

Philippians Chapter 1:

Part 1

Introduction:

Welcome to this Bible Study on the little epistle of Philippians. I do trust you will enjoy our time together and be challenged and provoked in your walk with the Lord. He is agricultural; He is looking for fruit in your life, the fruit of His Spirit, as He lives in and works through, you.

Format for the study:

Sometimes I will give you the scriptures and quote them, when I use a quote I will tell you which version I am using.

At other times instead of quoting them for you I will leave you to look them up for yourselves, that way you will get more out of the study as you participate. These references will be in the **centre** of the page.

You might like to have a notebook and pen by you, because you may wish to make some notes as we travel along and I will ask you questions from time to time, so let's begin -

Mark Twain was a 'professional' humorist, whose lectures and writings made people around the world laugh for a short time and forget their troubles. However, Twain - this is not his real name, it was a pseudonym - was, in private life, a man whose life was marked by numerous sorrows who died in 1910 broken and lonely. To my knowledge he never found Jesus as his Saviour.

Isaiah 53:3

Tells us that Jesus was a man '*acquainted*' with sorrow and grief, yet He possessed deep joy which was beyond anything that the world could throw at Him.

Some versions say He was *acquainted* with suffering – in other words, He knew about it, but it didn't govern His life –

Hebrews 4:15

States that He was in all points tempted as we are yet He was able to retain and live a life of fullness of joy, fully man, fully God. He knows what it is like to live in a human body with all its limitations. Wonderful Saviour - He identified with our weaknesses.

Jesus Himself said:

John 15:11 (AMP) '*I have told you these things, that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing*'.

Those of us who have trusted in Jesus have the privilege of experiencing the fullness of joy which is found in -

Psalm 16:11 (AMP) *'You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.'*

Many of us fail to take advantage of the privilege of living in the fullness of joy that Jesus gives us because we just don't know how. Very often we live under a cloud of disappointment, instead of walking in the bright sunshine of joy. What robs us? The answer is found in the four chapters of this letter, written centuries ago by Paul when he was a prisoner in Rome in about 62AD.

Paul wrote this letter to his fellow Christians at the church in Philippi which he founded. It is full of thanksgiving to them, but more than that, he shares his secret of maintaining his joy in adverse circumstances.

If you look carefully you will see that at least sixteen times in these four chapters, Paul talks about joy, rejoicing and/or gladness.

Take a pause now and read through the first chapter of the book, noting as you go how many times these words are used – you can read the whole book if you want to, I'll just wait here until you get back.

The thing about this letter is that there actually appears to be no reason for Paul to be rejoicing. He was a prisoner of the Romans, his case was coming up shortly, he had no idea of the outcome; it could mean death or freedom.

Acts 28:16 – 31

Paul had longed for this opportunity, his desire had been to go to Rome and preach there, but I doubt this was the way he thought it would happen. He had come under guard and was now awaiting trial before Caesar. We find him under what we would call house arrest - chained to a Roman soldier and not permitted to preach in public but in spite of his chains, he calls the leaders of the Jews in Rome to him and explains his reason for being there, without avail he preaches the gospel to them, but they harden their hearts against his message. Verses 30 and 31 tell us that he continually preached there boldly and without hindrance, even though confined as people came to him.

He further discovers that the believers in Rome are divided – some for him, some against. In fact, some Christians wanted to make things even more difficult for him. But in spite of the danger, discomfort, and rivalry amongst Christians, Paul *overflowed* with joy seemingly unaware of the seriousness of his situation.

Philippians 1:15 - 17

What was his secret? It is found in another word that is often repeated in this letter and it is the word *'mind'*.

The secret of Paul's joy in spite of the circumstances in which he finds himself is in the way he thinks.

It is in his mind.

As an exercise now, take a look at the number of times Paul uses the word 'mind' and the word 'think' and the word 'remember'. The version you read may not show as many as these, but in some versions you will find that he uses the word 'mind' 10 times, the word 'think' five times and the word 'remember' once!

If you add these together you have 16 references to the mind. In other words, Paul is saying, the secret of Christian joy is found in the way a believer thinks. Their attitude and outlook determine the outcome.

Or you could say - your attitude determines your altitude!

Philippians is a book that explains the *mind* the believer must adopt if he is going to experience Christian joy in a world full of distress and trouble.

Philippians is a Christian psychology book based solidly on Bible doctrine. It is not a self help book on the power of positive thinking! It is a book that explains the mind the believer must have if he is going to experience Christian joy in a world filled with trouble and pain.

Like anything else, before we can look at the solution, we need to discover the problem. What exactly is it that robs us of our joy? It is a commodity that is very scarce amongst Christians, yet Jesus said *'I am come that your joy may be full'* John 15:11.

There are four main reasons we either lose our joy or maybe never had it in the first place:

1. **Circumstances** – most of us confess that when things are going our way we feel a lot happier and we are much easier to live with! But have you ever considered how few of the circumstances or situations of life are actually under our control. We have no control over the weather, the traffic or over the things that other people say or do. The only control we have is over how we respond to these things. If our happiness depends on what happens, we are going to be of all people most miserable.
2. **People** – all of us have lost our joy because of people. What they are, what they say, what they do and no doubt we have been the cause of others losing their joy! As we cannot live in isolation, we have to learn how to be joyful in spite of what we perceive others do to us or say to us - or about us - or we are going to be miserable. So is there a way to be joyful in spite of people?
3. **Things** – the third thing that will come to trip us up is possessions. You may have heard the story of the wealthy man who was moving into his mansion and his Quaker neighbour, who believed in the simplicities of life, was watching these activities carefully. He counted all the things being carried into the house, finally he said to the lord of the mansion 'Neighbour if thou dost need anything come to see me and I will tell thee how to get along without it.'

And Abraham Lincoln was walking down the street with his two sons who were crying and fighting 'What's the matter with the boys?' a friend asked 'The same thing that is wrong with the whole world' Lincoln replied 'I have three walnuts and each of the boys wants two'.

Things – what thieves they can be. Jesus had a wonderful statement about them:

Luke 12:15

Many people think that joy comes from their possessions, in reality these are the very things that rob them of the only kind of joy that really lasts.

Just stop there for a moment and ask the Lord about these three reasons that stunt and stifle our joy and which, if any, apply to you. Write down your answer and listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

Remember, if the Holy Spirit convicts you of something, He will also show you His *provision* for the change He requires at the same time. Graham Cooke calls it the 'language of promise'. There is never a problem without provision. Isn't He wonderful?

Then finally we come to -

4. **Worry or anxiety** – this is the worst robber of all. Many people are robbed of peace and fulfilment because of anxious thoughts and worry. Worry has physical consequences, medicine can remove the symptoms, but it cannot remove the cause. Worry is an inside job. You can purchase sleep at a chemist's shop, but you cannot purchase rest.

If Paul had wanted to worry, he had plenty of opportunities. He was a political prisoner, facing possible execution, his friends in Rome were divided in their attitude towards him, he had no missionary organisation supporting him, no lawyer to defend him, but despite all of these difficulties Paul does not worry, but instead, writes a letter filled with joy and tells us how to stop worrying! It's like he is terminally ill but he is writing with concern about the state of our health!

So, these are the four things that rob us of our joy. Circumstances, people, things, and worry. As we move on in the study, we may find we need to change our outlook and cultivate a different mindset. You know what a mindset is – it is a mind set - in concrete!

In all four chapters of Philippians Paul describes four attitudes of mind that will produce joy in spite of situations, people, things and worry.

1.The single mind:

James 1:8 (AMP) '*[For being as he is] a man of two minds (hesitating, dubious, irresolute), [he is] unstable and unreliable and uncertain about everything [he thinks, feels, decides].'*

The reason why many Christians are so upset by situations and circumstances is because they do not have or cultivate a single mind.

Philippians 1:21

In this first chapter Paul discusses his difficult situations, faces them honestly, but he does not allow himself to be robbed by them, because he is not living in his circumstances, but is living and abiding 'in Christ'.

Philippians 1:12,13

He does not look at the situations themselves, but in relationship to Jesus. He is not a prisoner of Rome, but of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:1

A prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:13

In chains for Christ. He is not facing a civil trial, he is set for the defence of the gospel.

Philippians 1:17

He did not look at Christ through his situation, he looked at his situation through Christ, and this changed everything. When a Christian is single minded he is concerned about three things:

1. The fellowship of the gospel
2. The furtherance of the gospel
3. The faith of the gospel

All of these are found in the first chapter of Philippians. Paul rejoiced in difficult situations because they helped to strengthen his fellowship with other believers. He rejoiced because he was the one who said, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God for you. Why did he say that? Because rejoicing is our only recourse in good times or bad, rejoicing aligns us with God and His purposes, rejoicing tells God, You are bigger than my problem and I am setting my heart, my mind and my will to rejoice. The circumstances may be good, bad or ugly, the single minded Christian rejoices in all three and finds that the circumstances work for them – not against them.

2.The submissive mind:

Chapter 2 of Philippians focuses on people –

Philippians 2:3 (NIV) *'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.'*

In chapter 1 Paul puts Jesus Christ first, in chapter two people second, which means he puts himself last! The reason people aggravate us so much is usually because we do not get our own way. If we

go through life putting ourselves first and others go through life putting themselves first, there are going to be many occasions for strife!

In chapter 2 we find four people with submissive minds. Jesus, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Each of these examples proves the principle.

Luke 14:11

3.The spiritual mind:

Dependent on the translation you use, up to ten times in chapter 3 Paul uses the word 'things'.

Philippians 3:19-20

Show us that the spiritually minded Christian is concerned with heavenly things. The person with the spiritual mind looks at the things of this world from heaven's viewpoint – what a difference that makes.

4.The secure mind:

Worry is wrong thinking, wrong feelings about situations and circumstances. When we have a spiritual mind, our first recourse will be to turn to God in prayer which will give us a secure mind. If we have a single mind and a submissive mind we will not have too much trouble with worry.

Paul describes the secure mind in

Philippians 4:7

And he tells us what guards or garrisons our heart. Chapter 4 of Philippians gives us the spiritual resources that are available in Jesus. God's power, peace and provision.

Philippians 4:6 - 9 (AMP)⁶*Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. ⁷And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honourable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]. ⁹Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of peace (of untroubled, undisturbed well-being) will be with you.'*

Put simply, right praying, right thinking, and right living, that is God's secret for victory over worry and anxiety.

Summing up our introduction to Philippians then – what should we do? To have joy in spite of situations circumstances, people, things and worry and anxiety – in other words – life. We must put into practice daily, living, abiding, dwelling, in the place God has put us – in Christ. That is the one place we will get all our needs met and all our prayers answered, in Christ.

So it's time for a little self-examination at this point –

1. Be sure you are a Christian. Each chapter in Philippians begins with the words 'in Christ' or 'in the Lord'. Check it out.
2. Admit your failures. If you have been double minded, self assured, proud, worldly minded or filled with worry, confess it to God. To confess means to agree with – what you are doing is agreeing with God that you have had it wrong up until now and want to change your mind – which is repentance.
3. Surrender your mind to Christ daily. Ask Him to give you a single, submissive, spiritual and secure mind.
4. Practice taking every thought captive to Christ – replacement theology – have another thought, practice the right attitude, and right thinking, in situations and circumstances.

We conclude this opening chapter then, where we began, looking at the fruit of the spirit, which is what will be growing daily in us as we put into practice living and abiding 'in Christ.'

Beryl