

Joy in the Camp

A Study of

Paul's Epistle to the Church in

Philippi

Encouraging the Saints

One of the most encouraging letters Paul wrote to his brothers and sisters in Christ was the epistle written to the precious recipients of God's grace and mercy in Philippi. Although the church at Philippi was not wealthy in terms of finances and other tangible resources, this church was one that knew what it meant to "give with the heart" and "give with no obligations for a return on their investment." However, their giving was not invested for present day dividends, their giving was propelled by their desire to encourage future recipients of God's grace. Their return would come only in seeing souls coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, seeing the preaching of the gospel carried to other people/nations, and in seeing others blessed with the grace provided by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. By giving their monetary gifts and heart-felt support to Paul and those preaching the gospel, these precious lay church members in Philippi knew

that they were sharing in the spreading of the gospel all over the world. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal this revelation to man. Man's heart has to be changed before he can understand the joys of sharing, caring, and bearing the burdens of the lost and dying world. They knew that the only way to multiply is to divide. This was a new concept; dividing the wealth to gain new converts into the kingdom. Their hearts had been changed and their attitudes revealed a loving and grateful spirit of excellence in all they tried to accomplish. What they could not do physically, they would provide the means for others to accomplish it through prayer and financial support. Paul knew their hearts. Paul knew their genuine interest in seeing souls won to Christ for the kingdom's sake.

It was Winston Churchill who said, "We make a living by getting and we make a life by giving." As we study God's Word penned by Paul and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we gain knowledge and a perspective of real "heart giving" as we study the Book of Philippians. Prepare your hearts as we learn the benefits of "Giving Living" in a world where this concept was rare and even unbelievable in some of the cultures of the day. Is it any different in the culture of this day? Join us as we read the words of Paul, meditate on them, and heed to the truth of his teachings.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says..." (Revelation 2:7a).

Inspiration for the Title:

Joy in the Camp

The title to this study is based on the Old Testament Scripture, 1 Samuel 4:5-7 (NIV), “When the ark of the LORD’s covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. ⁶ Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, ‘What’s all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?’ When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, ⁷ the Philistines were afraid. ‘A god has come into the camp,’ they said. ‘Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before.’”

Although I very seldom use the Living Bible for Scripture reference, it clearly states my purpose for using the specific title for this study. The Living Bible states in 1 Samuel 4:5-7, “When the Israelis saw the Ark coming, their shout of joy was so loud that it almost made the ground shake! “What’s going on?” the Philistines asked. ‘What’s all the shouting about over in the camp of the Hebrews?’ When they were told it was because the Ark of the Lord had arrived, they panicked. ‘God has come into their camp!’ They cried out. ‘Woe upon us, for we have never had to face anything like this before!’”

There are 270 specific Scriptures with the word “camp” in the New International Version of the Bible. Only one time of the 270 Scriptures does it depict the camp of the Lord being one of joy and a time of celebration. I want my camp (my home) to be one of joy and inhabited with shouts of praise in celebrating the glorious truth of God’s Word, His salvation, and His care and concern for His children. With that, I begin the wonderful study in the Book of Philippians. “Rejoice” and “Joy” are used 16 times in the book. I wish I could express how I feel about my salvation experience and the knowledge of understanding my standing with the Lord. Jesus died for me...and you! He now is alive and sits at

the right hand of Jehovah God interceding for all who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb...Jesus, the Christ...the Resurrected One! What a reason to shout for joy until the earth shakes and our hearts are overwhelmed with such love.

Come join me as we joyously, yet reverently, study the Word of God. If the Scriptures in Philippians don't make you shout for joy, then your joy stick is not tuned to the right channel. Peter, the Apostle, puts joy in the right perspective when he wrote, "These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls," 1 Peter 1:7-9

Preface:

As most Christians know, the full story of Paul's relationship and work with the Philippians started some twenty centuries ago and the benefits from their friendship and fellowship continues today. How could it have started some 2000 years ago? Well, a story has to have a beginning and an end. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God's only begotten Son, initiated the story and will be the One to end the story as He takes Paul, the church at Philippi, and the glorious and beautiful bride of Christ (all who know Jesus Christ) beyond the vail of time into an eternity with the Father. The Philippian church is a part of that great vast number of saints who will be on that journey with us into eternal glory. The story continues with Paul and any other Christian who carries the cross of Jesus to others. It is an ongoing story of which Paul carried to many cities of the world of his time.

It was Paul, an itinerant tent maker, who was thrown into prison for allegedly creating a public disturbance in Rome who started this journey with the Philippian residents of that era. While in the prison, Paul took it upon himself to use the time to write many epistles to churches around the Mediterranean. This included some letters going to Asiatic established churches as well.

Taking the time to write, we, as modern day recipients of these precious letters, are blessed beyond measure as were the specific churches in which the letters were addressed. Today we cannot understand how difficult it must have been for Paul and the authors of the New Testament to acquire enough paper to pen some of the greatest words to individuals and churches while in prison and/or while being under horrific persecution.

Obtaining the resources to pen such historic and life-changing words was a miracle in itself. However, the preservation of these words (Words approved and anointed by God) can only be explained as something that only God can

and did do. The plan by God to accomplish the penning of God's revelation to man through man's experiences and God's revelation should be enough of a miracle to cause the Atheist, the sceptic, and anyone not understanding God's wisdom and power, to marvel at this preservation of these wonderful words of life. Although the skeptic might not see the words as "wonderful" or "life-changing", the simple truth of its penmanship and preservation through the years is a spectacular, marvelous, and historic event.

To help one understand the validity of the Word of God (the HOLY Bible), one must see the truth and absolute miraculous power of God Almighty as to helping to preserve the "Wonderful Words of Life" of which we are blessed. The Bible can be verified by external events such as archeology, geography, customs, politics, culture, known world history and writings in other ancient texts. In all aspects of these external event verification, the Bible has been proved to be accurate in all respects. New discoveries always support it, never vice versa. It has never once been proven faulty on single detail or fact, although many have mightily tried and failed.

These 66 separate books were written by about 40 different writers: Kings, such as David and Solomon; Statesmen, such as Daniel and Nehemiah; and Priests, such as Ezra, men taught in the wisdom of Egypt, such as Moses; men taught in the Jewish Law, such as Paul; herdsmen, such as Amos; tax collectors, such as Matthew; unlearned and ignorant fishermen, such as Peter and John; a physician, such as Luke; and mighty overseers, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah.

Where were these books written? Different parts of the world, such as:

- The desert of the Sinai,
- In Arabia,
- In the hills and towns of Palestine,
- In the courts of the Temple,

- In the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho,
- In the palace of Shushan in Persia,
- On the banks of the Chebar River in Babylonia,
- In the dungeons of Rome, and
- On the lonely island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Yet one of the most amazing and miraculous things about all this, is that after 1600 years and 40 different writers, they all talked about the same thing, with no contradictions and no errors (in the original languages of the Hebrew and Greek). They all spoke about the plan of God for man. Most of these men never even read the writings of the others. Everything recorded between the opening pages of the book of Genesis and the closing pages of Revelation was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Trying to preserve the old cities and its architectural structures from that era has been a feat in itself. To preserve the writings from that time is even more of a phenomenon. Paper of today lasts a few short years before turning brittle, crisp, and subject to the volatile forces of nature. Even photos start turning yellow and details of the pictures and/or writing on the photos yield to the elements (light and air) over a few decades.

The penning of God's revelation to the world has always been seen as a miracle by those who have faith and live their lives by faith in the One who created life and the One who said, "You can live it with joy." Faith in the One who gives us life gives us joy unspeakable and full of glory. Only the Creator of life, liberty, and the idea of pursuing life with joy can do that for the individual.

Few people would recognize who the Emperor of the day was when Paul was writing these words to the church at Philippi. It was Nero. Yes, that Nero who has been characterized as the one who twiddled his thumbs while Rome burned. However, Nero had accomplished many great feats as a ruler. Although a mad-man at a later stage in his emperorship, he was really a

generous ruler when he was young in his tenure as an emperor. He was an artist as well as one who sought notoriety as an actor. One thing we do know about him is that he was a prolific author. However, there is nothing whatsoever that remains of his writings. The common, every day folk don't really know much about Nero, apart from historians, classicists, and those who studied the people of this era. Nero killed those who sought to take him out of office and he was a haughty ruler later in his reign; thinking more of himself as a great man of power who wanted no one to challenge his methods of judging himself and others. The writings of Paul, the apostle, however, are well known by most Christians as well as those studying Christian history and the writings known as the New Testament or New covenant manuscripts. Isn't it odd that Nero and Paul are looked at today as opposites as we look at their accomplishments and their legacies? One was emperor and one was a prisoner of his time. One's writings survived many generations while one's writings are never even mentioned in today's culture. As T. R. Glover writes and puts it in proper perspective... "people now call their dogs 'Nero' and their sons 'Paul'."

One of the important cities in the region which Paul was going to on his second missionary journey was the city of Philippi. We might wonder why Paul in particular went to Philippi, but as we analyze particularly the book of Acts we find out that Paul didn't just choose himself to go to Philippi. In fact, if you look at Acts, particularly chapter 16 and the chapters before it, you will find that Paul's intention was to go to a place called Bithynia. But, the Lord didn't want him to go there. In fact we read that the Spirit of Jesus stopped Paul entering Bithynia and led him to go to a place called Troas. When he was in Troas, asleep one night, God the Holy Spirit gave to him a vision. He saw a man standing before him, a Macedonian man, and that man was calling to Saul (Paul), 'Come over and help us, come over and help us'. In obedience, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke set sail to Macedonia. From Macedonia they travelled into Philippi. Isn't the Spirit of God miraculously wonderful in the way he plans our steps? They are ordered of God when we yield to His will.

We read in the book of Acts that their stay in Philippi was quite short but it was very eventful. From reading the Word of God, we find that Paul first went to the synagogue in the town as he entered to make temporary residence. However, in Philippi, there was no synagogue in Philippi. This was probably because there wasn't enough Jewish men in the city to warrant a synagogue.

Just outside the city gate beside a river, however, there was a group of women; Jewish women, some of whom were Gentile proselytes. These were Gentiles who wanted to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were gathered together to pray. Isn't that such a precious truth found even in today's Christian culture; women coming together to pray? Women have carried the burdens of the day to the Lord pleading the cases for their homes and their Christian leaders to stand firm in the faith day after day. If a census were taken of today's churches we would find that the War Room (Prayer closet) is made up of the women of the church. I thank God for the women who have tender hearts for the lost, the hurting, and the depressed. What would the church do without these warriors of faith who lead out in combating against the true enemy and his army, Satan and his evil cohorts? Men of the Church – give thanks for these warriors of faith. Love them for their steadfast trust in Jehovah God and His Son, Jesus, the Messiah; our Savior and friend. These women have a sincere, genuine, selfless love for Jesus and are standing in the gap for the preservation of our homes, churches, nation, and the world.

Because the men of the city strongly detested the teachings of Paul and his following, Paul had to leave the city. As he left the city, he left behind him a diverse group of converts. One of those converts was Lydia, a seller of purple, whose heart the Lord opened. In Acts 16, the story is told of Lydia's salvation and her baptism. Her family followed her faith experience and were also baptized. We know the famous story in the same chapter of Acts the Philippian jailer, probably a Roman guard, who was gloriously saved along with his household. Seeing and believing, convicted by the Holy Spirit, yielding to the

pulling down of strongholds, these people, one by one, came to know the Savior, Jesus the Christ. Also, the slave girl mentioned in the same chapter most likely was converted to Christ also. This diverse group of people in Philippi became the first Christian church of Philippi. They possibly met in the home of Lydia since she was a wealthy and prosperous businesswoman who probably had the largest house on the block. This team of young converts to Christ in the city of Philippi were all from varied and different circumstances of life and backgrounds. What glorious ways the Lord puts together to form His Church! Praise God for whom all blessings flow!

It was the first Church in Europe, people converted from different backgrounds, different traditions, even different cultures. You would imagine that in the midst of persecution from outside there would have also been problems inside. As in the churches of today, Paul was calling for them to all work together for the cause of Christ. The task was not easy. In fact, we know from the letter from Paul to the church at Philippi that the task was extremely difficult.

Christianity today is no different. There are different denominations, changing cultures, different views on Scriptural passages, different backgrounds, and different ideas on how to worship, how to win the lost, and how to live the Christian life with all the problems of today.

Hopefully, as we study the Word of God found in the Epistle to the Church at Philippi, we will come to the conclusion that we need the Spirit's help as much or more today than in our forefather's time.

How do we live the life of the Christian and still enjoy the pleasures God intended for us? How do we hold fast to the faith without compromising with the traditions of man as well as being tempted to yield to the cultures of the day?

Philippians is a book calling for joy in the times of stress and stressing true joy in times of trouble. Wow! With that knowledge, let us begin our study in the book of Philippians.

NOTES:

Suggestions for Teaching—Topical/verse by verse study of the Book of Philippians:

I have placed each bible study in a format in which the teacher can make copies for self and/or student. Usually, each study is designed for a teacher/facilitator to present a 40-45 minute lesson utilizing the materials/outline for each section. This would allow a study for a Sunday morning Equip class or a Home Bible study to be effectively taught. The outlines are to be used as is or to be used as a possible guideline for the teacher to use his/her own materials, thoughts, and stories to enhance the varied types of cultures, interests, and backgrounds of the class members.

Please feel free to make copies of the materials and use as necessary for your class.

If you prefer to copy and input your own stories, add and remove portions of the lesson, and/or make other changes to the document in any way, you can send the scanned copy to a Word document and then make changes as necessary. Most Equip/Sunday School facilitators prefer to add blanks to each session as the Scriptures are taught. This keeps the class alert as the teacher provides the words to fill in the blanks.

Blessings to you as you begin this study of the Book of Philippians.

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