

Philippians: God's Joy On Display.

Week #3: Paul's Prayer of Joy

April 22, 2018

Joy can seem elusive in a world that seems to be growing in sadness, lacking in hope and seething in anger. But joy is an essential ingredient to a meaningful life. In fact, joy is often that proof that a person has found life's real meaning. Happiness comes and goes, depending on circumstances ... but not joy. Joy endures through even the most difficult days. People facing tragedy, heartache and even death are joyful when their purpose has been found. Nothing, for them, interrupts their joy.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we find an individual who bathing in the hot tub of joy. Though he finds himself in prison, he is filled with joy. Though people have let him down, he remains joyful. When his plans don't work out, he continues to rejoice. He has lost all his possession, but (you guessed it) he keeps on rejoicing. Throughout his letter to a congregation very dear to him, Paul urges those he writes to remain joyful. "Rejoice in the Lord, always," he writes. "And don't worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition - with thanks - present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:4-7)

What was Paul's secret? Knowing Christ, and leaving everything else behind.

Study Questions: #3 - *Paul's Prayer of Joy*

1. Pick five words that best describe your prayer life right now, and write them down.
 - Are they the words you want, or would you like to change them?
 - What has been your greatest insight about prayer so far in your journey with Jesus?
2. Paul was compelled to pray for his friends in Philippi.
 - Read Philippians 1:9-11. When you pray on behalf of others, what do you ask for?
3. Paul asked God to provide the Philippians with two things: greater love (agape), and: greater understanding & spiritual insight.
 - Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7. What does greater love produce?
 - Read 1 John 4:7-12. If God is *agape* love, and we have His Spirit within us, why is it so hard to love others?
 - Reflect on a time when God gave you understanding and insight about something.
4. Paul asked for these things, on behalf of the Philippians so that:
 - a. they would be able to discern between what is good and what is best.
 - What's the difference between "good" and "best"?
 - b. they would be pure and blameless until Jesus returned.
 - How's your personal integrity today - what God sees?
 - How's your relational integrity - what others see?
 - Is there a pressing habit that continues to cripple your integrity with God and/or others? Ask Him (and others you trust) to help you put this behind you.
 - c. their lives would be "righteous" in Jesus Christ.
 - Why is it so important that Christians live righteously? What happens when we don't?
5. Focus your prayer this week on asking for greater love, understanding and spiritual insight for yourself and others. Seek to see life and events through God's eyes, so that we all may bring greater praise and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.