



Philippians The Joy of the Lord

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Founding of Philippi

1. Located in what is now northeastern Greece.
2. Already ancient in 356 BC when Philip, father of Alexander the Great, took it over.
3. In 42 BC was the site of a decisive battle between Marc Antony and Octavian against Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar.
4. Was populated by retired Roman soldiers put there to ensure loyalty to Rome and the majority of the population in Paul's day were descendants of those soldiers.
5. Church founded by Paul during 2nd missionary journey about 49 AD.
6. City had no synagogue meaning there were fewer than 10 Jewish men in the city.
7. City was very Gentile, very pagan; emperor-cult of worship; Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris; many others.
8. Very cosmopolitan city—2nd only to Thessalonica in size in current Europe.

B. The church at Philippi.

1. Most of us know this story fairly well, but see Acts 16 for full details.
 - a. Paul leaves Antioch, determined and confident, on his 2nd missionary journey in about 49 AD intending to go back to the region of Galatia.
 - b. Is stopped at every turn by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Paul, having stopped humbled and confused at Troas, on the NW coast of Turkey, receives a vision of a man calling him to come to Macedonia to help them.
 - d. Now ministry begins to earnestly happen because Paul is now listening to God.
 - 1) Meets and ministers to Lydia and she and all her household are saved.
 - 2) Is hounded by a demon-possessed fortune-telling slave and Paul in irritation casts the demon out of the girl.
 - 3) The slave's owners have Paul and Silas thrown into jail for disrupting their business.
 - 4) Paul and Silas are stripped, beaten, and put into stocks, yet spend the whole night in jail praising God and singing praises to Him.
 - 5) The praises bring forth an earthquake so violent as to rip the jail doors from their moorings in the walls and break open the stocks and chains on Paul and Silas.
 - 6) The jailer is so impressed that he, and all his family are also saved.
2. The church at Philippi is deeply supportive of Paul both financially and emotionally.
 - a. Part of the letter is to let them know he is doing ok in spite of appearances (being in jail).
 - b. He deeply loves them.

II. DAVID AND PAUL

A. No accident these two series are running in parallel.

1. David.
 - a. Loved God
 - b. When he made mistakes he went directly to God, confident of His mercy; no groveling.
 - c. Initially deeply rejected by his family.
 - d. Giant of the faith, more about him than any other Biblical person except Yeshua.
 - e. Wrote more than 50% of the Psalms.

- f. Maintained his connection to God even when facing difficulty.
 - g. Embraced God beginning in the shepherd years during the deepest of rejection.
2. Paul
- a. Initially deeply rejected by friends, peers, possibly even his wife, but connected with greater Kingdom family.
 - b. Loved God
 - c. Wrote over 50% of NT.
 - d. Rejoiced in the Lord in any and all situations.
 - e. Maintained the joy of the Lord while in chains in Rome.
 - f. Was fulfilled in Christ and through the Philippians who embraced him.

III. PHILIPPIAN THEMES

A. Church under attack

1. Spiritual foes fighting against Yeshua.
2. Paul was writing against the encroaching cultural values of his day.
3. Writing to friends to encourage and exhort.
4. Earthly foes seeking:
 - a. To dismantle Godly values.
 - b. To 'stampede' believers through false teaching.
 - c. To promote situational ethics and morality.
5. Paul teaches that the only reply to a hostile world is a united church.
 - a. Steadfast in preaching the efficacy of the Cross.
 - b. Standing firm against deviation from Kingdom values.
 - c. Presenting constantly the availability of changed life through salvation.
 - d. Personal and corporate battle for moral righteousness.

B. Unity

1. But standing firm for one another requires love and care.
2. Fellowships/congregations start
 - a. Through and because of Christ.
 - b. Because the Father's love has been poured over them.
 - c. The Spirit endows the believer with agape love for one-another.
3. Sin had entered Philippian congregation.
 - a. Pettiness causing division.
 - b. Unauthorized men positioning themselves as leaders.
 - c. One-upmanship; putting others down.
 - d. Other leaders had become envious of Paul.
4. Paul points out they have a greater citizenship than just to Rome: the Kingdom of God.
 - a. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God requires daily exercise.
 - b. Disunity is a sin threatening the heart of any fellowship.
 - c. Disunity destroys Kingdom effectiveness.
 - d. Disunity renders a fellowship impotent against a hostile world.
 - e. Yeshua is the ultimate example of unity.
5. In spite of disagreement, believers belong to the same family.
 - a. Brothers in Christ are actual brothers.
 - b. The Spirit uniting them is the truest expression of love.
 - c. Believers have a common bond in Messiah.
 - d. Believers see perfect humility in Yeshua.
6. We see the Lord coming with revival.

- a. Great danger of split and division as persons fail to embrace the new thing.
- b. Disunity is one of Satan's greatest weapons.

C. Circumstances don't dictate condition.

1. Paul in chains when he wrote Philippians.
2. Was full of joy nonetheless; felt joy at success of congregation in the face of persecution.
3. Was content in any and every situation; trusted God in all things.
 - a. Paul had a Godly connection and joy accessible even in the midst of great difficulty.
 - b. Sang praises and worshipped even when beaten and put in chains.
 - c. 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.' (1:21)
 - d. 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.' (4:13)
4. Filled his mind with Messiah, so circumstances didn't break his spirit.
 - a. 'I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.' (3:7)
5. 'Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.' (4:4)
 - a. Sins are under the Blood, Cast into the sea of forgetfulness; as far as the East is from the West.
 - b. Forgiveness brings comfort and peace.
6. In any situation, look to Messiah
 - a. Consider His humility.
 - b. In spite of societal pressures and resistance.
 - 1) Do not retreat from the world; engage it.
 - 2) Shine like stars within society
 - 3) Look for good and take it to heart

D. The coming Day.

1. God's plan is to bring every living creature to Him through Yeshua.
2. Every day God is engaged in helping believers get ready for that Day.
 - a. Each believer should live in His likeness.
 - b. Have a harvest of righteousness ready for him.
 - c. Strive to bring others to faith; help others stand before His throne.
3. Every day the believer co-operates with God's unction
 - a. 'being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.' (1:6)
 - b. 'Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.' (2:15b-16)
 - c. 'But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.' (3:20-21)

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

A. Through Messiah we are transformed.

1. In Acts 8 we read of Paul going from house to house dragging believers off to prison.
2. In Acts 20 we read about Paul preaching the message of peace also from house to house.
3. No matter where we come from Yeshua can make us new.

B. We can come to peace with our past.

1. Paul had imprisoned many of God's children, yet Yeshua forgave him.
2. The pain of what he had done was always present, but forgiveness was always in his heart.
3. Yeshua will do for us what He did for Paul.

C. Yeshua's love heals wounded spirits

1. Paul rejected by family, entire Tarsus Jewish community, possibly own wife.

2. No home to go back to.
3. Abandoned and rejected.
4. But empty places filled with God's love.

D. We can experience God's love even when suffering.

1. Paul lived daily in deep intimacy with God.
2. Lived the Gospel of Grace that he preached.
3. Experienced joy even while in chains.

E. Somebody say it...

1. I don't feel joyful.
2. I don't have a deep connection to God.
3. I don't feel like singing praises when I am struggling.

F. Paul gives us the answer in 4:4-9.

4Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6Don't worry about anything; instead, pray (talk to God) about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all He has done. 7Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. 8And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. (NLT)

1. When Paul says 'The Lord is near' (NIV), he means He is soon returning, and also that Yeshua is walking along side each of us, in each of us; now and always.
2. The essence of the matter is this: "To so love Yeshua, to so long for the smile of His approval, that nothing else matters." (Motyer, Kindle location 2943).
3. Paul offers four steps to be joyful in all circumstances:
 - a. **Rejoice in the Lord and let everyone know it.** Imitate Yeshua in everything we do; make the love of Yeshua our 1st response to any situation; and accept people as they are.
 - b. **Don't worry, talk to God about everything and thank Him for what He's done.** God created us so He is easily capable of handling that problem which seems so big to us. Recognize the problem is there because God has appointed it to help us. Talking to God brings release; thanksgiving brings trust.
 - c. **Discipline our minds.** A mind drilled in the things of God is the steadiest way into practical holiness. Think about that which speaks well of the other, or that is fragrant and lovely in a situation, and all that is spiritually true. Do not engage in frivolity or damaging thoughts, or cloud our mind with half-truth. Such things are not of Christ.
 - d. **Obey the Living Word.** If we are to know the presence of the God of peace then we must seek to know Who He is. That means reading the Word, and meditating on it every day. 30 minutes is a good starting place to aim for!
4. All of us know others who are, at worst fakes, or at best, inconsistent. We know that because their actions don't match their words. Paul is saying not to be such people: Let our outer condition match our inner condition. Neither condition is determined by our circumstances, but by our relationship with Yeshua! When the two conditions match, we enjoy the promises of God! If we model our relationships on Yeshua, surround our circumstances by talking to God, focus our minds on godly thinking, and submit our lives to the Word, the peace of God that passes all understanding follows.