

Philippians: An Inmate's Guide to Joy

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I had a bit of irony as I was studying Philippians for this lesson. Philippians is all about joy; joy in Christ, rejoicing in God, and even in a sense, happiness. It is about where you find true joy, true happiness, which is ultimately in Christ. As I am studying this letter on how to have joy, my foot is propped up on the couch with an ice pack on it and I am in utter misery trying to study a letter all about joy. You see, the other night I had an idea, a plan on how I could find happiness, how I could have joy. I was going to beat a line of middle schoolers in a game of Gotcha. I am a very competitive person. For me, joy is often found in winning. I really enjoy winning. So my plan was to beat all these kids in Gotcha, and then I would be happy. The game started and I got put out several times, but in this particular round I am doing pretty good putting kids out left and right. These 6th graders are going down! This is a seven foot mini basketball goal hanging above an archway. So I have a little ball, a little goal, and I am just dominating these middle schoolers. Now, there are only three of us left. The kid in front of me misses the shot, I shoot and miss it too, but I get my rebound before he does. I go up for a slam dunk, and it is glorious...camera lights are flashing, bulbs are going off, kids are capturing

this on social media. This is one of those glorious moments! As I come down, one of the middle schoolers bumped me and I came down on the wrong side of my ankle. I hear cracks and pops, and all of a sudden, I am in pain. I am laying on the ground thinking *oh no I have broken my foot!* Luckily, I didn't break my foot. But what started out as a plan of joy and happiness, ended in pain, misery, and an ice pack.

I am not the only person who sought after joy and happiness this week. In fact, all of you pursued some sort of happiness, some sort of joy this week. As human beings, all of us want to be happy. If you asked people what the purpose of life is, most of them would answer that in some degree, it is to be happy. There is a reason we are like that. It is because we were made to enjoy God forever, so by default, we want happiness. None of us wakes up thinking; *I hope everything goes bad. I hope my family falls apart. I hope my house burns down. I hope I lose my job. I hope I get an incurable disease. I hope everything goes bad so I can be miserable and sad.* None of us want that! We all want happiness. We long for the day to go well so that we can be happy. The reason for this is that God created us to find ultimate joy in Him.

Finding Satisfaction

In Jeremiah 2, God tells the people of Israel that they have committed two sins; they have forsaken Him, the fountain of living water, and they have pursued after these broken cisterns that can hold no water. He is telling the people they need to find satisfaction in Him, but they have forsaken Him and are trying to find satisfaction in other things that are not ultimate. They cannot truly give you that deep satisfaction.



As we study Philippians, the letter that is all about true joy, I want us to think about that picture God gave the people of Israel. The illustration that God gave the people of Israel is that it is as if they were really thirsty and wanted to be quenched, to be satisfied. So our goal is satisfaction, we

want our thirst to be quenched. Picture our search for satisfaction as cups we have set out to be filled with rainwater. If we can fill these cups, we will be happy and have satisfaction. We all have these different cups in our lives. Maybe for you, the cup is family. Maybe you are single and you think if you can just get a family, if you can just get a girl to marry you, then you will be happy. Then you will have kids, and the kids will make you happy. When you get kids, usually the happiness is them going to the grandparents for the weekend. Happiness kind of comes and goes when you have a family. For a lot of us, family is happiness, so we put a lot of significance in that cup. Maybe the cup is a job. If you can just get a job, you would be happier. But if you could keep your job, climb the ladder, and get the *right* job, the *right* career, if you could have the *right* status, then you will finally be happy. A job ultimately brings money, and if you can just have enough money, if your bank account has enough dollar signs in it, then you will be happy. You could get out of debt and have all the things that you want. For some of you, the cup is hobbies. I have heard that is something people do. I have three kids under the age of six, so they are my hobbies. I have no idea what a hobby even looks like! But some of you think if you can just have enough time for your hobby, if you can have enough time to dedicate to that, then you can be happy. For many of you, maybe it is the cup of social media. If you can just see enough things on Facebook or post enough things on Instagram, or get enough likes, or be in the know, have enough friends, that is what makes you happy. So you spend hours a day trying to satisfy yourselves with those kinds of things. Maybe it is just entertainment in general. Maybe the new season just came out for your favorite TV series, and you are just going to watch them all this weekend, and that is going to make you happy. It could be a movie or a book, somehow to be entertained, and then you can be happy. Maybe the cup is sports. When your team wins, the cup runs over. But when they lose, the cup gets poured out, and joy turns to misery. For some of us, maybe the cup is a vacation. The weather is terrible, let's go to the beach. The beach will make you happy; sunshine is what you need. If you can just go on that vacation, you will be happy. Maybe for others it is health. If you

can just have good health, eat right, exercise, and not have a disease, that will make you truly and ultimately happy. For some of you, it is security. If you could just be secure, have your retirement, your 401k, if you can have everything settled, everything secure, then you will be happy. Maybe for some of you, the cup is just whatever version of success you have. As long as you are successful, then you will be happy.

We have this desire for joy, and it is a God given desire. But we often forsake God, and pursue ultimate joy in cups such as those. So we have these cups out, and we want them to fill them and that will make us happy. The problem is all the cups have little holes in the bottom...they don't hold and sustain water. In reality, they are all small cups and none of them is ultimate. The problem is they can all be taken away at any moment. Sometimes they are good, but sometimes they aren't. Sometimes we have money in the bank, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we get to go on vacation, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we have family, sometimes we don't. We have ultimate significance in them, but each of these cups can always let us down. Then our joy is gone rather than full.

In this cup illustration, we fill them with droplets of rain, longing for things we believe will bring true happiness. But we are standing with our backs to Niagara Falls, never realizing what this loud noise behind us is that we are hearing in the background. If we would just turn around, we would see a never ending water source pouring forth and we would have unending water that we can truly be satisfied with forever! That is the illustration God gives His people. God said they were trying to pursue ultimate joy and satisfaction in all these things that can't give it to them. You need to stop pursuing these things first, and you need to turn around and pursue Him above everything else. You need to have true joy in God, first and foremost. When you have joy in God, you can take all these little cups like family, and you can enjoy family from the source that the gift was given to. All these gifts can lead you back to the Giver, and you can have true, abiding joy that doesn't change no matter what the situation is.

True Joy

I want to take the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians and see how Paul would want us to pursue God and have true joy in God, rather than trying to pursue other things as having ultimate satisfaction. We are calling Philippians an inmate's guide to joy because Paul is writing from prison. It is a little bit strange having an inmate in a jumpsuit writing to the church on how to have true joy! He is going to tell them where true joy is found, and it is not found in circumstance. Paul is in jail, chained to some guards. No, it is not in circumstances; it is in the God of the universe. Overview of the message:

Root of True Joy – Joy in Christ

We are going to see the root of true joy is joy in Christ. You can't have true joy apart from finding all of your joy and significance in Christ, first and foremost.

Fruit of True Joy – Rejoicing

- 1. The Mission of God**
- 2. The People of God**
- 3. The Gospel of God**

The fruit of joy in Christ will be rejoicing. If you are joyful in Christ, it is obvious you should be rejoicing. Primarily, no matter what is happening, we can always rejoice in the mission of God, the people of God, and the gospel of God. Those are the things that Paul is going to call us to rejoice in because we have joy in Christ.

Our Scripture will be Philippians 1:18-26. Remember that he is writing from prison.

Scripture

"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will

rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again."

Root of True Joy

The root source of joy is joy in Christ. If you don't get the root, you will not have the fruit. You will not have rejoicing no matter what happens. Yes, you will rejoice at times when everything is going great. But when times are really tough, you will not have a reason to rejoice. You will not have a reason to have joy. When we talk about joy, we are not just meaning happiness. Happiness is when we feel good; we are laughing and smiling. Sometimes with joy, you can still frown and have tears because things are really tough. You can actually cry and still have joy. The reason is because joy is not just some emotion. Joy is this abiding hope in the God of the universe, hope in Christ. So how can we have our roots in Christ? How is Christ going to be the source of our joy? Like Paul, we have to confess this statement: "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" In other words, in your spiritual progress with Christ, you have to get to this point before you know that your joy is in Christ and nothing else. Paul didn't say that for him, Christ is this really good part of his life. Maybe that is you. Christ is a really good part of your life, like Christianity is a good accessory. It helps

you out, it gives you a place to go, it helps you surround yourself with a group of people, or there is a book that you can run to and read a few verses and feel better about things. That is not how Paul views Christ. Christ is not this accessory to his life. He not a helper to his life; He is his life, period. So when it comes to Paul, his very life, what it means for him to be alive, can only be defined by Jesus. For him, everything was Jesus. His whole life revolved around Jesus. Jesus was the center point of his universe, everything revolved around Christ. For Paul, as long as Christ was doing well, he could have joy. As long as Christ was reigning high, Paul could have joy.

You see, if we take any of these cups, family for example, and put it at the center of our universe, we will be happy as long as the family is doing well. What happens when something happens in the family, like strife and enmity, and one of our children runs off? What happens when there is disruption in the family, or lose a family member? Then our whole world is gone, because the center of our universe was family rather than Christ.

Paul is telling us that his life is something that cannot change. His life is something that is constant, something that is ultimate. His life is Christ, to the point that he could say, *when I die, when I breathe my last breath, it is going to be gain for me. That is going to be the best moment of my life!* When you realize your day of death is going to be the best day of your whole life, then that is when you know you have come to the place where Christ truly is the treasure and the source of all your joy. Now think about death. You lose everything at death. Everything you have now, you lose at death; everything is gone! So for Paul to say that death is gain, he has to admit that Christ is worth more than everything else he has. Paul says that is exactly right. He said I have joy no matter what, even when I am in prison and I have all of my rights and all of my freedoms taken away, I can have joy because my joy is in Christ and Christ is still doing well, no matter what my situation is.

You see, if you are going to have true, lasting, and abiding, joy that will get you through anything in your life, it has to be in Christ because Christ is the only ultimate in this world. He is ultimate, and everything else is secondary. Everything else is an accessory. Everything else is an add-on that can be taken away at any moment. Christ is your life if you are going to have joy in Christ. So we have to get to that point where to live is Christ, your life is Christ, and to die is actually gain. When we get there, then we will have rejoicing that will come out of that steady place where Christ is our all and all.

Fruit of True Joy

1. Rejoicing in the Mission of God

In chapter 1, the first point of rejoicing is rejoicing in the mission of God. If we have joy in Christ, one of the things we will be able to do is to rejoice in the mission of God. That is exactly what Paul does in chapter 1, he rejoices in the mission of God. He begins to thank this church for their partnership in the gospel and their participation in grace with him. One of the reasons Paul is writing this letter is to thank them because they (a church that he planted) began to give of their money so that he could go and plant more churches. So they have been partners with the gospel. They have partnered with Paul to take the gospel to all places and all people, so they are literally partners with Paul in the gospel. So one of the things he can have joy in is their partnership.

You enter into a partnership when the offering plate passes and you put money in that offering plate. You are partnering with missionaries across the globe that you will never meet. We are partnering with them in the gospel. There is joy in giving; you get to give, and that is a blessing and you get joy in that. But there is also the joy of the missionary on the front lines who gets to receive that gift. There is joy in partnership because the

gospel is going forth. There is so much joy in partnering with people for the gospel's sake! My wife and I are currently partnering with the Gibbs family, who were members of our church. They went to an Indian reservation in Arizona. It is a very easy partnership. We just send money every month. It is a joy to know where that money is going. Of all the things that I have spent money on this month, that is something that really matters. It is something I can see tangible results of. He texted me a picture of a building he has been building for a year and a half and it is finally done. I could see the fruits of this laboring and partnership! There are countless people who are partnering with them for the sake of the gospel. It is this joy to say our life is not just to build our own kingdom, but to build the gospel, to build the Kingdom of Christ. There is this joy Paul says in partnering with others for the sake of the gospel.

Not only did Paul have joy in partnership, he had joy in suffering. He is in prison, but he says his imprisonment is for Christ, and in that, he rejoices. He is imprisoned, one of the worst suffering you can have. None of us would want to go to prison. The thought of that absolutely terrifies me! But Paul says even in his suffering, his incarceration, he is rejoicing. He said I never really got a chance to witness to the Roman guards, but now I'm chained to them, which is a pretty good deal because I can talk to them all the time! You see, Paul didn't see his own suffering. He saw through his suffering at what God could do in his suffering for the mission of the cross. He was in prison, but he was hooked to a Roman soldier and got to share the gospel with him.

When you suffer, it is like this magnifying glass is around your life; people are looking, people are watching. You have an audience, and it is a way you can reflect the audience to the glory of Christ. If you were in the hospital, you would be interacting with nurses and doctors you normally wouldn't interact with. Paul would say that in this suffering, maybe your hospital visit is for the glory of Christ. Maybe this is so the visitors that come and the nurses that take care of you would see there is something deep within you, a joy they can't explain. It is the joy of the gospel. Paul

would say to use your suffering for the sake of the gospel, so that no matter what is happening, no matter how bad your situation is, you can always rejoice. Your suffering can be used to show people the glory of Christ. Connecting your suffering with the mission means you can rejoice even in your suffering.

Paul is also rejoicing in the advancement of the gospel. There are groups of people outside the prison and they are preaching the gospel. One group is trying to afflict Paul in preaching the gospel. They are trying to make fun of him. There is another group that is preaching because they love Paul and they want to carry on the mission that Christ has given them. But Paul says I don't care; no matter whether they are inflicting me or not, the gospel is going forth and in that, I rejoice. He says I don't care about me; all I care about is the gospel advancing, so no matter if people are afflicting me, picking on me, bullying me, I am alright with that as long as the gospel is going forth. Paul's joy was in the advancement of the gospel.

Those three things are things you can always rejoice in no matter what is happening. I mean Paul is in prison, suffering is happening. A bad thing is happening to him. I have been to Rome, I visited the cell that Paul was in. It is not a pretty place. It was a hole in the floor that they put Paul through. It was this little bitty room with very little light. It was musky and dark and had to smell horrific! That is where Paul is at, and he is writing about joy! And, he says he loves being there because he knows the gospel is going forth. You see, when you have joy in the mission of God, then it doesn't matter what is happening in your life. You can always rejoice in what God is doing around the world.

2. Rejoicing in the People of God

Paul doesn't just want us to rejoice in the mission of God, he also wants us to rejoice in the people of God, which is the second thing that will flow out of our root joy. Joy in Christ causes rejoicing in the people of God. Paul wants us to be savoring Jesus, serving through Jesus, and shining for Jesus. In chapter 2:3 Paul says, "*Do nothing from selfish ambition or*

conceit. "Let's notice that is the default setting for every one of us. Our default setting is selfish ambition and conceit...*I am about me, and I love me more than you...*that is our default position.

It is kind of like the children's movie Toy Story when Buzz gets flipped to default. He goes into this setting where he is a space ranger who takes over the galaxy to fight the evil Zurg. Buzz is acting according to his default setting, but Woody and the gang are trying to get the default setting turned off so he can once again act like the Buzz they all know.

Our default flesh setting is that we are selfish. We think about us and look to our own interests because we are full of conceit. Paul wants us to flip the default button over to the Spirit, so that by the Spirit, this will be happening, "*...but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.*" So flip it, and count others more significant than yourself. Then he says in verse 4, "*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*" Again, the default setting is caring about yourself, and what you want, but he is telling us to flip that to the interest of others. He wants the church to stop looking and caring for themselves, and start rejoicing in the people of God, to start loving and serving people.

So how does Paul tell them to do that? He starts by putting Jesus on display for them. He wants them to start savoring Jesus, because when they savor Jesus, when they see Jesus and remembers the gospel, it will lead to serving and loving other people. In verse 5, he says, "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*" If you are going to get off the default setting and into the Spirit mode, you have to have the mind of Christ.

So what was the mind of Christ? In verses 6-8, Paul goes into what was probably a hymn that the early church sung, this beautiful Christ hymn, which is full of theology. He said, "(Jesus) *who, though he was in the form of God...*" This means the very nature, the substance of God. The NLT version says, "...though he was God." This is a great translation of that. So

Jesus, though he was God, "*did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...*" In other words, in the NIV translation, He did not "consider equality with God something to be used to his advantage." Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, living in Heaven and being the High King of Heaven with all of the privileges, being worshipped by the angels day and night, left all of that! He left the rights and privileges of being worshipped 24/7, and "*emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*" Jesus emptied Himself, He turned loose of all the rights and privileges of being worshipped 24/7. He emptied Himself by taking on something. He added humanity and servanthood to Himself so that He could come, serve, and die for us. Paul wants you to be overwhelmed by Christ and the gospel. Take your attention off yourself for just a moment, and think about Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is fully God, eternally God, who is in Heaven being worshipped by the angels in the fullness of who He is, with all of the rights and privileges of being God. He left all of that and came down to earth in the form of a servant. He got spit at, laughed at, and faced hunger. He was mocked and beaten. He went to a cross, and He bled and died for us. The One who really deserves all glory, humbled himself and became a servant, to die in our place for our sins, to rescue us through the gospel.

Then in verses 9-11, Paul said, "*Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" What is Paul trying to do here? His point is if you are going to love and serve people, you have got to see people through the glory of Christ. Jesus served people. Jesus is fully God, deserved nothing but service, honor, and worship. He deserved all of that, but He left Heaven to come and serve us. The correlation is how much more should we then, as people who are made from dirt, who have no rights and privileges, who aren't worshipped by anyone, how much more should we, as dirt created creatures, be able to serve one another? If Christ, who was

God, came and served us then you and I, created by dirt, should be able to love and serve one another! So when you think you can't serve this person, you're too good, too high, you can't stoop that low; instead, you need to realize you are coming from dirt to stoop down. Jesus came from Heaven to stoop down! Do you see the big difference? If Jesus did that, can't you as well?

Paul is saying after you savor Jesus, then you are going to start serving through Jesus. In verses 12-13, Paul says, "*Therefore...* (So because of all of this) *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*" When he says workout your salvation with fear and trembling, I don't believe Paul is telling you to figure out whether you are in Christ or not, work it out, make sure you are a Christian. The word, "*work,*" means 'to produce or to do something.' He is saying work it out, do something with your salvation! In other words, if you are a Christian you should be flexing your spiritual muscles to serve people, to love people, and to be a servant. You are able to work out your salvation because it is God who is working in you to will and to work for His good pleasure. You have the example of Christ who did it, and you have God working in you and through you as you work to be a servant and serve other people.

Joy comes through serving. Rejoicing in Christ leads to serving. When you do that, you will shine as stars for Jesus. You will be shining for Christ. He tells us in verses 14-15 to do all these things without grumbling and complaining, but instead, shine like lights in the world. You see, servanthood attitudes are not common in the work place, schools, and homes. It is all about self, and you serving me. If you want to start sticking out, if you want to be like a star, like a light that blinds people, then start serving others like Christ served you. Then attention will be drawn to you, and when it is, you reflect it to Christ, the One who is working in you to both will and to work for His good pleasure. Joy in Christ leads to joy, and it leads to rejoicing in the mission of God and the people of God.

3. Rejoicing for the Gospel of God

Then in the 3rd chapter, Paul tells us to rejoice in the gospel of God. Paul basically hits on the false gospel and then the true gospel. He says over and over again, "Brothers, rejoice in the Lord." He tells us in verse 2 to watch out for the dogs. That is pretty hard core for Paul! This is a reference to people who are dogs. What kind of people would Paul call dogs? It is people who preach a false gospel. It is the judaizers, those who mutilate the flesh. It is those who preach that it is Jesus plus something, and that gospel is confidence in yourself. It is about Jesus and you; you doing your part and Jesus doing His part, and there is a lot of confidence in yourself. Paul is going to interact with that and say if you think it is about you earning a relationship with God, then I just want to put my pedigree on display for a moment. He said if anyone has confidence in the flesh, it is me; just check me out! I was circumcised on the eighth day; I have the covenant mark on my body. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. I am the tribe of Benjamin. I was a Pharisee (that means he taught the Law), and I am blameless when it comes to the Law. I persecuted the Church. I mean, Paul was like the poster boy for a guy who could earn a relationship with God! But Paul says I added all of my lists up, all of my works righteousness, and I realized that it is worthless in comparison with knowing Christ and being found in Him. Paul met Jesus and understood the true gospel. The true gospel is confidence in Christ, Jesus plus nothing. It is confidence only in Jesus.

In chapter 3:8-9, Paul says, "*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...*" The gospel according to Paul is not his own righteousness; it is being found in Christ

and having the righteousness of Christ. Paul had his to do list, he had his works righteousness, but he met Christ and threw it out in the garbage because Christ is so much greater! He said I had a religion that was helping me to try to get to God and it didn't work. But now, through Christ, I have a relationship with God and it made all the difference in the world. You see, if you are trying to somehow earn a relationship with God, it is not going to end in joy; it is going to end in misery. You are always going to fail! You are never going to measure up. It is always about duty; you have got to please, you have to do. Paul says it is not about duty or trying to please. It is about you in Christ, being pleasing to God. It is about a relationship. When you have a relationship, when you know Christ and you are found in Him, then Christianity becomes joyful because you are a child of the king who is deeply loved! His love for you will not change; therefore, no matter how you behave or how you act, God loves you and He wants you to progress in the faith and become more and more like Christ. And you do that out of love and joy, not because you have to earn His love, but because you already have His love, and it is changing everything for you. If you find no joy in being a believer, if you find no joy in God, there is a good chance you believe the false gospel, which is about what you do and don't do when it comes to God. The true gospel, believing that it is Christ's righteousness, that it is being found in Him, leads to joy because you are fixed and gazing upon Christ all the time. In Christ, there is joy forever. So Paul wants us to do is rejoice in the true gospel and in Christ who redeemed you and who saved you.

Joy Killers

In chapter 4, Paul will give us bits and pieces of what I am going to call three joy killers and three joy promoters. In verse 4, he says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*" He says this over and over in the book of Philippians. He wants you to rejoice! But there are three joy killers.

- **Division**

There are two women who are fighting and arguing, and Paul says to agree in the Lord. He knows that fighting and division doesn't lead to joy, it kills joy. We should agree with one another. Some of you are not finding joy because you are arguing and fighting all the time and there is constant division. Paul is saying to agree upon the gospel. Agree to disagree, get along, love one another because unity will promote joy and division will rob joy.

- **Hidden Joy**

Let your reasonableness or big heartedness be known to everybody. In other words, don't hide it! Hiding your joy in Christ actually diminishes it. Letting your joy in Christ out is going to grow your joy in Christ because others are being affected and you rejoice because of that.

- **Worry**

In verse 6, Paul says, "*...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" He says stop worrying, stop being anxious! That is trusting in yourself rather than trusting in the God of the universe. Instead of worrying all the time, start praying and trusting in the God who can actually do something about your situation.

Joy Promoters

- **Godly Thinking**

Concerning godly thinking, Paul says in verse 8, "*...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*" In other words, in your thinking, think godly. Think about things that honor Christ because your thinking has a lot to do with your joy. If you are thinking about God, the gospel, and things that He approves, it will lead to joy. If you are thinking about other things, unholy things, it is going to diminish your joy.

- **Godly Living**

We are not just to think about godly things, but actually live out a godly life. In verse 9, Paul says, "*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things...*" Don't just think about them, do them, and put them into practice.

- **Kingdom Giving**

Then lastly, Paul talks about kingdom giving. Again, he tells them of the joy in partnering in the gospel. He rejoices again in the gift they gave to him. He says you gave a gift, but the gift was actually to your credit. In other words, giving to the sake of the gospel for the sake of the mission is actually a reward to you. You are losing money, but you are getting a reward in return. You are being joyful because you are seeing the Kingdom of God advanced. If you want to start promoting your joy in Christ, start thinking godly, living godly, and start giving to Kingdom purposes. That will spur your joy and will flow out into a life that has true joy in Christ.

The truth is I want joy. The truth is you want joy. The reason is because God made us this way because he is ultimate source of joy. We were made to enjoy him. I love how Jonathan Edwards puts it, that everything else is like a river, and God is the fountain. Everything else is like drops of water and God is the ocean. All of the things in life are to lead us to God. The human problem is we forsake the fountain and we pursue all of these cups, all these things that truly can't satisfy us forever. That is the human problem, so what is the solution? The solution is to turn from these cups, turn from these things as ultimate, and instead, pursue God first. Pursue the fountain that can truly quench our thirst to have true and abiding joy in Christ, first and foremost. When we have our joy in Christ, we can rejoice no matter what is going on because we can always rejoice in the mission of God, we can always rejoice in the people of God, and we can always

rejoice in the gospel of God, because that is where true joy is ultimately found.