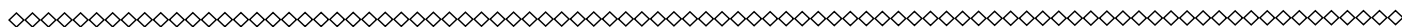




Pastor of the
International
Baptist Church
in Cologne Ger-
many.

Sermon Brief
Text: Phil. 1:3-30
Title: Living in Joy
Lorin L. Cranford

Seeking to faith-
fully proclaim
the whole coun-
cil of God in
scripture!



INTRODUCTION

The Christian life is to be a joyful celebration! And yet joy is a tricky emotion. The ancient Roman world was deeply suspicious of joy and similar emotions, such as excitement. Ancient Greek philosophy shifted the emphasis away from joy to happiness, in Greek Eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία), which designated a state of well being and good fortune as a major objective for life. Joy was too elusive and unstable. It laid the foundation for chaos in life. This was a particularly strong emphasis among Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers in the ancient world. For them happiness achieved through moral virtue was far superior.

Into this world came the Christian gospel. Out of its Jewish roots, the idea of joy in the New Testament found its primary connection to religious experience in relationship to God.¹ Some eighteen different Greek words in the New Testament relate to the concept of joy or happiness.² Overwhelmingly these terms describe

¹“The experience of joy, as related to praise and thanksgiving in public worship, or to the quiet confidence of the individual in God, or to the proclamation of God’s saving power, is one of the characteristic elements in religious faith as this is described in the Bible.

In the OT thirteen Hebrew roots, found in twenty-seven words, are used primarily for some aspect of joy or joyful participation in the cult. The root which appears most frequently is שמח, the most general term for “joy,” either cultic or secular, individual or connected with tumultuous group expression (Exod. 4:14; Ps. 97:1, 12). Other roots are גיל, the usual literary parallel for שמח, and probably connected originally with cultic dance (Ps. 96:11); שיש and אשרי, associated especially with the blessings of prosperity (Ps. 1:1; Isa. 60:15); and רנין, רועי, and הלל, all suggesting shouting or singing in praise of God’s power in creation and victory or as part of the more formal pattern of public worship (Ezra 3:10-11; Ps. 100:1-2, 4). Physical expression of joy is often mentioned. Expressions which occur most frequently in connection with the terms for rejoicing are the sounds of singing, shouting, noise, uproar, a loud voice, singing praise; words for musical instruments -- the pipe, harp, trumpet, flute, or stringed instruments; or words describing motion -- dancing, clapping, leaping, or stamping the feet. The most frequent occasions for joy are feasting and offering sacrifice (Deut. 12:12; Isa. 56:7), celebrating harvest or victory I Sam. 18:6; Joel 1:16), enjoying prosperity or personal triumph as seen especially in the recovery of health (Ps. 31:7; Isa. 61:3-7); or rejoicing in God as part of public worship (Pss. 33:1-3; 95:1-2).

In the LXX the most common Hebrew term (שמח) is usually translated by εὐφραίνω or εὐφροσύνη, words referring to personal emotion as well as to the occasions for it, especially the joy of feasts or festivals. גיל is usually rendered by ἀγαλλιαω and its derivatives.

In the NT both these terms appear often in connection with joy in God’s salvation (I Pet. 1:6) or the joy of eating and drinking or holding festival (Luke 12:19; Acts 7:41), much as they are used in the LXX. The words which appear most frequently in the NT, however, are χαίρω and χαρά, the most common Greek words for joy of all kinds, and καυχασμαι (“to boast, take pride, or rejoice in”). The latter is Paul’s favorite term, with which he contrasts man’s inclination to boast in himself (Rom. 3:27) with his right to boast in Christ or in his cross (Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:3). The one real difference between OT and NT attitudes toward joy is that the NT writers go on to the bold statement of joy in suffering as well as in salvation. The OT makes clear that man’s cause for rejoicing is in God and not in himself (Jer. 9:23-24). Joy is, however, related primarily to God’s triumph over evil, as demonstrated in recovery of health, or in some other victory of national or personal existence. It is in the NT that we find the statement of joy in suffering itself, or in weakness seen in terms of a power of God “made perfect in weakness” (Matt. 5:12; II Cor. 12:9). “ [D. Harvey, “Joy,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach]

²joy/ful(ness) topics 25.116–134

25.116 ἰλαρότης, ητος *f*: a state of happiness characterized by being cheerful—‘happiness, cheerfulness.’ ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰλαρότητι ‘whoever shows kindness must do it with cheerfulness’ Ro 12.8. In some languages ‘cheerfulness’ may be expressed idiomatically as ‘one’s heart is laughing’ or ‘one’s eyes are dancing.’

25.117 ἰλαρός, ἄ, ὄν: pertaining to being cheerfully happy —‘happy, cheerful, one who is happy.’ ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότιν ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός ‘for God loves the one who is cheerful as he gives’ 2 Cor 9.7.

25.118 μακαρισμός, οῦ *m*: a state of happiness, implying favorable circumstances—‘happiness.’ ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν; ‘where, then, is that happiness of yours?’ Ga 4.15. In Ga 4.15 μακαρισμός clearly refers to a state of happiness which occurred in the past but which was no longer evident. It may therefore be necessary to indicate that the happiness in question is past, and accordingly, one may translate ‘you were so happy! What has happened?’ or ‘then you were so happy! What has happened to you now?’

25.119 μακάριος, α, ὄν: pertaining to being happy, with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances—‘happy.’ μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται ‘happy are those who show mercy, for God will be merciful to them’ Mt 5.7. This passive construction in Greek (ἐλεηθήσονται) is generally regarded as a so-called ‘passive of avoidance,’ that is to say, the use of a passive form in order to avoid a direct reference to God.

25.120 μακαρίζω: to regard someone as happy or fortunate in view of favorable circumstances—‘to regard as happy, to regard as fortunate.’ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας ‘we regard as fortunate those who have endured’ Jas 5.11; μακαριοῦσίν με πάσαι αἱ γενεαί ‘all generations of people will regard me as fortunate’ Lk 1.48.

a religious based joy. Modern western society perceives joy as completely divorced from religious connections, and as a purely human emotion created largely by stimuli from one's surroundings. Joy is a part of the pursuit of pleasure and is the opposite of pain and suffering.

Ancient Christians understood joy in dramatically different fashion and would have viewed modern perspectives as shallow and unquestionably destructive. Even a quick glance at MTV proves their point.

What is the joy we are to seek as believers? The topic is too broad to cover in one sermon. But I want to focus in on Paul's letter to the Philippians, which is one of the documents of the New Testament saturated with the theme of joy. In particular, let us hear Paul's words from chapter one of this letter:

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying **with joy** in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of

25.121 εὐφροσύνη, ης *f*: a state of joyful happiness—'joyfulness, rejoicing.' πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης 'you will make me very joyful' Ac 2.28.

25.122 εὐφραίνομαι^a: to rejoice as an expression of happiness—'to rejoice.' εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ 'rejoice, Gentiles, together with his people' Ro 15.10; εὐφραίνοντο ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν 'they rejoiced because of what they had made' Ac 7.41; διὰ τοῦτο ἠὲ φράνθη ἡ καρδιά μου 'therefore, my heart rejoices' Ac 2.26. In some languages it may be necessary to translate εὐφραίνομαι in Ac 2.26 in an idiomatic manner, for example, 'my heart sings' or 'my heart shouts because it is happy.' For another interpretation of εὐφραίνομαι in Ac 7.41, see 51.3.

25.123 χαρά^a, ἄς *f*: a state of joy and gladness—'joy, gladness, great happiness.' ἀπελθοῦσαι ταχὺ ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου μετὰ φόβου καὶ χαρᾶς μεγάλης 'and quickly leaving the tomb, fearful and (at the same time) very joyful' Mt 28.8. In a number of languages 'joy' is expressed idiomatically, for example, 'my heart is dancing' or 'my heart shouts because I am happy.'

25.124 χαρά^b, ἄς *f*: that which is the cause of joy or gladness—'cause of joy, reason for gladness.' τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρά 'for who is the basis for our hope or the reason for our joy' 1 Th 2.19.

25.125 χαίρω^a: to enjoy a state of happiness and well-being—'to rejoice, to be glad.' χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν 'I rejoice as I suffer for you' Col 1.24; ὡς λυπούμενοι αἰεὶ δὲ χαίροντες 'although saddened, we are always rejoicing' 2 Cor 6.10.

25.126 συχαίρω: to enjoy a state of happiness or well-being together with someone else—'to enjoy with, to rejoice with.' συχαίρητέ μοι 'rejoice with me' Lk 15.6; εἴτε δοξάζεται ἐν μέλος, συχαίρει πάντα τὰ μέλη 'if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it' 1 Cor 12.26.

25.127 συνήδομαι: to be happy as the result of the pleasure derived from some experience or state—'to rejoice in, to delight in.' συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἕσω ἄνθρωπον 'my inner being delights in the law of God' Ro 7.22. In a number of languages one may speak of 'one's inner being' as 'one's liver' or 'one's heart' or 'one's abdomen' (employing a reference to one of the organs of the body as a focal element of the personality). But in some languages a more figurative and idiomatic expression may be employed, for example, 'one's inner counterpart' or 'the little one who stands inside of a person.' It is often this central or crucial aspect of the personality which must be referred to in contexts speaking of the type of pleasure or delight which one might have in the law of God.

25.128 ἀσμένως: pertaining to experiencing happiness, implying ready and willing acceptance—'happily, gladly.' ἀσμένως ἀπεδέξαντο ἡμᾶς οἱ ἀδελφοί 'the fellow believers welcomed us gladly' Ac 21.17.

25.129 ἡδέως; ἡδιστα (superlative): pertaining to experiencing happiness, based primarily upon the pleasure derived—'gladly, happily.' ἡδέως; ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες 'you yourselves are so wise and so you gladly tolerate fools' 2 Cor 11.19. ἡδιστα: ἐγὼ δὲ ἡδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθῆσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν 'I will most gladly spend all I have and myself as well in order to help you' 2 Cor 12.15.

25.130 ἀσπάζομαι^b: to be happy about something, on the basis that it would prove particularly welcome (thus implying a type of future orientation)—'to be happy about, to anticipate with pleasure.' ἀλλὰ πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι 'but from a long way off they saw them (the promises) and anticipated them with pleasure' He 11.13. In order to render the future implications of ἀσπάζομαι in He 11.13, one may be able to translate 'and looked forward with happiness to what was going to happen.' For another interpretation of ἀσπάζομαι in He 11.13, see 34.55.

25.131 εὐφραίνω: to cause someone to be or become happy or glad—'to make glad, to cheer up, to cause to be happy.' εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼ λυπῶ ὑμᾶς, καὶ τίς ὁ εὐφραίνων με; 'for if I were to make you sad, who would be left to cheer me up?' 2 Cor 2.2.

25.132 ἀγαλλίασις, εως *f*: a state of intensive joy and gladness, often implying verbal expression and body movement (for example, jumping, leaping, dancing)—'to be extremely joyful, to rejoice greatly, extreme gladness.' ἐσκίρτησεν ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ μου 'my yet unborn child jumped with great gladness' Lk 1.44.

25.133 ἀγαλλιάω: to experience a state of great joy and gladness, often involving verbal expression and appropriate body movement—'to be extremely joyful, to be overjoyed, to rejoice greatly.' ἡγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου 'my soul rejoices greatly because of God my Savior' Lk 1.47; ἡγαλλιάσατο ἡ γλῶσσά μου 'my tongue rejoices' Ac 2.26. In Ac 2.26 it may be impossible to say 'my tongue rejoices.' One may, however, translate in some languages as 'I shout because I am so happy.'

25.134 σκιρτάω^b: (a figurative extension of meaning of σκιρτάω^a 'to jump for joy,' 15.243) to be extremely happy, possibly implying in some contexts actually leaping or dancing for joy—'to be extremely joyful, to dance for joy.' χάριτε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε 'be glad when that happens and dance for joy' Lk 6.23, but see also 15.243 for a different semantic focus. The phrase 'for joy' clearly expresses 'reason,' and therefore it may be useful to translate 'dance for joy' as 'dance because I am so joyful' or '... so happy.'

f feminine

m masculine

Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

12 I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14 and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

15 Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. 16 These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; 17 the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. 18 What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that **I rejoice**. Yes, and I will continue to **rejoice**, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. 20 It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. 25 Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and **joy** in faith, 26 so that I may share abundantly in **your boasting** in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, 28 and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. 29 For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well — 30 since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.³

Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:301-303.

³GNT: 1.3 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνεῖα ὑμῶν 1.4 πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, **μετὰ χαρᾶς** τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος, 1.5 ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, 1.6 πεποιθῶς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ· 1.7 καθὼς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας. 1.8 μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. 1.9 καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει 1.10 εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ἦτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, 1.11 πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ.

1.12 Γινώσκων δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν, 1.13 ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν, 1.14 καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν.

1.15 Τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουν· 1.16 οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμεθα, 1.17 οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνώως, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου. 1.18 τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ **χαίρω**. ἀλλὰ καὶ **χαρήσομαι**, 1.19 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 1.20 κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνηθήσομαι ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ παρηρησία ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου. 1.21 ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος. 1.22 εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω. 1.23 συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γάρ] μᾶλλον κρείσσον· 1.24 τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι' ὑμᾶς. 1.25 καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μὲνῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πάσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ **χαρὰν** τῆς πίστεως, 1.26 ἵνα **τὸ καύχημα** ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

1.27 Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ἵνα εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὼν ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μὴ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου 1.28 καὶ μὴ πτυρ-

The letter was written, most likely, about AD 61 while Paul was under arrest at Rome and was awaiting his trial before Emperor Nero.⁴ While in prison the apostle received a love offering from the Philippian church to help provide food and supplies during his confinement (cf. 4:15-17). Epaphroditus had brought it from Philippi and Paul's letter is largely a response to this generous gift from the Philippian believers.

In chapter one under the theme of joy, Paul makes two basic points. He had found his joy, not in himself nor in his particular circumstance, but in his relationship with other believers (vv. 3-11). Secondly, he had also discovered that joy through the providential leading of God over his life that brought him into imprisonment (vv. 12-30). Here are two sources of joy diametrically opposed to modern perspectives of joy and where it originates. We need as believers to hear Paul's words if we are to discover true joy and happiness in life.

BODY

I. Finding joy in others, vv. 3-11

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

1.3 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μείᾳ ὑμῶν 1.4 πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος, 1.5 ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, 1.6 πεποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ· 1.7 καθὼς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας. 1.8 μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. 1.9 καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει 1.10 εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ᾗτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, 1.11 πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ.

The Proem of ancient letters was typically a brief prayer expression invoking the blessings of the patron deity of the sender upon the recipients of the letter. Often this took the form of an expression of wishing for good health and prosperity. For Paul this prayer language provided an opportunity to invoke the blessings of the Heavenly Father upon the readers of the letter. This Proem of Paul follows a frequent pattern in that the prayer of thanksgiving (vv. 3-8) shades over into an intercessory prayer for the Philippians (vv. 9-11).

Also to be noticed are the expansion elements working off the core prayer expressions. For the thanksgiving, Paul used his common expression "I give thanks to my God..." (Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου), which is the [dominant pattern](#) throughout the Pauline letters. Quite helpful is the elaboration off this core expression in verses four through eight. The thrust of this expansion is an expression of gratefulness to God for the Philippians because of their partnership with him in gospel ministry. That support of Paul has been over the duration of the existence of the congregation, since its beginning. They have stood with Paul through his trials and are continuing to support him now. Thus Paul is confident that the work of divine grace begun in the Philippians will continue through to the end (v. 6).

But he wants more for them. Thus his intercession in their behalf (vv. 9-11) is for God's fullness to continue to unfold before the Philippians, bringing them ever increasing spiritual depth and insight. Notice the connection of spiritual insight with love. The reason for this insight is to make the right decisions (v. 10a), which will lead to a wonderful day of judgment by Christ at the close of the age (vv. 10b-11). Then on that day of judgment the Philippians' spiritual achievements will go out to the praise of God (v. 11).

What can we learn from these verses? Much! The joy of the world is a self-centered, usually highly selfish kind of joy. It's what I experience that makes **me** happy. What Paul is talking about here is just the opposite. In his daily praying for the Philippians, he found joy. The folks he was praying for were sharing the gospel and being faithful witnesses to Christ. With joy Paul prayed for God to bless and extend this work (vv.

όμενοι ἐν μηδεὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἧτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐνδειξις ἀπωλείας, ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ· 1.29 ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν, 1.30 τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, ὅλον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί.

⁴For details, see Lorin Cranford, "Living in Joy," Bible Study, at http://cranfordville.com/Cranfordville/Phil1_1-26SSLess.

3-6). How much do you pray for fellow believers? And how much joy do you find in such intercession to God in their behalf? We want -- and often need -- others to pray for us. But Paul challenges us to give major attention in praying for others. And to find joy in so doing.

He also found joy in his relationship with the Philippian church because of the close partnership he experienced with them in the work of the Gospel (vv. 7-8). The Philippian believers stood with Paul from their beginning in the early 50s to this point about a decade later. Through a shared commitment to spread the Gospel both they and he found great joy and excitement. Folks, here is where we need to grow as a church. Through our membership in both the IBC and the German Baptist Union we have tremendous opportunity to discover joy in praying for sister congregations in these two groups. And also to experience profound joy and excitement in discovering how God is using our participation and support of these two groups to touch countless lives in many different parts of the world even today.

Here is the challenge I want to lay before the Women's Ministry. A part of your assigned tasks adopted by the church is to educate us as a congregation on what is taking place in missions through the IBC and the Bund. Help us learn more about missionary endeavors through these two organizations so that we can pray more fervently and meaningfully for the various pastors, missionaries etc. who are laboring to spread the Gospel. We are missing out on great joy by not knowing fully what God is doing and how we are directly involved in it.

II. Finding joy in God's providence, vv. 12-30

12 I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14 and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

15 Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. 16 These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; 17 the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. 18 What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. 20 It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. 25 Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, 26 so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, 28 and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. 29 For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well — 30 since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

1.12 Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν, 1.13 ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν, 1.14 καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν.

1.15 Τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουν· 1.16 οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμαι, 1.17 οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνῶς, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου. 1.18 τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι, 1.19 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 1.20 κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνηθήσομαι ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνηθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου. 1.21 ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος. 1.22 εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω. 1.23 συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον· 1.24 τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι' ὑμᾶς. 1.25 καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πάσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως, 1.26 ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

1.27 Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ἵνα εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὼν ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου 1.28 καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδεὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἔνδειξις ἀπωλείας, ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ· 1.29 ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν, 1.30 τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί.

This first segment of the body of the letter recounts Paul's present situation at the time of the writing of this letter. The verses are a combination of describing his situation (vv. 12-26) and admonition (vv. 27-30). The tone of joy and hopefulness is foundational to what is said. We get something of that in the very first sentence (v. 12): "I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel,..." (NRSV). In prison and possibly facing execution, Paul decided to 'make lemonade out of the lemons' that life had dealt him. He had the insight to see the hand of God at work in his imprisonment using it for positive good. A couple of aspects are stressed. **First**, he had opportunity to witness to soldiers inside the Roman military that he would not have had otherwise (v. 13). **Secondly**, his experience had encouraged other Christians where he was in prison to be more courageous in their witnessing to non-Christians (v. 14). To be sure, the motivation of some of these was highly questionable (vv. 14-18a). Some despised Paul enough to witness in the hope of creating enough problems for Paul with the Roman government so that they could be rid of him! Astounding on one hand, but not so much when you pause to consider that Paul had enemies inside Christianity most all his career. Yet Paul chose the higher road of thanking God for even these people, since their witnessing was leading other to faith in Christ.

Verses 18b - 26 contain some of the most eloquent expressions of faith found anywhere in the Bible. Paul believes that the intercessory prayers of the Philippians for him will contribute to his being released from prison (vv. 19, 25-26). But which ever way his case before the authorities goes -- whether in release or in execution -- his bottom line goal is to glorify Christ in the way he conducts himself before the authorities. He has come to grips with the possibility of his own death, and is fully prepared for it, since he knows death simply means a deepening of the believer's relationship with Jesus. But his gut instinct is that God still has work for him to do and thus will spare his life (vv. 24-26).

Growing out of this comes an admonition to the Philippians to live a worthy life of service before God whether Paul is able to be with them or not (vv. 27-30). He wants to hear good news about their faithfulness to serve the Lord. The Philippians' faithfulness is indeed a condemnation of those who oppose the gospel at Philippi. Paul's final thought to them is most challenging to modern pleasure oriented American Christians. God has favored the Philippians not only with the privilege of believing in Christ, but also with the *privilege of suffering* for Christ! The "privilege of suffering" is not a common sermon topic these days. Paul has sensed his own sufferings as a privileged blessing from God, and the struggles of the Philippians have bonded the Philippians with the aged apostle in that privilege of suffering.

The lessons from this passage are numerous. Joy in the midst of suffering. Joy in the face of stinging opposition from fellow Christians. Joy in facing the possibility of execution. Most of all, joy in seeing the hand of God at work in every conceivable situation. Joy in the forward look of being with Jesus in death. Joy in the confidence that God is doing something wonderful in the lives of fellow Christians. Joy in the belief that God still has ministry ahead after all these thirty plus years of service since the Damascus Road experience. Paul provides us with so many reasons to rejoice and to praise our God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

What a challenge we find from Paul's example! Modern perceptions of joy see opposition and antagonism as joy killers. You can't be happy when people are opposing you and fighting against you. But Paul reminds us that the joy of Christ transcends opposition. Remember that God pronounces His blessing upon those being persecuted because of Christ in Matt. 5:10-12. Paul realized the truth of Jesus' beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount throughout his three decade plus long ministry.

Joy is produced by circumstance, says the world, and those circumstances must be favorable. The world knows nothing about joy in suffering. Pain produces the opposite of joy in its mind. Paul calls suffering a 'privilege' (v. 29; ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ). The world knows nothing about the joy of facing death and what lies beyond the grave. And absolutely nothing about unselfish ministry to others in this life! It has no inkling of joy in standing before Almighty God in final judgement.

Paul's joy came through God working in his life. Folks, that's the only joy worth having. And it's the joy we should be seeking as believers.

CONCLUSION

Joy in living -- that's our topic today. Do you have joy? Or, more accurately, do you have the joy that Paul is describing here in Philippians? The joy of the world is fleeting and vanishes quickly. The excitement even of a worship service doesn't last but for minutes after the service is over. But the joy of Christ continues on, if it's real.