

CHRISTIAN JOY IS A CHOICE, NOT AN INHERITED TRAIT!

Presented by Gerald Cumby



"Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world."

John Piper, Founder & Teacher; www.desiringGod.org

Christian JOY is painted throughout the Book of Philippians. Joy is truly a Biblical trait and an encouraging thought taught in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi in which Paul loved so dearly.

From the beginning of this epistle to the last chapter, Paul was filled with joy of the Lord. He wanted this generous church to learn that "Giving Living" is a wonderful trait expressive of the true Christian life.

Let us look at this painting of the Christian joy depicted and exemplified in Philippians. There is the:

1. **Joy of Christian prayer** (Philippians 1:4), *"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy"* - the joy of bringing those we love to the mercy seat of God. When we share our joy of our salvation with others, our joy is made complete. Expressing and exhibiting joy is a responsibility of every Christian. Remember, as a Christian we have come out of darkness into His (God's) glorious light. Jesus is truly the light of the world. That is why we sing "Joy to the World." The Lord has truly come...and we get to proclaim this joy as we share this truth to others.

2. **Joy that Jesus Christ is preached** (1:18), "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."-Adding, even multiplying people into the Kingdom by the preaching of Jesus Christ.

I once taught a lesson on "The Abomination of Denominations." I since have repented of that teaching. The reason I repented of this teaching is because Jesus himself approved of other people sharing their faith and gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 9:49-50, 'Master,' said John, 'we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.' ⁵⁰ 'Do not stop him,' Jesus said, 'for whoever is not against you is for you.'

I also have realized that the main thing we as a church (whether Baptist, Assembly of God, Methodist, Church of Christ, Presbyterian, etc.) must focus on "The Main Thing." The "main thing" is preaching Jesus, "The Resurrection and the life" and those that believe in him will live, even though he dies. And those that believe and live will never die." John 11:25 It is imperative that we don't shoot ourselves (Christians) in the foot, reload...and shoot again with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. **Joy of Faith** (1:25), "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me." - If Christianity does not make a man happy, it will not make him anything at all. Faith is believing you already have what you can't see and feel. Faith truly

is... *"the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen."*

4. **Joy of seeing Christians in fellowship together** (2:2), *"then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."* = There is peace for no one where there are broken human relationships and strife between individuals. There is not a lovelier sight than a family linked in love to each other or a Church whose members are one with each other because they are one in Christ Jesus their Lord. If the Church does not love one another and rejoices over every person who places their faith in the One and Only Savior, Jesus Christ, then we are in violation of our faith...and we need to look at ourselves in the mirror and see a misguided follower of Christ. Every Christian ought to be exuberant and ecstatic over every one who falls to their knees and places their faith in Jesus.
5. **Joy of suffering for Christ** (2:17), *"But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you."* - In the hour of martyrdom while in the flames Polycarp prayed, "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast judged me worthy of this hour." Would we be willing to be baptized with the suffering Jesus went through? Jesus said to them, *"You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?"* (Mark 10:38)...This was said when John and James, sons of Zebedee, asked to sit at Jesus right hand and left hand when he (Jesus) came into glory.
6. **Joy of the news of (or from) the loved one** (2:28), *"Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety."* - Life is full of separations, and there is always joy when news comes to us of those loved ones from whom we are temporarily separated. Joy can come with a postage stamp, an email, a phone call. It is a choice.

Our temporary separation from our spouse, family, and friends is always a gloomy and bleak time in our lives. Our jobs sometime carry us away from our loved ones (temporarily). This is all part of the times we are living in. Sixty or Seventy-five years ago (and before) our employment very seldom would cause our families to be separated. Most families stayed in the area in which they grew up. Of course,

wars separated families from their love ones. Today, air travel has made it much easier to be temporarily separated. Get on a plane on Monday and fly 700-1000 miles away...and come home 3 days later. This is the norm. However, temporary separation has caused many problems in marriages and home life. The strong and secure Christian family, however, always brings joy to the spouse and family members. There is something about "togetherness" that causes our hearts to rejoice. Christian joy is truly a choice...not something inherited.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39.

7. **Joy of Christian hospitality** (2:29), "So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him,"...There should be an open-door policy for the Christian who is hurting. Be hospitable, but always be attentive to what the Lord and good common sense tells you. The Holy Spirit will let you know who is really hurting and who needs help in their spirit, soul, or body. He lives within you; let him guide your actions. You are to be open always to the Spirit's leading.
8. **Joy of the man in Christ** (3:1), "Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."-It is human nature to be happy when we are with the person whom we love; and Christ is the lover of our souls from whom nothing in time or eternity can ever separate us.

Heaven is real...Hell is a reality. Just as joy is a choice, so is our destiny after our life here on earth. This is a decision every person living has to be made. Choose Jesus...don't be a fool and let your arrogance and stubbornness be a stumbling block for a true joy experience...now and for eternity.

9. **Joy of the man who has won one soul for Christ** (4:1), "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!"-The Philippians are Paul's joy and crown, for he was the means of bringing them to Jesus Christ. For the Christian, evangelism is not a duty; it is a joy.

10. **Joy in a gift** (4:10), "I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it." -
The joy does not lie so much in the gift itself, as in being remembered and realizing someone cares.

The Church members at Philippi were hospitable, grateful, concerned for lost souls, and generous to the hurting people in Philippi as well as the person who brought them the message of salvation...that being Paul. The gospel (the Good News) has its benefits. The greatest two benefits one gets from sharing the Good News is peace and joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things." Philippians 4:4-8

