

Joy

But even if I [Paul] am being poured out as a drink offering [i.e., prepared to be put to death] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me. (Philippians 2:17-18)

Joy is commonly defined as a feeling or emotion of great pleasure (delight) and happiness, primarily tied to good circumstances. For believers, it is more of an inner sense of well-being or delight based on what we have in Christ and is not necessarily dependent on circumstances. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and should be experienced and exhibited by believers.

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians while in prison in Rome (his crime was speaking the truth in his service to God), not knowing if he would be released or put to death; as it turned out, he was eventually put to death (Philippians 1:12-14, 19-24; II Timothy 4:6-8). Despite his circumstances, and instead of lamenting over his imprisonment or seeking justice, his letter is often considered to be the book of joy. As examples for us, Paul expressed his joy and rejoicing in his letter to the Philippian believers as follows:

- He thanked God in all his remembrance of them and their participation in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-8).
- He rejoiced when Christ was truthfully proclaimed, despite the motives of the teachers (Philippians 1:15-18).
- He desired that his ministry and fellowship could continue with them for their progress and joy in the faith (Philippians 1:21-26).
- He derived joy from their love and unity in the faith (Philippians 2:1-2).
- He rejoiced and shared his joy with them, and urged them to do the same toward him (Philippians 2:14-18).
- He asked them to receive his coworker and messenger Epaphroditus with joy (Philippians 2:25-30).
- He encouraged them to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 3:1; 4:4).

Furthermore, Paul loved and appreciated the Philippian believers so much that he considered them to be his joy and crown, perhaps the most heart-felt compliment a person could give (Philippians 4:1). He expressed the same loving sentiment for the Thessalonian brethren (I Thessalonians 2:19-20). In this figure of speech Paul was expressing his great love for the Philippian brethren and his thanksgiving to God for how they were growing in the Lord and standing for the faith despite their circumstances that included terrible persecution—they were a blessing to Paul (Philippians 1:3-5, 27-30).

We should remember and be encouraged that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Do we know this joy and do we express it in our daily walk?

And my soul shall rejoice [be joyful] in the Lord; it shall exult [rejoice] in His salvation. (Psalm 35:9)