

13. The Book of Philippians 2:12-18

Joy in Service-Part 1

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(8-13-23)

Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

We've been working our way through Paul's epistle to the Philippians. But instead of going verse by verse thru Philippians (which is the standard style of teaching we do here at Calvary Chapel)—I believe the Lord wanted us to study it *topically* instead of expositionally.

Every book in the New Testament has a theme and so I thought it might be beneficial to build a series of messages around the main theme of the Book of Philippians—which is joy.

Now, what makes that theme so powerful is that—Paul wrote this letter while he was a prisoner in Rome.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this study—Paul was waiting to stand trial before Caesar to defend himself against the false accusations that were leveled against him by the Jewish leadership in Israel.

These accusations were extremely serious—that Paul was an insurrectionist and an inciter of riots around the empire.

In Roman law, these crimes were capitol offenses and if found guilty, would have resulted in Paul's execution—and yet the theme of this epistle is joy in the Lord!

So far, we've looked at:

I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6

II. Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18

III. Joy of Faith—1:25

IV. Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2

V. Joy in Service—2:12-18

Philippians 2:12–18 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. ¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me...

Three times in these verses Paul talks about his joy ('rejoice') in serving God Who allowed him to bring the gospel to those living in the city of Philippi.

When he said, **"Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice..."** he was referring to the riot that broke out in Philippi when Paul cast a demon of divination out of a young girl *"who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling."* (Acts 16)

Paul was probably making reference to the charges that had been brought against him by his enemies, as an inciter of riots around the Roman Empire which led to his arrest and landed him under house arrest in Rome waiting to stand trial before Ceasar to defend himself—charges that could have resulted in his execution.

And yet, he still rejoiced that he was able to serve God by bringing the gospel to the people of Philippi and to serve those who had become Christians causing him to say, **"so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."**

One pastor had this to say about Paul's attitude in facing death with joy so that others might have the gospel preached to them—

"Unfortunately, many believers experience joy in much the same way as the world does. When circumstances are favorable, they are happy; but when circumstances are unfavorable, they are sad and sometimes resentful. The only things that bring them joy are those that promote their own interests and welfare. But when believers seek to do the Father's will and please Him, they view sacrifice for Him with joy. The reason many believers know little about Paul's kind of joy is that they know little about his kind of sacrifice.

It is difficult for self-centered, worldly believers to understand how missionaries can live for years under primitive, demanding, and often dangerous conditions yet still maintain their joy. Through it all they rejoice, because, like Paul and the Philippians, they offer their lives as a continual sacrifice to God. They have learned that the greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy. They have the same attitude as Peter and the other apostles who, after being flogged and ordered "not to speak in the name of Jesus, ... went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:40–41)."

Listen: Message to missionaries sent by telegraph—'OTHERS'

There is great joy that comes from serving God—but only if you have the right mindset—the mind of Christ and not that of the world. Let me say this—the life of a Christian in many ways is exactly opposite to the life we lived as unbelievers. That life was often a selfish life where we were at the center of our universe and everything and everyone revolved around us.

Back in those days we dreamed of being served (the ultimate joy in life—having enough money to hire people to wait on us!)—but the thought of serving others wasn't something that brought joy to our hearts. But then we got saved and the Lord turned our world upside down (actually right side up!)—and we began to think like Jesus who said, *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28 NKJV)

Jesus taught us that there are no *volunteers* in the Body of Christ only *servants*—servants that God has entrusted the work of His Kingdom to.

As our society becomes more and more selfish and self-focused—the less we will understand or be willing to fulfill the role of a servant. I see this even among Christians. It's getting harder and harder to find people who are willing to serve in the church—most of the people that come into the church are looking to *be* served not to serve. Yet, there is no shortage of people who are looking for joy and happiness in their lives.

Here's what most of them don't understand—*happiness in life* comes, not as a direct pursuit, but as a by-product of serving God and others *with our lives*.

Remember what Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

John 13:13-17 (NKJV)

¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

The word for '**blessed**' in verse 17 is the Greek word *markarios* which literally means—"*Oh how happy.*"

It's the same Greek word that Jesus used when He gave the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount—where 9 times He said, "Blessed"—

Matthew 5:3-5 (NKJV)

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth...

So again, the word *markarios* literally means "*Oh how happy*"—but not happiness as the world defines it.

This Greek word describes a person who has happiness which is rooted in the *heart* and not in outward circumstances—we would call it '**joy**'. You see our English word for '*happy*' is based on the old Anglo-Saxon word *hap*—which means chance, as in "*whatever happens*" or "*happenstance.*"

Earthly happiness is circumstantial—therefore, it is uncertain, temporary, and insecure because it changes with my circumstances whether those circumstances are positive or negative.

Whereas the '**blessedness**' or *happiness* (joy) of the Christian life is not temporary or uncertain—it is solid and unshakable because it's rooted in our relationship with Jesus which is solid (permanent) and unshakable!

This is the desire of God for all of us—that our hearts be filled with joy.

And this was the goal of Jesus' teaching here in John 13—that true happiness in the lives of His people is not based on outward circumstances but rather is based on the inward attitudes of the heart when a person is born-again. (2Peter 1:4)

Please indulge me a little longer. As we look at the Beatitudes (the foundation of happiness)—they seem almost paradoxical because they're completely reversed from what *we* (and definitely the world) would have equated happiness with.

You see, as Jesus said, the really happy people are:

- ❖ The *poor* in spirit,
- ❖ The *mourners*,
- ❖ The *meek*,

- ❖ The *hungry* and the *thirsty*,
- ❖ The *merciful*,
- ❖ The *pure* in heart,
- ❖ The *peacemakers*,
- ❖ The *persecuted* and the *reviled*.

I think that most people, upon reading the words of Jesus spoken in the Beatitudes, would say to themselves—“*I don’t think I want that kind of happiness!*” That’s because to most people this whole thing sounds absolutely absurd—as one writer said, “*It’s as if Jesus crept into the large display window of life and change all the price tags.*”

The things we consider of little, or no value Jesus assigns great value and worth to—like *humility*, and *servanthood*.

The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, and that among these are the right to—“*Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*”

That means that each of us has the freedom to pursue our own personal definition of happiness. Because so many people define happiness as being rich, successful, beautiful, famous and popular—that’s what they pursue because in their minds those things will bring them happiness.

Jesus put it this way, “*A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*”

We would do well to listen to Jesus, after all—He made us and knows what will make us happy.

Through these Beatitudes He is basically saying that it’s pure foolishness to think you can fill up the void in your soul with the junk of this world—and yet how many people are feverishly trying to do that very thing—pursuing feverishly the elusive concept of happiness?

What they don’t realize in their pursuit of happiness is that—true happiness is not found in a *possession* or in a *pleasure*—it’s found in a Person—Jesus Christ!

And that is because true happiness comes when a person’s empty heart is filled—but understand, you can’t fill an empty heart with anything this fallen world has to offer.

As one author put it, “*Jesus has come into the world to announce to man that—the tree of happiness doesn’t grow in the cursed earth.*”

Only Jesus can fill up an empty heart and make a person truly *happy*—but only then as a ‘by-product’ (a ‘fruit’) of having a relationship with Him.

- But if this is true—then why are so many Christians depressed and unhappy in their Christian lives—they have Jesus in their hearts?

That’s a great question—and to answer it we need to go back to John 13.

The key to living a 'happy' (joyful) life is first to receive Jesus into your heart and be born-again—that's true, that's where it starts.

But then to experience the happiness Jesus spoke of in the Beatitudes on a daily basis we must—listen to, take to heart and obey His words in John 13 verse 17:

John 13:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed ['O how happy'] are you if you do them.

➤ "If I know and do what things!?" Well again, context is important.

As we come to the last night Jesus would spend with His disciples before His crucifixion, He wants to reinforce some of the more important principles He had already taught them—one of them being the importance of servanthood.

The Lord's comments on servanthood were not new—He had taught them that greatness in the Kingdom of God was based on them becoming lowly *servants* and not worldly *lords* (Matthew 20:25-28).

The problem was they had not taken that teaching to heart—why do I say that?

Because, what led Jesus to stop at the very beginning of the Passover Seder with His disciples in the upper room the night before His crucifixion and start washing their feet was that—they began to argue among themselves as to who was going to be greatest in the Kingdom, they believed Jesus was about to establish (Luke 22:24).

Earlier Jesus had *taught* them the principle of greatness in God's Kingdom thru His words (Matthew 20:25-28)—now He *demonstrates* for them the principle of greatness by His example (John 13:4-17).

Once again, as I said to open this message—in the course of giving them this final discourse, the Lord Jesus (the One Who created us and knows us better than anyone) gives them the secret to living a happy, fulfilled life on earth.

John 13:12-17 (NKJV)

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

So once more—Jesus is teaching us that the secret to living a happy and fulfilled life is becoming a servant to others—and that the by-product of serving others is that you experience happiness (joy) in your own life.

However, the words of Jesus also imply that—a life lived in the opposite way (a life of selfishness and pursuing happiness as a direct pursuit thru pleasure and materialism)—will produce a life of emptiness and despair.

Somehow our modern American Christianity has moved from being 'Christ-centered' and 'others-centered' to being self-centered—which I and many others believe is the big reason so many Christians seem empty and unhappy inside.

Again, the problem in our society is that so many are pursuing happiness as a direct pursuit not realizing—it is a by-product of knowing Jesus and being a servant to all. This is especially true with this Millennial generation.

There has never been a generation in American history that has been less ‘churched’ and more self-focused and unhappy as are Millennials (1981 to 1995)—although, Generation Z (1995 to 2015) is in hot pursuit! The tragedy is, it has led to the exact opposite of everything in life that makes life worth living—joy, peace, purpose, fulfillment...etc.

Listen to a letter that was published not long ago from one such millennial—the title of which is, “*Millennials, the Dying Children*”:

“I am one of the oldest millennials. Something terrifying is happening to us... The oldest of us are rapidly closing in on 40. We are the least married, least fertile generation in history. Really, only 30% of people under 40 are married!...

We started coming of age in 2003, and economic conditions were nowhere close to as bad as the 1930s, 40s, or 70s, when people had little trouble marrying and procreating. Yet here we are, aging out of our ability to enjoy childhood, and feeling death creep up on us. The video games have grown boring. The TV marathons are suffocating. The candy tastes like ashes in our mouths. We're committing suicide and consuming antidepressants at record rates. We try to accumulate even more, and it fails to make us happy. We don't know why, and we don't know how we got here. Well, I'll tell you.

My entire life, the only message I got from school, church, college, and the media was that every decision I made, from what degree to pursue, to where I lived, to whether to marry, was with the goal of having a maximally pleasurable life. True, as someone raised in a conservative church, I was warned against fornication and substance abuse—but these were framed in terms of interfering with the good life.

In the 1990s, there was no difference between Christians and non-Christians in that general outlook. Both Christian and non-Christians were equally horrified at the notion that a bright young woman might not end up "maximizing her potential," which meant putting 40 hours a week into a cubicle. Both warned her against getting married too young, because marriage could cut short a promising career. Evangelicals, for their part, indulged in a pious fiction that the unmarried 25-year-olds in the church were all virgins, but still, everyone agreed that the proper way to treat the world is as your playground...

It's sad to watch my generation collapse into nihilism and fear as our bodies begin the process of dying. The men become ‘bug-men’ (the Urban Dictionary defines ‘bug man’ as—‘the rootless, lifeless, metropolitan drones who have a permanent thousand-yard stare due to an existence void of any meaning other than waiting for the next iPhone.’) living to consume, filling shelf after shelf with toys their adult brains can't find amusement in, because they know of nothing else to do. The women are in a panic, desperately trying to hold onto their evaporating youth, trying to prove to themselves that a woman can be just as sexy and alluring at 35 as she could at 23...

Now my generation is absolutely miserable, because we're reaching that age where your brain shifts modes from "consume and copulate" to "prepare your offspring for adulthood," and we don't understand that's what is actually happening. Women of my generation have been told their entire lives that loneliness is a psychological disorder, that children are parasites, and that exhausting yourself for 40 hours a week at work is the meaning of life. It turns out that continuing to live as though you were a teenager does not in fact bequeath eternal youth...

For my generation, there is not really a path back out. All the social institutions of this country have been detonated in the quest for money and self, or via the hysterical condemnation of every kind of organic social

relation as "sexist" or "racist."

In the cities, nobody knows anybody. Professional associations and social clubs are borderline nonexistent. Nobody knows or cares about anyone, and nobody knows how to start. It's so sick and twisted that my generation uses the word "community" to refer to people who buy the same consumer products—like going to see a movie means you're part of the "Star Wars community." Even churches have been consolidated into massive theme parks where anonymous masses of people go to be entertained...

Millennials need to accept that the values inculcated in us were a load of horse crap. I don't see that happening, as we're mostly upset that we can't live the idyllic lives of self-indulgence the Boomers promised us (parents of Millennials). Even suggesting that divorce should be harder, marriage should be younger, and women were built to be mothers, not office drones, causes the average Millennial to dissolve into hysterical outrage. We're the generation that thinks having a country is racist and the most important thing about space exploration is making sure hijab-clad Muslimas are a part of it. So, we're probably not going to snap out of it. We'll be buried in Batman coffins, surrounded by our Xbox games..."

This is a generation crying out for help—what they need is Jesus!

The only ones preaching Jesus are Christians—but the only way we as Christians are going to be able to help them is if they see in us something that will draw them to Jesus.

In other words, we've got to get our heads on straight and stop following the mindset of the world in our quest for happiness and start living with the mind of Christ—the mind of a servant!

In some ways, this letter reminds me of the words of Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes where he finally realized that a life lived for this life only, will only lead to frustration and futility—and the constant realization that everything in that kind of life is *"emptiness and vanity"*.

Well, that's true if it's a life lived *'under the sun'* (a worldly life apart from God)—instead of a life lived *'in the Son'* (a life committed to and living for Jesus)!

You see, if a person will accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior—God will place them 'in Christ' and seat them with Jesus in the heavenlies where they will have an eternal perspective of life.

Only that perspective of life will allow them to live for God and not for self—and lead to an 'others' centered life.

(Start with your marriage!)

This is the secret to a 'happy' life!

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.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).