Joy in the Journey
A Joyous Look at the Book of Philippians

Lesson One

The apostle Paul suffered unspeakable cruelty in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of his many imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

The more influence Paul exerted for the Lord, the harder the journey became. Finally, he was arrested and placed under house arrest. He was allowed to remain in his own rented quarters (Acts 28:30) for the space of two years. Paul was able to have visitors and he continued to preach and teach to all who visited, but he was kept in custody and chained to a Roman guard twenty-four hours a day.

From his captivity, Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi. Amazingly we discover the apostle’s reaction to his unfortunate circumstances was joy. He did not complain about his difficult circumstances or ask his friends to procure his release. He wrote a rather upbeat message, urging his readers to celebrate the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ with him. And he spoke often of his joy. Nineteen times over the course of this short letter Paul mentioned joy. Unbridled. Outlandish. Unspeakable joy.

I. The Background of the Book—Philippians 1:1

Most Bible commentators place the writing of the Book of Philippians about A.D. 62. Paul had founded the church at Philippi and he had special feelings for this beloved congregation. When the church body discovered Paul’s incarceration, a love offering was collected. A trusted church member, Epaphroditus, was dispatched with their financial aid for the beloved apostle. The letter of Philippians is a thank-you letter of sorts, back to the church.

According to the custom of the day, Paul opens the letter with his signature. Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus. Paul included Timothy in his greeting, because the Philippian congregation knew him.

Paul identified himself and Timothy, his co-laborer, as bond-servants. In the Greek language the term bond-servant means “one bound to another by the bands of constraining love.” Paul wrote to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi. Philippians is a letter written by servants and addressed to saints. In the original Greek the term saints means “set apart and consecrated for the purpose of God’s service.”
II. The Benefits of Believers—Philippians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ we receive God’s grace, His unmerited favor. Additionally we have peace with God and we experience the peace of God regardless of our circumstances. The word peace in its earliest form meant “to bind together.” It carried the idea of being bound so closely together with someone or something that the end result was harmony.

God has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Pet. 1:3). As believers we have received untold riches in Christ Jesus. Here Paul mentioned only two: grace and peace. The benefits of the grace of God and the peace of God give us reason to rejoice.

III. The Birthmark of Believers

The letter to the Philippians resounds with joy. Rather than wallowing in self-pity or rehearsing his misfortune, Paul pens a joyous letter of encouragement to the flock at Philippi and urges them to share his joy!

Outrageous joy is the birthright of every child of God. It is a byproduct of our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- John 15:11 says, These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in your, and that you joy may be made full.
- John 16:24 says, Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.
- In Jesus’ high priestly prayer, He said to the Father, But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves (John 17:13).

Joy is not something we muster up; it springs forth from an endless Source. It spills and it splashes from a fountain of the overflow of our devotional life and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the study of the Book of Philippians Paul will repeatedly urge us to appropriate the joy of the Lord. Perhaps nothing makes the Christian life more appealing than outrageous joy regardless of the circumstances of life. Beloved Christian, join me as we experience Joy in the Journey.