

The Joy That God Offers You

Text : **Phil. 1: 12-26**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Question : Does your life have one singular priority ?

1. Do you have one singular commitment to which everything in your life is subordinate ?
2. You will find fulfillment in your life only to the degree that you're able to focus, to wrap your life around one priority that overshadows all others.
3. The joy in your life will be in direct proportion to your ability to focus on one priority.

B. We live in a society dominated by a tyrant that sucks the joy right out of our lives.

1. This tyrant is known by many names, but most often called *"multitasking."*

ill. Ad in the help wanted column : **"Applicant must be adept at multitasking."**

- a. It requires people to divide their time and energies among many priorities.
- b. From grade school until people leave this life it sucks the joy out of their lives.
2. Today there are too many demands vying for our time, our attention and our energies.
 - * a. No one has the ability to place a priority on everything that demands his attention.
 - b. Trying to do so causes frustration and robs one of the joy God wants him to enjoy.
3. Consequently, we've become a people with no real sense of purpose beyond busyness.

C. To receive God's joy, each person must choose one central priority in his life.

1. No one has the ability to give his whole heart to more than one thing.
2. That's the principle Jesus taught in :
 - a. **Luke 16: 13** – **No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**
 - b. In America we're taught to strive to have it all, but Jesus is saying, **"Pick one priority because you really can't have two."**

D. **Vs. 18** The Apostle Paul could write a letter of rejoicing from a prisons cell. Why? Because his life focused on and centered around one singular priority.

1. His one singular priority was that **"Christ is preached."**
 - a. The proclamation of the gospel was at the core of his existence. (**"to live is Christ."**)
 - b. Telling who Jesus is, what He has done and what He wants to do for all people.
2. Everything else in his life was subordinated and revolved around that one focal point.
3. **Because of this focus, Paul had the joy only God can give. Vs. 18 ... rejoiced**

I have question for you : **Are you a victim of your circumstances ?**
-or-
Are you a victor over your circumstances ?

I. THE JOY THAT GOD OFFERS SURPASSES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

A. No one can escape “*circumstances.*”

1. **Another word for circumstances is life.**
2. We’re all either victims of **-or-** victors over our circumstances.

B. Paul had to deal with a lot of very negative circumstances in his life, but he refused to be a victim.

1. That’s why he could sing with joy until midnight in his cell at Philippi. **Acts 16: 25**
2. I read a quote that’s worth repeating : “*Though limited by his imprisonment, no freer spirit ever knew the limit of confinement than the Apostle Paul.*”
3. Paul did not allow his imprisonment to take away his joy.
 - a. His joy did not depend upon external circumstances.
 - b. His joy was a gift given by God that emanated from Paul’s heart. (**not a reaction**)
 - c. **LIKEWISE** : Peter and John walked away “**rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.**” **Acts. 5: 40-42**

C. Paul was imprisoned because he was preaching, but Paul did not react as a natural man. (i.e., *react with earthbound thinking.*)

1. What would be the natural reaction in Paul’s circumstances ?
 - a. Lord, how could you allow this to happen to me ?
 - b. I have served you faithfully all these years, I don’t deserve to be treated like this.
2. Paul saw the opportunity in his circumstances.
 - a. **READ ...** Vs. **12-18** (**Brethren were emboldened.**)
 - b. How else would the whole palace guard be taught the gospel ?
?? Would they attend a gospel meeting or seek out an evangelist ??
 - c. Paul rejoiced because the gospel was preached and brethren were emboldened.
That around which his life was centered was being accomplished.
3. A sister was in the hospital, it gave her an opportunity to invite nurses to church.
4. Paul’s joy surpassed his circumstances rather than react to them or be defined by them.
 - a. He was able to rejoice because the desire of Christ was being accomplished.
 - b. There will always be troubles, but the Christian has an inner joy.
 - c. Like Paul, our joy enables us to surpass any and all problems we can experience.

D. All of us will face hardships in this life, but if we focus on God, He will give us a joy that surpasses all life can dump on us. (Christians know God is in Control.)

1. There will be times of trial, of sorrow, and of hardship. (God knows and He Cares.)
2. There will be times when we grieve at the loss of loved ones.
3. BUT, God gives us a joy that surpasses the negative circumstances of our life.

E. We start having problems when we begin to focus our minds on the problems, on the circumstances instead of what God's done for us.

1. He has blessed us in so many ways and continues to do so.
2. No matter how bad a circumstance becomes, it's only temporary. (This life is short.) God is watching over us and He will soon take us home to be with Him eternally.
3. If we maintain our faith, circumstances provide us with opportunities to glorify God.

The Joy God gives us surpasses our circumstances. (It's tied to our purpose.)

II. THE JOY GOD OFFERS RESHAPES THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIPS.

A. Vs. 15 ... Some were preaching because they wanted to harm Paul.

1. Paul had to deal with antagonistic relationships in his life.
2. These people were preaching out of bad motives.
 - a. They pretended to be Christians.
 - b. They wanted to cause him suffering, if not death.
3. There will always be brethren who let us down, **but God never will.**
 - a. God wants to give us joy, but we have to have enough faith to receive it.
 - b. When our life is hidden in Christ, it's covered with peace, with security, with joy.

B. Because they were not spiritual, Paul's opponents made a fundamental mistake.

1. They thought he would sink to their level, but their preaching made him rejoice.
 - a. **Regardless of the motive, Paul rejoiced that Christ was being preached.**
 - b. **People were learning the good news of salvation.**
2. Paul rejoiced because the central goal of his life was being accomplished.
3. He did not allow his relationships to determine if he had joy. **God gave his joy.**

C. Do you allow your relationships in life to dictate your joyfulness ? Do you allow your relationships with people to determine if you have the joy of the Lord in heart ?

1. If you do :
 - a. When your relationships are going great, you'll have the joy of the Lord in your heart.

- b. When people are treating you badly you're going to be depressed and upset.
 - c. Your life will be an emotional rollercoaster ride. (**up, down .. out of your control**)
2. Paul says it does not matter what these people are doing around me, I rejoice.

D. If we have the joy that God gives, it will reshape our relationships.

- 1. When we have the joy that is from God, no one can rob us of our joy.
 - a. Sometimes people are going to treat you great. (**Joy**)
 - b. Sometimes they will treat you with disdain, perhaps even seek you harm. (**Joy**)
- 2. Paul shows us that other people cannot rob us of the joy that comes from God.
 - a. The joy that is given by God transcends anything others can do to **or** for us.
 - b. No one else can give God's joy to us and no one else can take it from us.

E. Imagine the kind of influence we could have on the people around us if we could rejoice no matter what happens to us or what other people did to us. (**faith = light)**

- 1. If no matter how negative our circumstances, (*even prison*) we could rejoice in them.
- 2. If no matter how other people treated us, we could rejoice. (**Respond with love**)
 - a. "No matter what I do or say to them, no matter how I try to press their buttons they rejoice."
 - b. "What do they have that I don't?" "What's going on in their life that enables ...?"
- 3. People would know that our joy was the fruit of our faith in the risen Christ. (**Gal 5:20**)
 - a. We would be lights shining in the darkness and draw men to Christ.
 - b. When we rejoice through our adversities, **GOD IS GLORIFIED**.

Vs. 20 – according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

The joy that the Lord gives reshapes our relationships at every level. Paul did not allow his relationships to affect his joy.

III. THE JOY THE LORD GIVES UPROOTS OUR UNCERTAINTIES.

A. Have you ever had cause to fear what might lay ahead in your future ?

- 1. Perhaps your source of livelihood is threatened by the economy or circumstances.
- 2. Maybe you were ill and feared the worst result from tests taken.
- 3. Paul set an example for us in not allowing the future to make him afraid.

B. If ever there was a man who had cause to fear the future, it was the Apostle Paul.

1. Whether he lived or died was dependant upon the whim of a mad man.
 - a. Paul lived during the time of Nero. (Burned the city to gain control of land & blamed Christians.)
 - b. None of us will ever have as much reason to fear the future as did the Apostle Paul.
2. Sometimes just the uncertainty of the future frightens us.
 - a. Paul accepted the uncertainty without fear. (**Faith entrusts the future to God.**)
 - b. **Vs. 21 - For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Life does not end.)**
3. No matter what happened, Paul knew he was en route to a reunion with God.
 - a. His greatest concern was what was best for the cause of Christ. **“Fruitful service”**
 - b. No matter what happened, Paul knew he was going to be glorifying God.
 - 1) By his life
 - 2) By his death (**I Cor. 11: 1- Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.)**
4. Paul could have been killed at any moment, but he did not fear ... He rejoiced.

The joy that God gives uproots uncertainties.

No matter what happens in your life you can be certain of three things :

- 1) God will be there.
- 2) God will see you through it.
- 3) If you conduct yourself as a child of God, God will be glorified in it.

*** Paul knew that he was going to practice what he preached, that he was going to live faithfully to the glory of Christ until the very last day. Therefore, no one could rob him of the joy God gave to him.**

CONCLUSION :

A. In Summary :

1. The joy that God offers us ... **Surpasses** our circumstances.
2. The joy that God offers us ... **Reshapes** all our relationships.
3. The joy that God offers us ... **Uproots** all of our uncertainties.

B. Do you have the joy that God offers ?

1. Christian, if you do not have it, you must be trying to control your own destiny.
 - a. Relax your grip; turn loose; turn your life over to God.
 - b. Have enough faith to trust God to work His will.
2. If you're not a Christian, God wants to give you joy **-if-** you will become His.