



**Old Testament Reading – Zephaniah 3:14-20**

**New Testament Reading – Matthew 25:31-46**

**The Epistle Of Joy**  
**“To the Glory and Praise of God” # 2**  
**Philippians 1:3-8**

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The Book of Philippians is called the “epistle of joy” because, despite being in prison for preaching the gosple, the Apostle Paul still rejoiced in the Lord, and he communicated that joy in his letter of thanks for their love for him, their gifts to him, and their continued support for his ministry.

- Rejoicing in the Lord is mentioned at least 16 times in this short letter.
- Paul ministered at Philippi during his second missionary journey, and the Lord used him to lead a wealthy woman and her household to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, establishing the first Christian church in Europe.
- When Paul cast a demon out of a derelict girl, her owners forced Paul and Silas to be arrested, beaten, and jailed in stocks, because she was making money for them.

- God used a violent earthquake to break their chains and loosen their bars, but rather than escape, the Lord used them to lead the jailer and his family to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- Paul and his companions stayed in Philippi for about three months before moving on to the next city on his second missionary journey.

Dr. John MacArthur defined the contrast between temporal happiness and eternal joy.

- **"True joy is a gift from God to those who set their hope and put their trust in God alone."**

- Happiness is based on the "happenings" of life – i.e., there is a chance that something might happen today that will bring us happiness. True joy is that deep down confidence that all is well with us, regardless of the ever-changing circumstances of our lives.

- **"True joy is a gift from God to those who set their hope and put their trust in God alone. True joy is produced in them by the Holy Spirit who indwells them."**

- The work of the Holy Spirit within the believer allows us to experience real joy, even when the events of our lives are not pleasant. Galatians 5:22, ***"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,"***
- "True joy is a gift from God to those who set their hope and put their trust in God alone. True joy is produced in them by the Holy Spirit who indwells them, **because of their willingness to obey God, even when their obedience includes suffering and possibly death.**"
- It is easy to be joyful and to express joy when things are going our way, but it is not so easy when they are filled with troubles and trials, sorrow, and sadness.
- In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, the Apostle Paul bragged on the brethren when he said: ***"You became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit."***

True joy cannot be produced by us, regardless of the circumstances of our lives. True joy is produced within us by the Holy Spirit, and manifested in our lives, even in the midst of sorrow suffering.

- Paul's life circumstances were not joyful, for he was shackled to the wall in a dark, dirty, damp, and depressing dungeon.
- However, knowing his temporal life and his eternal destiny were in the hands of Almighty God, Paul was full of inexpressible joy.
- Paul had the deep satisfaction of knowing that he was exactly where the Lord wanted him to be at that time, even though he was in prison.
- Therefore, rather than raging at his captors for their mistreatment, and rather than whining to his followers about his circumstances, Paul was calm and content, even though he was facing his date with death.
- It was with that kind of joy that Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Philippi, expressing his love for them, and for their continued support of him and his ministry.

## **1. The Joy of Recollection – VS. 3 – *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you."***

Paul had visited many places and started many churches, and he had memories of each one of those churches, whether

good or bad.

- But when Paul remembered what had happened when he first came to Philippi, he thanked God for the museum of positive memories.
- The church at Philippi was not "perfect!" Paul admonished them to have *"one spirit, one mind, and to strive together."*
  - Instead of trying to win an argument, Paul urged them to focus on the common ground they shared at the foot of the cross.
  - Instead of remembering those things that divided them, Paul urged them to choose the things that had brought them together, for as he could testify, the joyous memories of those precious moments far outweighed the pain of their present circumstances.
- Philippians 3:13-14 – ***"Forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."***

## **2. The Joy of Intercession – VS. 4 – *"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."***

When the Spirit of the Lord is in control of our lives, and we are living in obedience to God's Word, we cannot help but intercede before God on behalf of those we love, and especially those who God has used in our lives in a very special way.

- Just as it is more blessed to give than it is to receive, there is more joy in praying for others than in praying for ourselves.
- True joy is to see God at work in the lives of others, and if we want to be filled with true joy, we will become more concerned about others than we will about ourselves.
- God chose the Apostle Paul to get the gospel to the Gentiles. Yet, being in prison, his public ministry has been halted, and his physical, mental, and emotional well-being has been better.
- However, there is not one word of personal pity in this letter because Paul's joy was not based on the circumstances of his life, but rather how God had used him, and was still using him in the lives of others.
- Even though his physical needs were greater than many others, Paul's prayers were for others, for to intercede for others is to do the same thing God the Son is doing for us before the Father.
- In Psalm 66:18, the Bible says, ***"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."***
- If we are holding on to a sin, or harboring some hate filled action of others toward us, the only prayer God the Father will hear from us is the prayer of confession and full repentance.

## **3. The Joy of Participation – VS. 5 – *"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."***

The Greek word for fellowship is "koinonia," which means a loving partnership in spreading the gospel. Paul was grateful they had received the gospel, but he was even more grateful they were now his partners in sharing the gospel with others.

- In Philippians 4:15-16, Paul said, ***“When I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.”***
- The Philippians had helped Paul personally, but they had also supported his ministry to get the gospel to the Gentiles, which meant, each person who gave to Paul’s ministry was a part of everything Paul did.
- That’s why Paul was so appreciative of the church at Philippi – God had bonded them together in a fellowship of love, and he was thankful for their partnership in the ministry God had given to him.
- On the day every believer stands before the Lord at the Judgement Seat of Christ, those who supported the ministry of the Apostle Paul will receive the same reward as the apostle Paul.
- In 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 – the Apostle Paul said, ***“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”***

#### ***4. The Joy of Anticipation – VS. 6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”***

The Greek word translated in our Bibles as began or begun is only used twice in the New Testament: Philippians 1:6 and Galatians 3:3. In both cases, the reference is to God’s work of salvation, from the day of our conversion to the day of our glorification.

- God began the work in Philippi when He opened Lydia’s heart to receive what Paul was preaching and when He opened the heart of the jailer to believe what Paul and Silas had told him.
- Chapter 1:29, ***“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”***
- Chapter 2:13 – ***“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”***
- John 1:12 – ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name.”***