

6. The Book of Philippians 1:24-25

Joy of Faith-Part 2

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

By that I mean—we have isolated every place in the epistle where the words 'joy' and 'rejoice' appear studying each passage to determine what the context was in which Paul was using the concept of joy—and then placing each reference under a specific heading.

These headings will become the main points I want to build this series around—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—1:24-25

Philippians 1:19–26 (NKJV)

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. ²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

So here in verse 25 Paul mentions **joy** again—but this time he connects it to faith. By talking about the '**joy of faith**' Paul is talking about the joy that comes from *having* faith—or even the joy that comes from *exercising* faith.

The word '**faith**' appears 389 times in the New King James Version of the Bible—'**believe**' appears 250 times (that's not to mention the words, "**believing**", "**believed**" etc.).

Faith is a very important subject in the Bible—in fact it's so important that it is talked about in every book in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

- The Bible says without faith it is *impossible to please God*.
- It tells us that *salvation* comes by *grace through faith*.
- It says once we are saved, '*the just shall live by faith*.'

So, needless to say—the subject of *faith* is a rather large and important one.

In fact, it is not an overstatement to say that your Christian life will rise or fall on whether your concept of biblical faith is right or wrong.

And I say that because everything God has for us in the way of grace (power to walk with Him; serve Him; the power to grow and be fruitful believers in Christ)—comes to us as a gift that has to be received by faith if it's going to benefit us.

Even as Jesus said— *“According to your faith let it be done to you.”*

With that in mind, it's critical that we understand what biblical faith is if we're going to understand the joy that is associated with it.

Last week we talked about what biblical faith is not—this morning we'll talk about what biblical faith is.

There are 4 types of faith that the Bible talks about:

A. **The Shield of Faith**

B. **The Gift of Faith**

C. **Saving Faith**

D. **Practical Faith**

To our first point:

A. **The Shield of Faith**

Ephesians 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶above all [*or 'in addition to'*], taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The **'shield of faith'** is one of 6 pieces of armor that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6, that a Christian should put on every day before going out into the world to do battle against the devil and his demonic armies. The word **'shield'** here in the Greek is *thureon* which wasn't the small round shield that most of us are familiar with.

That smaller shield measured about two feet in diameter and had two leather straps on the back through which the Roman soldier put his forearm and was used to defend himself in close combat with an enemy.

In contrast, a *thureon* was a large shield that usually measured about 4 1/2 ft. long (vertically speaking) by 2 ft. wide and roughly 2 inches thick.

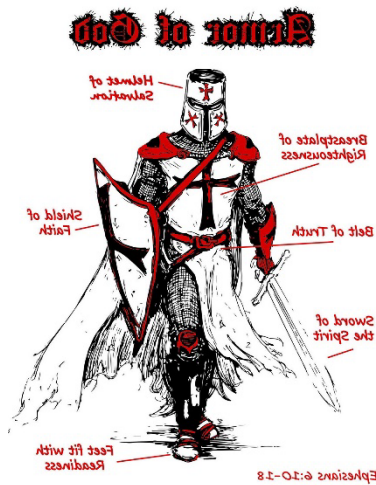
It was made of hardwood and covered with tough leather that had been heavily oiled to help deflect incoming arrows. The soldiers who carried these shields were on the front lines of battle.

One other piece of information about this Roman shield that might be helpful to understand—the edges of these shields were made in such a way so that an entire line of soldiers could interlock their shields together and thus march at the enemy—like one solid wall!

This suggests of course that faith united is faith strong and victorious! (Hebrews 10:25)

This shield would completely protect the soldier against spears, arrows—and what Paul refers to as **‘fiery darts.’** These were arrows or spears dipped in pitch or some other flammable material, set on fire, and then launched at enemy armies.

Without this large shield, that protected the soldier’s entire body, he would be vulnerable to these flaming missiles—yet when held in front of him the arrows would safely lodge in his shield and be extinguished.



No front-line soldier ever went out to battle without his *thureon* shield.

Paul calls our shield, the *thureon* or **‘shield of faith’**.

The shield of faith is totally sufficient in its ability to protect us against the devil’s attacks—how do we know that?

We know it because Paul tells us that by taking up our shield of faith—we will be able to quench **all** the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The devil can’t fire one shot at you, as a Christian, that the shield of faith can’t protect you from.

Now you might be thinking—what do these **‘fiery-darts’** of Satan represent?

Well, some think they refer to various *temptations* that promote the *“works of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:19-21)—adultery, fornication, moral uncleanness, hatred, drunkenness, jealousies, violent outbursts, and even murder.

This they say is what the fiery darts are—temptations designed to inflame our flesh towards sin.

Others think they refer to Satan attacking us *emotionally* in the area of depression, anxiety, worry, fear, anger and so on.

Author and Pastor Ray Stedman—

“What are these flaming arrows that Paul speaks of? The devil’s arrows come in many forms, including blue moods of depression, dark nights of fear, gray days of doubt, and more. Sometimes those arrows come in the form of evil thoughts — and they occasionally come at the most unwelcome, incongruous times. We may be reading the Bible or on our knees in prayer or thinking about something else entirely when suddenly a filthy, lewd, or blasphemous thought comes to mind. Where did that come from we wonder? But we don’t need to wonder at all. It is a fiery arrow of the devil — and we should recognize it as such.

Sometimes the idea comes to our imagination that Christianity is nothing but a hoax. Maybe the miracles of the Bible can be explained as psychological manifestations. Maybe Jesus was just a victim of grandiose delusions. All Christians have had such feelings from time to time, mingled with a sense of queasy anxiety. Where do such thoughts and feelings come from? Again, these are nothing more than the fiery arrows of the evil one.”

Look, since Paul doesn’t get specific—we can’t be dogmatic about what these fiery darts are all about.

However, since he calls this shield “**faith**”—and tells us that if we take it up daily it will protect us from these satanic missiles by neutralizing their effectiveness in our lives. Since the antithesis of faith is *doubt*—I’m wondering if that is what Paul has in mind here.

That, primarily Paul is likening demonic doubts to ‘fiery-darts’—doubts about God’s love for us, doubts about His promises to us, doubts about His goodness—doubts about His Word in general.

We’re talking about *spiritual warfare* (Ephesians 6:10-17) and the quickest way for the devil to neutralize your effectiveness for God is to get you to doubt God—to try and turn Him into an adversary instead of an ally—isn’t that exactly what the enemy did with Adam and Eve.

Now, if this is true and these missiles from hell (fiery-darts) are demonic doubts directed at us to try and get us to question the goodness, love and faithfulness of God in our lives—then the only thing that *will* counteract them is *faith*.

Ray Stedman—

“Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when doubts come? It means saying to yourself—‘Christ is the truth. He is reality. I have been convinced of His reality many times over. I have committed myself to Christ because I have been persuaded that He is the way, the truth, and the life. So, I reject this thought that Christianity is a hoax. I will continue to act in faith despite my feelings of doubt.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when feelings of unworthiness come? It means saying to yourself, ‘Yes, I’ve failed God — but His promise to me is that He always accepts me. All of the great men and women of the Bible have failed God from time to time, yet God still used them, and I know He will use me. Christ is my righteousness — I am one with Him and His righteousness covers me. Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when depression and anxiety come? It means saying to yourself, ‘Feelings are not facts. Feelings come and go, but the truth of God is forever. I refuse to believe the lie of Satan. With the Lord Jesus Christ as my shield, I am going to cling to my faith despite my feelings.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when evil thoughts arise? It means saying to yourself, ‘These evil thoughts are not my thoughts. They came into my mind as fiery arrows from the devil. I do not want these thoughts. I reject them. Lord Jesus, fill my mind with Your thoughts. Drive everything out of my mind but what You want me to think!’

This is what the Bible calls resisting the devil (see [James 4:7](#)). This is the shield of faith. Refuse to believe the lie of the devil. Take refuge in the truth of God. When you resist the devil, says James, he will flee from you. Resist those thoughts whenever they come your way, refuse to yield your position, and sooner or later, those thoughts will clear up. Your feelings will change. The attacks will cease.”

When Paul says to “*take up the shield of faith*”—he isn’t saying that *faith* in and of itself will protect you from the devil or any other problem.

- In Genesis 15:1 God said to Abraham, “*Fear not Abraham; I am your shield...*”
- In Psalm 18:30 the Psalmist said, “*The Lord is a shield to all who put their trust in Him.*”

When Paul speaks of ‘*taking up the shield of faith*’—it means my faith is nothing except for what it puts in front of me—and that is God Himself.

HE is the One Who is my shield—not really my faith:

Proverbs 30:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Faith alone will do nothing for you—faith in Jesus will do everything! (Hebrews 12:2)

Again, faith is not a power we can use to play God, **it is simple childlike trust in God**—in His power, promises and Person (His character).

Let me end with this and we'll pick up our study in faith next time—(**LISTEN:** Cherise's death)

The Lord led me to use her death to do a message on how our faith can remain strong when we're confronted by adversity, tragedy or any other 'fiery dart' that the devil fires at us to get us to doubt the love and character of God.

I began it by presenting various real-life stories I had heard about in the news:

- *A bus taking a church group to a ski resort overturns, injuring many and leaving one young woman permanently paralyzed.*
- *A child crossing the street is struck and killed by a drunk driver.*
- *A Christian girl is abducted by two men, though she shares Jesus with them and pleads for mercy; she is brutally raped, and murdered.*
- *A missionary is killed by the tribe he came to serve after only two weeks of ministry.*
- *A young father working a second job as a convenience store clerk is killed by a teenager on drugs who holds up the store.*

These are just a few of the stories we hear about almost every day on TV or read about on whatever news service you use.

Tragedies that touch every one of us in one form or another, leaving people broken, and grieving with one question burning in their hearts—

- *“Why did this happen?”*
- *“If God is a good and loving God—how could He allow these kinds of terrible things happen to good and decent people made in His image—or in many cases those who are His children?”*

I mean, if we could see a direct relationship between our sufferings and our sins—a connection between our tragedies and our transgressions—then maybe we could begin to understand the whys of our adversities. But when tragedy strikes and there seems to be no reason for it, no correlation with sin, we are often left with the feeling that we have been mistreated by God and that He is unjust in His dealings with us.

This leads to feelings of fear, anger and even bitterness toward this God we thought we knew as a God of love and compassion.

As Christians we believe in a loving all-powerful God Who is in control of this universe—
a God Who claims that He is good and has our best interests at heart.

But if that is true—then why do so many bad things happen to those who love Him and belong to Him?

(J.B. Phillips—*“If God were small enough to understand—He wouldn’t be big enough to worship.”*)

Adversities can make us bitter or better depending on how we approach and handle them—and they can certainly damage or destroy our faith if we let them.

So how can we use the *‘shield of faith’* to protect us against the devil’s attacks on the character and love of God and on our faith in God so that our relationship with Him isn’t damaged or destroyed?

In this regard, your faith in God that you shield yourself with—has to be made up of **3 critically important beliefs** (the shield of faith):

1. That God Is Sovereign

First of all, I have to believe that not only is God *aware* of everything that touches my life—He is in absolute *control* of everything that touches my life.

This means that He is all-powerful (omnipotent) when it comes to the circumstances of my life and that nothing can happen to me except what God allows for His purposes (assuming you are walking with the Lord and not living in open sin and rebellion against Him).

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

It doesn’t say *“we see all things working together for our good...”*, it says *“we know it by faith”* because of what God has told us in His Word.

Now, the fact that God is sovereign (He can do whatever He wants because He is all-powerful) wouldn’t comfort me in times of difficulty or adversity if I didn’t believe the second truth—

2. That God Loves Me

You see, if God was all-powerful but a cruel despot—that wouldn’t comfort me, it would terrify me! The fact that God is all-powerful *and* at the same time is all-loving is a tremendous comfort to me.

God loves us with all of His heart, which He proved on Calvary— *“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”* (Romans 5:8)

The Bible clearly teaches that God’s sovereignty and His love always work together for my ultimate good—

Romans 8:28 (NLT2)

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

I have to believe this by *faith* because my circumstances don’t always show me that this is true— (*“Walk by faith and not by sight.”*)

The devil is always trying to get me to judge the love and goodness of God by my circumstances.

But listen, these 2 truths—that God is sovereign (all-powerful) and that God loves me with all of His heart unconditionally—still wouldn't be enough to comfort me in times of great adversity if I didn't believe one more thing about God—

3. That God Is Infinitely Wise

God is so much wiser than I am—a truth I accept in principle but not always in practice. There are many things that God allows to happen in my life or in the lives of others that, honestly—I really don't understand.

I look at the situation and say to myself, *"If I was God, I wouldn't have let that happen", or "If I was God, I wouldn't have done things that way..."* The problem is I'm not God!—I can't see the big picture like God—I only have limited information of the situation.

But that never seems to stop me from making judgments based on my limited understanding—judgments which often cause me to question the wisdom (and ultimately the love and goodness) of God.

Peter said the problem with us is that—*"We only see what is near and not what is a far off."* In other words, we can't see the future, so we don't know what is coming down the road—but God does. I need to realize that God is often working in my life *today*, preparing me today for what He knows is coming tomorrow, next week, next month—or even 5 years down the road!

So, I have to trust in the **sovereignty**, the **love** and
the **wisdom** of God because—like a 3-legged stool,
these 3 truths will *hold me up* when my circumstances try to *knock me down*.

They will keep me going by strengthening me in my adversity—they will strengthen my faith in knowing that everything is working together for good in my life (eternal good not temporal comfort) by the One Who loves me and gave Himself for me!

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

This morning we find ourselves living in difficult times—our country is divided and many of our cities have descended into chaos and lawlessness. Inflation has gotten so high that many people aren't sure how they're going to buy groceries, pay the rent or purchase other essential goods and services.

Experts are warning that our economy is on the verge of collapse—and that a third world war is becoming a very real possibility. Because of it, many in our country feel so hopeless and helpless that they have turned to alcohol and especially drugs like opioids to find some peace and escape.

However, these substances don't bring peace—they often bring death in that they are killing people in record numbers.

We are living at a time when, because of the uncertainty of the future, many people are experiencing a considerable amount of fear, anxiety and stress—and even Christians are not immune—so what are we to do?

We must take up the shield of faith every day!

We must keep our eyes on our God, cling to His promises and trust in His ability to take care of us and bring us thru whatever storm of life we are facing—along with all the stress and anxiety that comes with it.

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

³ You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!

You see folks—[that’s the key!](#)

The key to experiencing this peace is that you have to keep your thoughts (your mind) fixed on God (which means your faith in Him and His promises), because you trust Him and have absolute confidence in His strength, love and wisdom towards you.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

⁶ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then 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.

This may not minister to you, especially if you tend to be on the controlling side but—there is a lot of joy when you learn to let go and just trust God.

As Paul put it—faith is an incredible shield that will keep us protected from the devil’s fiery missiles of doubt and despair. In the process, bring joy into our hearts—the **“joy of faith!”**—the joy of trusting in God each and every day of our lives!

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](#).