

DATE OF MESSAGE: August 28, 2016

MESSAGE TITLE: The Foundation for Unshakable Joy, part 2

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:1-11

KEY TRUTH

What do you do when circumstances or people threaten to rob you of joy? This morning, we will look to the example of Paul to see what he did that stirred joy in his heart.

GETTING STARTED

Read Matthew 11:28-30 and consider this excerpt from *Classic Christianity* by Bob George:

People do not end up in a counselor's office, nor do they become fanatical, judgmental, or self-righteous through carrying the yoke of Jesus! Taking on the yoke of Jesus means becoming His willing disciple, that is, a lifelong learner. It means totally trusting Him with our lives. It may mean difficulty; it may mean facing rejection; it may mean a great deal of hard work – but it will not burn you out. The yoke of Jesus also means rest, peace and fulfillment in a life linked with His.

Consider what Jesus meant when He invited His followers to take His yoke upon them. Think about how taking on His yoke leads to peace and joy.

OBSERVATION

What challenges does Paul allude to in this passage that could have stolen his joy? What other obstacles did he face in his ministry that you are aware of from another one of Paul's letters?

What did Paul do to maintain joy in Christ?

How many times does Paul mention prayer in this passage? How do prayer and joy relate to one another?

What does Paul pray for in verse 9? What reason does he give for offering this prayer in verse 10?

APPLICATION

Read Isaiah 26:3. According to this verse, what produces perfect peace of mind? How can a believer 'stay' his mind on God throughout the day? Does this happen naturally or does it take conscious effort?

What or who tends to rob you of joy? What will you do to fight for the joy that is yours in Christ this week?

What stirs your heart to joy? What will you do this week to put yourself in a position to have your heart stirred toward joy?

PRAYER

Dear God, we read in John 10:10 that the thief comes 'only to steal, kill and destroy.' We realize that the enemy of our souls wishes to steal our joy, among other things. He works hard to see that we lead joyless lives by distracting us from the source of real joy which is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Please renew the spirit of our minds to depend on You for lasting joy. We praise You for making us new and for continuing the work You started in us. Cause us to cling to Gospel truth that leads to unshakable joy in You!

SHARE POINT

Read Philippians 1:1-11 and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARTY NOTES

1:3-5 Paul prays for the Philippians with joy, a word that will become a key-note theme in chapter 4. Paul's joy springs from their partnership with the gospel, which involves not only their financial support of the apostle but also their deep personal concern for his wellbeing.

1:6 Paul is sure about God's commitment to the Philippians. The foundation for spiritual growth is recognizing that it is God who began a good work in you and will bring it to completion. Genuine spiritual progress is rooted in what God has done, is doing and will do. His faithfulness ensures that he will be with believers until Jesus returns. The Philippian believers can have supreme confidence that the God who saved them will never let them go.

1:7-8 Again, Paul expresses his warm thought about the Philippians and the fellowship they enjoy in God's grace. Paul's imprisonment would have been a source of great shame in the ancient world, but the Philippians have nonetheless stood in solidarity with him. This was no doubt an encouragement as he shared the good news with his captors and judges.

1:9-11 The first petition in Paul's prayer is that God would cause the cardinal Christian virtue of love to abound more and more and would be accompanied by knowledge and all discernment, so that the Philippians' love would find expression in wise actions that would truly benefit others and glorify God. As believers grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, they will increasingly be able to affirm and practice what is excellent. Such joyful obedience to God will give them the confidence of being found pure and blameless when Jesus returns. This does not imply instantaneous spiritual perfection but rather an increasing likeness to Jesus. The fruit of righteous is not produced in the believer's own power. Only Jesus can produce the fruit of righteousness in the believer's life which will result in the glory and praise of God.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study