

17. The Book of Philippians 3:1; 4:4

Joy in the Lord-Part 2

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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of **'joy'** topically.

Last week we began looking at number six in our main points on joy—

VI. Joy in the Lord—3:1; 4:4

Philippians 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord...

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

As we said last time—**'Joy in the Lord'** is not the same as the *'joy of the Lord.'*

Joy in the Lord is a joy that is ours by virtue of us being in Christ or saved.

When we got saved, we were made one with Jesus, a member of His Body and as such we became partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) of which joy is one of the attributes of God.

Joy in the Lord works its way out in our lives as the *'joy of the Lord'*—a *practical* joy others notice, that draws them to Jesus.

But joy in the Lord, is a *personal* joy that continues everyday as we maintain our fellowship with Jesus—or as Him Himself put it in John 15:1-11 as we abide in Him.

John 15:4-5, 11 (NKJV)

⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...

¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

So, Jesus tells us here that our joy (*"joy in the Lord"*) will be full as we abide in Him every day.

The core principle of this entire passage (John 15:1-11) on bearing fruit in the Christian life and having fullness of joy is that of **'abiding in Christ.'** This is not only the heart of this passage—it is the secret to everything in the Christian life!

The Greek word translated **'abide'** is *'meno'* and it means to *'remain'*, or to *'continue'*. When it comes to **abiding in Christ** there are two sides to it—*union* and *communion*.

Union with Jesus is the connection that comes when we put our faith in Him, accepting Him into our heart as our Lord and Savior.

This is a *positional* connection to Jesus which we commonly refer to as salvation. After *union* then comes **communion**—or in other words daily fellowship with Jesus.

This is a *practical* connection to Jesus that is dependent on our daily walk with Him—whether we walk in obedience or disobedience—whether we walk in the Spirit or in the flesh. If we don't stay in *communion* with Jesus everyday (a deep personal relationship as opposed to a superficial one) we will never experience all that God desires for our lives as His children—

Victory over the flesh, the spiritual dynamic and power of the Holy Spirit, the abundant life which includes great joy and fruit bearing etc.

3. **The Practice of Abiding**

a. **The outward actions**

- 1) Prayer
- 2) The Word of God
- 3) Confession
- 4) Obedience

b. **The inward attitude**

We often make the mistake of thinking that outward actions like—reading our Bibles, going to church, praying and serving God will *result* in us abiding in Jesus—when the opposite is actually true.

Certainly, these things are necessary if we want to *keep* abiding in Christ as we have already said—but only if the motive of our heart is love.

Abiding is all about love—a deep love relationship with Jesus which leads to obeying and serving Him out of love!

John 15:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

When we are in love with Jesus—we will want to read, pray, go to church and tell others about Him. The activities, responsibilities and disciplines of the Christian life don't initially result in abiding they result from abiding—they are a *fruit* of our love relationship with Jesus.

Yes, as we continue going to church, staying in the Word and prayer, being in fellowship with other believers we will continue to abide in Jesus—but first things first!

First comes the inward attitude of loving Jesus—and then comes the outward actions of living for Jesus.

It's possible to be obedient to what God has said and even be serving Him in ministry—and yet still not be very close to Him (Revelation 2:1-5— 'motion without emotion').

When a parent tells their child to clean their room—if the child obeys, does their obedience automatically demonstrate their love for that parent? Not necessarily—their obedience could be motivated by a fear of consequences if they don't clean up their room, or by the promise of some reward (ice cream) if they obey.

In other words, their obedience could be totally rooted in *self-interest* and have nothing to do with loving their parent or parents at all.

The same is true with our obedience to and service for God—these things might not be motivated by a sincere love for Jesus but by a love of self—*"I don't want God mad at me"* or *"I want God to give me something so I'll obey..."*

It begs the question—what is the driving force (desire, passion) behind our relationship with Jesus?

The passion of Paul the apostle's life was *'That I might know Him.'* When he said that in Philippians 3—he had already known Jesus for 30 years as a believer. But Paul wanted to know Him more and more—he wanted a deeper and more intimate relationship with Jesus with each passing day.

The question you need to ask yourself is—*"What is the state of my love for Jesus?"*

Not the state of your theology *about* Jesus or the state of your service *to* Jesus—but what is the state of your love for Jesus!

The Christian life is a very simple thing—it's all about loving Jesus—making Him our first love and allowing everything in our lives to revolve around Him.

One pastor had this to say on the subject—

"It's about loving Jesus totally, loving Him sacrificially, loving Him obediently, loving Him worshipfully, loving Him with our service—it's all about loving Jesus—that's what it means to be a Christian."

Modern Christianity has all but lost that perspective.

Many Christians today put *themselves* at the center of their Christian life and make it all about them—*"How much God loves me. What God should do for me. What God should give to me"* etc.

Apparently, they believe that God's whole purpose for existing is to bless *their* life and do everything in His power to make *them* happy—but Jesus said—

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* 'This is the first commandment.

John 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

One author spoke of the life of Christian missionary David Brainard—

“Every now and then we meet someone or read about someone who has had that close personal relationship with Christ. David Brainard, the missionary to Indians [native Americans] in this country, was such a man. He suffered from what was then called consumption (we know it as tuberculosis). He would travel to the Indians by horseback, and sometimes he would have a convulsion, vomit blood, become unconscious, and fall off his horse. He would lie in the snow, and when that happened, his horse learned to stay right there. When he regained consciousness, he would crawl back onto his horse and be on his way to preach to the Indians. As he went, he would cry out, “Lord Jesus, I’ve failed You, but You know that I love You.” He had that close, intimate relationship with Christ.”

This ‘*abiding love*’ keeps us in fellowship with Jesus—it keeps everything we do for Him motivated by love and not *fear* or *obligation* or even *selfish ambition*.

We don’t need to ask Him to love us or abide (remain) with us—the unfaithfulness in abiding is always on our part never on His part.

4. The Principles of Abiding

- a. **To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must *believe* it’s possible through faith—**

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV)

⁶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith for salvation], so walk in Him [by faith for daily fellowship]...

Ephesians 3:17-19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Andrew Murray—

“We speak of a man’s home as his abode. Our abode, the home of our soul, is to be the love of Christ. We are to live our life there, to be at home there all the day: this is what Christ means our life to be, and really can make it. Our continuous abiding in the Vine is to be an abiding in His love. You have probably heard or read of what is called the higher, or the deeper life, of the richer or the fuller life, of the life abundant. And you possibly know that some have told of a wonderful change, by which their life of continual failure and stumbling had been changed into a very blessed experience of being kept and strengthened and made exceedingly glad. If you asked them how it was this great blessing came to them, many would tell you it was simply this, that they were led to believe that this abiding in Christ’s love was meant to be a reality, and that they were made willing to give up everything for it, and then enabled to trust Christ to make it true to them.”

But we still have some practical part in our abiding in Him—

John 15:4 (NKJV)

⁴ **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

One author—

“Many believers pray and long very earnestly for the filling of the Spirit and the indwelling of Christ and wonder that they do not make more progress. The reason is often this, the “I in you” cannot come because the “abide in me” is not maintained.”

b. To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must spend quality time with Him.

1) Set aside some time when you can be alone and things are quiet

All of the great Christians of the past scheduled time to be with God (for many it has been in the morning)—

Psalm 5:3 (NKJV)

³ My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You, And I will look up.

Psalm 88:13 (NKJV)

¹³ But to You I have cried out, O LORD, And in the morning my prayer comes before You.

Use this time to think and get alone with the Lord to talk with Him and to read and meditate on His Word.

Keep a note pad handy to write down insights and other things God might be saying to you to meditate on and pray about throughout your day.

2) When you read the Word don't race through it

One author said,

“When you read your Bible, receive and savor it like food [not ‘fast food’], like a treasure, like a love letter from God to you...Ponder what you have read, and apply it to your present circumstances. Let it go down into the core of your being. And as you read, expect Him to commune with you. Paul advised, ‘Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly’” (Colossians 3:16)

You will only get ‘out’ of your relationship with Jesus what you put in...

3) When you spend time with the Lord talk and listen to Him like a Person

So often we treat the Lord like an ‘object’ we talk ‘at’ instead of a Person we talk and listen ‘to’.

The goal is to build a relationship with a Person. Talk to Him the way you would talk to a friend—tell Him your fears and concerns, upcoming decisions, and thank and praise Him for His answers—

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

1 Peter 5:7

...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

4) Keep a daily written record of what God is doing in your life

This is not a diary but a record of your personal journey with God—a journal. Write down personal struggles, disappointments, victories, and anything else that is related to your walk with God.

Also write down your prayers and then later record how God answered them.

- a. To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must *believe* it's possible through faith.
- b. To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must spend quality time with Him.
- c. To maintain an abiding relationship with Jesus I need to learn to dwell in His presence all day.

One busy mom named Annie shared how she accomplishes this—

"I'm putting away groceries, and the kids are tearing through the house with the bags over their heads, screaming. I can be a little frazzled, but inside I'm saying, 'Jesus, You are here with me, in me, around me. Thank You for food and for my noisy kids'—I'm not always successful at this, but I try to take Jesus with me wherever go. We keep each other constant company."

Paul said, *"In Him we live and move and have our being."* (Acts 17:28)

1. The Definition of 'Abide'
2. The Nature of Abiding
3. The Practice of Abiding
4. The Principles of Abiding
5. Overcoming Barriers To Abiding

- a. Realize that abiding is not based on feelings.

Abiding is an act of *faith*—believing that God loves you and wants to spend time with you; and believing that as James promised us, *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."*

So often we believe that if I spend time with God and I don't *feel* His presence or have an emotional rush that God hasn't been there with me or that my relationship with Him is defective. The problem with that is—after a few days I get discouraged and quit—*"Abiding didn't work for me—I didn't feel anything!"*

One author said—

"We understand this in our marriages and other significant friendships. My love for my wife is constant—but my feelings for her are far different during an argument than they are during a candlelight dinner. We don't measure the depth of our relationship by our feeling at any particular moment."

Just understanding this one principle can revolutionize your time with the Lord.

- b. Understand that abiding is impossible without obeying (Him).

John 15:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

The main idea behind abiding is *remaining with* or *staying close* to Jesus. You can't stay close to Jesus if you're walking in sin—that's going in the opposite direction from where Jesus is wanting to lead your life—

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27)

6. The Benefits of Abiding

a. **Abiding helps us to sense the leading of the Lord.**

Through abiding I develop 'ears to hear' what the Spirit is saying to me—I learn to hear and recognize the *'still small voice of God.'*

b. **Abiding helps us tap into all of God's spiritual riches and power.**

Acts 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...

Acts 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

c. **Abiding gives us fresh strength for our day and our service.**

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

³¹ But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

John 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Corrie Ten Boom—

"Connected with Him in His love, I am more than conqueror; without Him, I am nothing. Like some railway tickets in America, I am "Not good if detached."

d. **Abiding carries with it the promise of answered prayer.**

John 15:7 (NKJV)

⁷ **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

e. **Abiding contains within it the promise of great joy:**

John 15:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

Psalms 16:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Andrew Murray—

“Abiding means going out from everything else, to occupy one place and stay there. Come away from all else, and set your heart on Jesus, and His love—that love will waken your faith and strengthen it. Occupy yourself with that love...wait for it. You may be sure it will reach out to you, and by its power take you up into itself as your abode and your home.”

Remember that the context of abiding in Jesus in John 15 is bearing fruit—and fruit takes time to grow so be patient!

James 5:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Yet this isn't easy for us who are not used to farming and growing things—those of us who are living in 21st century America.

It's hard because we live in a culture where we have become accustomed to getting what we want quickly. Everything from microwave food to entertainment (streaming movies), to super-fast internet speeds where with a click of our mouse we move from one webpage to the next instantly.

We have gotten used to everything being 'on-demand'—which the dictionary defines as *“at any time that someone wants or needs something.”* So, this mindset tends to carry over into our spiritual lives where we want an immediate return on our spiritual 'investment' of time (going to church, reading our Bibles, serving God in ministry...etc.).

However, that's not the way it works—not in physical farming and certainly not in our spiritual lives with regard to sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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