

PHILIPPIANS

The Epistle of

Joy



Old Testament Reading – 2 Chronicles 30:1-27

New Testament Reading – Hebrews 12:12-17

The Epistle of Joy

“Paul’s Pastoral Passion”

Philippians 1:27-30

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

The overarching theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is the Apostle’s ability to remain joyful, even in the midst of persecution.

- Perhaps Paul thought he was reaping the fruit of the seeds he had sown during the first 30 years of his life, for that which the Jewish religious leaders were doing to him because of his faith in Jesus as the God-sent Messiah, he had done to those Jews who were the first to make such a confession of faith.
- However, after Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, the man who was, at that time, the greatest persecutor of Christians was converted to become the man whose voice would proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to what was then the known world, and through his writings to the rest of the world.

- The Holy Spirit is still using Paul's letters to guide churches to remain true to sound doctrine and biblically-based governance and to equip Christians to live for Christ in a wicked world.

Philippians was the most personal letter Paul wrote to the churches.

- The church at Philippi was the first church Paul started in Europe.
- While the Jewish religious leaders were hateful to him, the people in the church became dear to him, and they supported him in his mission to spread the gospel.
- In verses 1-26, Paul assured the Philippians, while he was under house arrest, he could continue to preach and teach. Many of the Roman soldiers had received Jesus as their Savior and Lord, and they had shared the gospel with the other servants.
 - Paul was okay with being in prison.
 - Paul was okay with being criticized by other pastors.
 - Paul was okay with dying if that was what God ordained.
 - Paul was okay with living if he could be of help to their spiritual growth.
- Verse 27 – ***“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.”***
- Verse 29 – ***“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but to suffer for His sake.”***
- Matthew 16:24 – ***“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”***
- Romans 8:17 – ***“If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”***
- 1 Peter 2:21: ***“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”***

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, and He speaks to us in our conscience, but He shouts to us in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C.S. Lewis

The Christians in Philippi were experiencing the same kind of conflict Paul had endured when he was with them, the same kind of conflict he was suffering in Rome, and the same kind of conflict we now face in this anti-God, anti-Christ culture.

- The Greek word translated here is “agon,” which describes an athletic contest in which the opponents “agonized” to win.
- To agonize is the level of intensity with which God has called us to exert in our assignment to live for Christ, even if it means we will suffer some kind of persecution.

1. Stand Firm in the Struggle – Philippians 1:27 – *“That you stand fast in one spirit.”*

- The greatest challenge Christians have today is to stand firm in our faith while every facet of our culture is pulling us deeper into the quicksand of compromise, which leads to apostasy. Many have already fallen for the devil's lies.

- Therefore, we should be so firmly established in the true gospel that we will not fall victim to the compromised gospel that has been adapted to approve the culturally acceptable sins of our day.
- Being a Christian is not joining our friends on the playground to have a joyful fun-filled journey to heaven, but rather it is to, as Paul said in Ephesians 6:13, ***“Put on the full armor of God,”*** and join our fellow believers on the battleground.
- Before we can advance the gospel into the evil world, we must equip ourselves with the armor of God to stand firm in our faith against the attacks of the evil one.
- God has called us, saved us, given us His Word, and given us the power of the Holy Spirit to indwell us, but He has also called us to stand firm in our faith in this day of testing, even if we suffer for our convictions.

2. United in Spirit – Philippians 1:27 – *“That you stand fast in one spirit.”*

- The hallmark of a spiritually strong church has nothing to do with its size, but rather with its unity, with everyone working together for a common goal: to glorify the Lord Jesus.
- The church that is a threat to Satan is unified in the Holy Spirit.
- Ephesians 4:5-6 – ***“One body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all,”***
- The Admonition:
 - **To those within the Church:** Find some way to settle the differences for the sake of the glory of the Lord.
 - **To those outside the Church:** Be bold and courageous in our stand for the gospel; establish a solid front against the onslaught of the enemy.
- There can be no depth of unity without a full agreement and universal submission to the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament; the Church must be unified in the “one faith.”

3. Contending for the Gospel – Philippians 1:27 – *“With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*

- The Greek word which has been translated as “striving” is the root word for an athlete who is striving with all of his might to win the prize.
- We strive with all of our might against our fleshly lusts and desires that war against our soul so we can prove the power of the gospel to change a person’s life.
- We strive against the divisive issues that arise within our marriage, within our families, among our friends, and our church family, so as not to allow Satan to diminish the power of the gospel.
- We strive against Satan when we go into the world to advance the gospel with our lips and lives, contending with those who oppose the gospel because it convicts them of their sins and their need of a Savior.
- We strive against those who attack the gospel or attempt to diminish it out of their love and compassion for the sinner.

4. Face the Persecution – Philippians 1:28-29 – *“Not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from*

God, for to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

- When we decide to live godly lives in an ungodly world and establish our family on the basic Christian values, we will be persecuted.
- It will begin with mocking, followed by false accusations, ridicule and shunning.
- Hopefully, none of us will be beaten, flogged, stoned, or martyred for our faith, but we are all called to face the persecution that God allows into our lives,
- As Paul said, if God called us to be saved, then God called us to live differently from the rest of the world, and to suffer the persecution for that decision.
- Paul says, knowing that we ought to rejoice that God has called us to endure whatever level of persecution He allows us to suffer, and even as we endure it, we are to bring Him glory.