

Philippians

INTRODUCTION: Philippians is a thank-you note. The Apostle Paul had been in prison for quite some time. He was in Rome. The Philippian church had taken an offering and sent it to him by Epaphroditus. Notice Philippians 4:14-18. In verse 16, he says that they had sent offerings to him before. In verse 17, he explains the main reason why he wanted them to give. He wanted fruit to abound to their account. In verse 18, he tells how sweet the gift was to him because it expressed their love.

THEME: The theme could be summed up as follows: "Rejoicing in Spite of..." The Apostle Paul was in prison, and everything was going bad for him externally, but he had great rejoicing in spite of his difficulties.

He is teaching that the Christian experience is not caused by something which is going on around the Christian, but something which is going on within him. Circumstances did not determine the happiness of the Apostle Paul; the condition of his own heart did. (Teacher, discuss with the class the things that we normally think will make us happy and show how that the Apostle Paul was happy without these things.) Paul was in prison. He did not have any of the things that we normally think will bring us happiness and joy. In spite of this, he had the peace of God in his heart and the joy of the Lord in his soul. His circumstances were a striking contrast to his Christian experience. His circumstance was that he was Nero's prisoner in the Mamertine prison in Rome. His Christian experience was one of victory, joy, happiness and peace.

I. CHRIST BRINGS REJOICING IN SUFFERING. In Philippians 1, Paul is explaining to the Philippine people that he can rejoice even though he suffers. Most of us are unhappy when we suffer and happy when we do not suffer. Our happiness, joy and peace depend upon the external condition of the body. It was not so with the Apostle Paul. He was happy and full of rejoicing, even in his suffering.

II. CHRIST BRINGS REJOICING EVEN IN THE MOST SIMPLE SERVICE FOR CHRIST. Read Philippians 2. Once again, man is deceived. He thinks he can find happiness and joy through the big places, the big opportunities, the big titles, the seat of honor, but the Apostle Paul found rejoicing in spite of the fact that at this time his was a place of lowly service. He was in prison. He was tied to the hands of those that guarded him; yet, he found real joy.

III. CHRIST BRINGS REJOICING IN SPITE OF WEAKNESS AND IMPERFECTION. See Philippians 3. Paul was weak; yet, he was happy. Paul was in prison, but he was happy. Paul had found from within what most of us seek from without.

IV. CHRIST BRINGS REJOICING IN SPITE OF ANXIETY. Notice Philippians 4.

V. HERE ARE THE WAYS CHRIST BRINGS THIS JOY AND PEACE.

1. The right prayer life brings peace. Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." We should be careful for nothing, but we ought to pray and thank God always. Notice in verse 7 the peace this brings: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

2. The right thought life brings peace. Philippians 4:8, 9, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there

be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

3. Being ready to die brings this peace. Philippians 1:21-24. Paul did not live for himself; he lived for others. To die would be gain for himself. To live would be better for others. The only reason he was left on earth was to help someone else. This brought him joy.

4. Obedience brings this inner peace. Philippians 2:12, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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."

5. Fellowship with Christ brings this peace. Philippians 3:10, 11, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

6. Growing in grace and continuing to press forward in service for God brings this peace. Philippians 3:13, 14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

CONCLUSION: Most people never learn the blessed truth that happiness comes from an inward state, not an outward state. It comes from an inward condition, not an outward condition. All happiness that comes from outward stimuli is but temporary and leaves a greater hunger for future happiness. The happiness that comes from serving God, living for others, walking with God, etc. is a happiness that is not only real, but it is lasting and does not increase the appetite for experiences that bring temporary happiness.

This means that the Christian can control his own happiness. His happiness does not depend on the will of another. If one is happy when people are nice to him and unhappy when people are not nice to him, then he can be happy only when someone decides to be nice to him. If one is happy only when people give to him and is not happy when people do not give to him, he can be happy only when somebody decides to give something to him. If one is happy because of what he determines in his own heart, then he can decide to be happy. If giving brings happiness, one can be happy all the time, for he can give all the time. If loving brings happiness, one can be happy all the time, for he can love all the time. If serving brings happiness, one can be happy all the time, for he can serve all the time. Once the Christian learns this blessed truth, he has found the happiness for which he sought and for which the world covets.