

JOY IN LIVING FOR JESUS

EXPERIENCING
LASTING JOY
THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

PRECEPT

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Read the rest of verses 3-11)

PROMISE

Philippians is the last letter that Paul wrote while in prison awaiting his trial before Nero. Of all Paul's epistles, Philippians is the most consistently positive and personal. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi when he was in prison, a fact that makes his theme of joyfulness throughout the book all the more pertinent. It is a love letter to the Christians in Philippi, and it reflects a joyful spirit despite facing difficult times and trying circumstances.

Having joy is synonymous to having peace in our lives. Peace is internal, and joy is the external manifestation of the peace we have inside us. Life is surely not easy. There are times when we are surrounded by many challenges, trials, and despair; which can consume us, overwhelm us, and cause a lot of stress and distress. As a result, we lose peace, and joy fades away. There are quite a few things that can rob us of our joy; it can be other people, circumstances, or even ourselves. Greek philosopher Epictetus says, "*It is not your problems that are bothering you. It is the way you are looking at them.*" The good news is there is a way to restore the peace and joy in us.

THANKFULNESS. Paul responded to his unimaginable situation with an attitude of gratitude. He said in verse 3, "*I thank my God every time I remember you.*" Philippians have supported and helped him in many ways before and even during his imprisonment. We must have the same attitude to experience real and lasting joy in life.

PRAYERFULNESS. "*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*" (verses 4-5) Paul thanked God for them and prayed for them with joy. Why pray? Because God is the only one who can help us overcome our battles and He is the only one who can make a way when there seems to be no way. So let us pray with faith and believe that He can make the impossible possible. That is the way to experience real and lasting joy.

POSITIVENESS. Paul was in prison, awaiting trial, and might be executed, yet, he remained positive, putting his confidence that Christ would complete what He had started (verse 6). American businessman and philanthropist Clement Stone said, "*There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.*"

KINDNESS. Some would complain being on the shoes of Paul, narrating the suffering they are going through, begging for justice and crying for prayers for their situation. Paul instead chose to respond with kindness, expressing his appreciation to the people who helped and are helping him with his situation (verses 7-8). Joy is the most magnetic trait a Christian can have. Faith and love will come after, but it is joy that people will notice and will identify us as Christians. Joy draws people to one another, causes healing to hurting hearts, brings a positive spirit to a negative situation, and is the one that will keep us going in serving God and His people.

MINDFULNESS. This means being aware of what really matters in life, distinguishing between what is temporary and eternal. Material things are temporary, souls are eternal. Paul was saying, I pray that you will keep growing in knowledge and understanding, not focusing on what is temporary, but investing to what will last for eternity (verses 9-10).

PRACTICE

1. Joy Vs. Happiness. What do you think is the difference between joy and happiness? What seems to consistently threaten your joy?

2. Joy at all Times. What is a way you remind yourself of the joy you have in Christ in a regular basis?

PRAYER

I. Joy

- May God fill our hearts with joy that overflows, even in the midst of challenges.

II. Love

- May we be vessels of God's love, spreading kindness and compassion wherever we go.

III. Trust

- May we always have the faith to trust in God's plan, even when I cannot see the way forward.

IV. Healing

- Pray for God's presence to those who are suffering in body, mind, or spirit.

V. Provision

- May God guide us in stewarding what we have wisely and generously.

VI. Hope

- Pray that God may renew our spirits with the assurance of His presence all the days of our lives.

VII. Peace

- May God's peace reign in our lives, the peace that surpasses all understanding.