

- Think over this last week, and call to mind 4 things that happened which brought joy to you ... Now, call to mind 4 things that happened which brought frustration or anger to you ... Which was easier for you to recall – the joys or the frustrations? ... It is far easier for us to recall bad situations and memories than it is to recall those that are good ... Our mind processes the good and bad differently, due in part to emotions attached and how situations impact us ... So that, what we should remember, we forget, and what we should forget, we remember – right?! ... This means, then, that it takes intentional work, on our part, to regularly bring to mind what Paul instructs in **vs8**
  - Remember as we said last week, **2:12-13** ... God is the One who is giving us the will-power and ability to follow His leading and instruction ... So, we are to work out our own salvation, meaning see our salvation through till the end, with **fear and trembling** ... Realizing that living in you is the Holy Spirit – He is all-powerful, He is all-knowing, He is ever-present, and He is graciously-holy
  - So then, being assured and holding fast to this, **1:6** ... Therefore, **1:20-21** ... This is Paul's overall refrain throughout the letter ... He is writing from Rome, while under house arrest and most likely chained to a guard, or, at the very least, under the watch of Roman guards ... This occasion surely sparked another memory in Paul's mind, of him and Silas, his missionary partner, shackled in chains within a Philippian jail – **Acts16:22-25, 32-34** ... Paul lived out what he wrote – he preached and testified from his experience ... It didn't contradict God's word, it affirmed God's word ... He would later testify **2Cor4:17-18**
  - What does this have to do with possessing joy and peace – everything! ... Joy and Peace are not realities that we muster up for ourselves ... Nor are they realities that are dependent upon circumstances ... True Joy and Peace are rooted in the One who stands over all circumstances, who is beyond us and yet within us ... His very presence is the foundation of the joy and peace which we crave and need – **Ps16:11; 27:1,4; 42/43** (refrain, “**Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God.**”)
- The command of Paul is a command that runs throughout the scriptures – **rejoice in the Lord**, or **be joyous in the Lord** ... When? **Always** ... Why? Because the Lord never changes; the Lord never fails; the Lord never ceases to work on our behalf, nor for the good of His purpose ... The Lord is always for us, not against us, if in fact we are in Christ and Christ is in us ... Joy and Peace are always available for us (to rest in and to live from); however, their availability coincides with our willingness – will we choose the joy of the Lord or the joy of our own liking
  - “It's OK to be disappointed. It's not OK to live in disappointment.” ... As Christians, we should live and grieve in Hope – a reality that is absolutely certain but not yet fully experienced ... **Heb11** are not people who are unlike us; Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Joseph, David, the prophets, all of the apostles ... Their way of making it through is our way of making it through: **keeping our eyes focused on Jesus, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and shame and suffering, and who now sits upon the Throne**
  - Biblical Joy and Peace can, and do, exist within suffering and hardship and pain and stress and chaos ... Many times, these serve as fertile ground for joy and peace to grow in us and through us ... So often, God does not remove us from such things, because it is in these very moments that He wants to meet with us ... And in doing so, His purpose is threefold: 1) to heal us, 2) to grow us, 3) to work through us
  - How often have you asked God to remove you from a moment of pain or hardship, but then plant yourself in a moment of past pain or hardship that He has asked you to let go of and move on from ... I don't know anyone who enjoys hardship and suffering; however, on this side of eternity, hardship and suffering are realities of everyday life, especially as a follower of Jesus, and He was pretty clear about this (**Jo16:33**) ... Therefore, if we cannot escape these experiences, we must learn how to rightly live through them – the joy and peace of Christ, which the Spirit produces within us, are gifts from God to help us endure through

- **Redman**, “We can always find a reason to praise. Situations change for the better and for worse, but God’s worth never changes.” ... He goes on to speak about **Fanny Crosby**, who at six weeks old got sick and underwent a procedure that left her permanently blind ... She would go on to write some 8,000 hymns – Blessed Assurance; To God be the Glory; Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior; All the Way My Savior Leads Me; There is Joy in My Soul ... When asked about her blindness, and if she wished things were different, her response was: “Well, the good thing about being blind is that the very first face I’ll see will be the face of Jesus.”
  - The joy and peace of the Lord exists in the midst of suffering and hardship; and yet stands above it, in that our circumstances do not change His joy and peace, rather they change our response to our circumstance ... **4:6-8** ... “Dwell on these things” – weigh out the reality of things; take into account everything, not just the situation at hand
  - Jesus says in **Jo15:9-11** ... Lasting joy, joy that fosters peace, is found only in Jesus ... It is received from Him, as we rest in Him – He in us and us in Him ... We may not always feel joyful or at peace, but it doesn’t mean that joy and peace are not present ... God says, here’s My joy, here’s My peace, and then He gives us the means to walk in it, but we have to choose to walk in what He provides
  - We do so, keeping our eyes focused on Jesus – who has conquered the world, who has conquered sin and death, who gives us His life and unities us to His presence ... What in this world can compare to this? What in our life can change these truths and realities? Let the Lord’s joy and peace, then, be found in us always
- The Fruit of the Spirit is not merely for us, but for the benefit of God and others – to glorify Him and to serve others ... How are we to love others – joyfully, peacefully, patiently, etc. ... How are we to use the gifts which the Spirit has given us – to serve others joyfully and peacefully, with gentleness, faithfulness, self-control ... We are to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves” (**2:3**), following the example of Jesus ... Why? Because our lives are not our own, but they belong to Him ... Why? Because it is His life that is being lived in us and through us now, by the Holy Spirit
- Remember, discipleship is about relationships – UP, IN, OUT ...