

ESSENTIALS FOR A JOYFUL LIFE  
PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26

**Introduction**

Most people don't really enjoy life—they just endure life and go through life with no real sense of joy. God used King Solomon to write a book that describes our lives that are lived under the SUN (i.e. our earthly existence). Is there any wonder that one of the key words in that book is “*vanity*” and one of the key phrases is “*vexation of spirit.*”

Solomon himself looked to the things of this world to find fulfillment! But, I want you to listen to his statement after he had lavished on himself wine, women, and song and whatever his vast riches could afford him: *Ecclesiastes 2:11*—“*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.*”

For many, life has become just a series of chores and obstacles that one must go through – just to endure life. There is little happiness and there is little joy!

The dreams of – “*If only*” fill the minds of most, especially the most discontented. You know what I am talking about. “*If only*” I could find the right job...the right mate...I could win the lottery or the Publisher's Clearing house jackpot! “*If only*”... “*If only*”... “*If only.*”

But even after a small minority have their “*if only's*” fulfilled they find that although there may be a temporary happiness, there is still no lasting joy found in those things!

Solomon also said, *Ecclesiastes 5:10*—“*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*”

So, is it even possible to have joy? Whether or not we have the “If only's?”

Many people believe that happiness is based on perfect circumstances. “If everything is perfect – I will be happy.” Perhaps there is some truth in that – we like to find ourselves in good situations and circumstances – but having joy should just not be based on perfect circumstances!

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We live in a sin cursed world and the perfect circumstances are not going to be the norm. In fact, more often than not life is going to be way less than perfect!

But, with the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, it is possible to have **joy** within in spite of our circumstances! We could say that **happiness** is based on the **happenings** in our life! However, true joy is not based on our circumstances, but rather comes from what Christ brings deep within our lives!

Paul talks a lot about joy in the book of Philippians! Even though the circumstances that he found himself in were rough – Paul still had **JOY** in his life!

The background of our passage today is that Paul, for the last four years, has been in some miserable conditions. His circumstances were far from perfect. He's spent two years in prison in Caesarea on a trumped up charge.

He was then put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Nero who WAS NOT known for his nice treatment of Christians. On the way to Rome, the ship wrecks and he is stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, spent three months of winter there, then finally continues on to Rome, spends another two years in custody awaiting trial.

During this two year period in Rome he is chained to a guard for 24 hours a day. He has absolutely no privacy. Every four hours he gets a new guard. Now follow along with me as I read our passage this morning. **(READ)**

How is Paul able to have and to show joy? What was Paul's secret? How does he stay positive while imprisoned? How does he triumph over his troubles? How does he delight in his difficulties? How does he stay so happy, positive, and joyful in spite of the fact that things have NOT turned out the way HE would have wanted or planned it.

Well, I believe that our passage of scripture today gives us six secrets of living a joyful life.

SIX ESSENTIALS FOR A JOYFUL LIFE!

**I. WE NEED TO VIEW OUR LIVES FROM THE LORD'S PERSPECTIVE! (Vs. 12-14)**

Folks here is a fact: Every one of us has problems!

Some of our problems are **big**. Some of our problems are **small**. **But they are still problems – just the same!** Some of you have brought your problems in here with you today and consequently, you've found it hard to worship because of your problems!

But folks here is the secret: **The way we look at our problems is much more important than the problems themselves!** Our perspective about our problems...our view of our problems...our understanding of our problems...what we focus on in the midst of our problems can make all the difference in the world!

In fact, our problems are not as important as how we view our problems. Look at **verses 12 and 13** again!

Paul's imprisonment gave an opportunity for the Gospel to be shared where it otherwise may never have been shared!

**Our Lord is big enough to take our bad circumstances and turn them around for His honor and His glory!** He's big enough to turn them inside out. He is big enough to flip them over, shake them up and make a bad situation – good! If He could do it with the cross of Christ at Calvary – He is big enough to do it in our lives too!

You remember what happened to Paul – he was thrown into prison - bound with chains – in fact, look at what Paul says in **verse 13-14!**

Paul's attitude toward his problems had been an encouragement to other believers in his day! His courage was contagious! It spread like wildfire. Other believers became bold because of Paul being bold!

The perspective we need to live from – if we're going to have joy in our life – is found in Romans 8:28.

*Romans 8:28–“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

When we get this perspective, then we will be well on our way to joyful living! Paul says that God has a purpose behind all the problems of the child of God, therefore we have *TO VIEW AND LIVE OUR LIVES FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE!*

**II. WE NEED TO LIVE OUR LIVES WITH THE LORD'S PRIORITIES. (Vs. 15-19)**

In life we need to know what's really important and what is not!

If we don't choose our priorities we'll spend a lot of time spinning our wheels. We'll be reactionary – rather than pro-active! We'll go around putting out one fire after another and living our lives simply from problem, to problem, to problem – without choosing what's important!

Look at what Paul says in **verses 15-17** again.

In these verses we see the important thing—**Christ was preached!** Isn't that wonderful news? Whether He was preached out of envy and strife or out of love – Christ was preached – His name was proclaimed!

Paul rejoiced that the word was getting out! Yes – he would rather have the word preached out of love – but he rejoiced in the fact that the Word was being proclaimed! He was praising God for that!

Paul was saying, their motives may be wrong – their style may be wrong – their delivery may be wrong – but the message is getting out! What does it matter? Christ is proclaimed!

But some may say, “*Bro. Jerry, if it is not preached in love—isn't it wrong?*” Is that what Paul said? Look with me at **verse 18 and 19.**

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Listen, if you want something to steal your joy quicker than anything else, just listen to everybody who criticizes you!

Believe you me, other people are going to criticize you! Folks there are sometimes when you can't win for anything! If you do "this" – one crowd will criticize you! If you do "that" the other crowd will criticize you! And even if you do "nothing" there is a crowd who will criticize you! **So why don't you just do what the LORD wants you to do** and not pay attention to the criticism?

**Set your priorities to God's priorities and it will help you live a life of joy!**

Paul wasn't going to let anybody or anything steal his joy! Not critics! Not circumstances! Not situations!

*Joy comes from viewing our lives from the LORD's perspective!  
And joy comes from setting and keeping proper priorities—the LORD's priorities!*

**III. WE NEED THE PRAYERS OF FELLOW BELIEVERS IN OUR LIVES! (Vs 19)**

We ALL need strength to make it through life! We need power to just "keep on keeping on!" Life can wear us out! Life can drain us completely! One crisis after another will deplete our energy! And the older we get, the easier it is for us to lose our energy and our power! We express this sometimes by saying, "My git up and go has done got up and went!" Can I get a witness?

Some of you today might be ready to just throw in the towel. You say, "I'm finished – I'm fed up. I've done the best I could, but it's not good enough and I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."  
You need a fresh power supply!

Well, there is power available—IF YOU ARE NOT TOO PROUD TO RECEIVE IT! Look at what Paul says in **verse 19!**

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Paul says, "I have two things that are my salvation"(not salvation of his soul, but rather giving him the strength to carry on in the ministry) i.e. "There are two things that give me strength and keep me going."

First of all he mentions the prayers of the believers at Philippi!

Prayers are powerful! That's why Paul encouraged young Timothy in the matter of prayer!

*1 Timothy 2:1-3—"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;"*

And He encouraged the Church at Ephesus in the matter of prayer: *Ephesians 6:18-20—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."*

Yes, we need to pray for ourselves that we will have strength and wisdom – but listen, **WE NEED TO HAVE OTHER PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR US TOO!** In fact, the Bible tells us that we are to pray for one another! Why?

Because it is encouraging to know that God's people are praying to God – for us!

Paul mentions his prayers for the Philippian Church in this letter! Why? I believe it was because the Holy Spirit knew they would be a source of encouragement to the Church!

**I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I NEED ALL THE PRAYERS I CAN GET!!!**

**IV. WE NEED TO ACCESS THE LORD'S POWER IN OUR LIVES!  
(Vs. 19)**

The second thing Paul mentions in **verse 19** is God's supply through the Spirit of Jesus Christ! (i.e. the Holy Spirit!)

If we are going to continue on, we need a strength that is beyond our strength! A strength that is greater than our strength alone!  
We need the very power of God to live our lives with joy!

Paul tells us in *Ephesians 6:10*—“*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*”

*Psalm 28:7*—“*The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.*”

God wants to give us HIS power to live by! In fact, He has ALREADY GIVEN US HIS POWER SUPPLY WHEN HE SAVED US—THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

However, we must access that power supply by living lives that are filled with His Holy Spirit!

The Lord wants us to live lives that are full of joy with a song in our hearts! But in order to do that, we MUST ACCESS THE POWER OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES! It's called WALKING IN THE SPIRIT!

**V. WE NEED TO LIVE OUR LIVES WITH GOD'S HOPE!  
(Vs. 19-20)**

Not only do we need God's power – but we also need God's hope!  
Let's read **verse 19** again and add on **verse 20** this time!

The Gospel message is a message of hope! It is a message of faith in what God has said and a hope (or a sure expectation) that He will do what He said He will do!

Paul knew that he would be delivered – and because of this – he could step out with boldness!

*Hebrews 11:1*—“*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

Hope and faith go hand in hand! You can't live a joyful life without hope! You've got to have hope to cope! God has promised us a bright future! We should live in that hope!

*Cornell University did a study of 25,000 POWs from WWII. They found that man can handle tremendous stress and pressure as long as he has hope. The moment hope is gone we're doomed. Where do you get your hope to keep on keeping on? Is that source reliable?*

**We as Christians – more than any other people – should be a people of hope – and that hope should be THE LORD!**

**VI. WE NEED TO BOTH FIND AND LIVE OUT GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES! (Vs 21-26)**

By the time *Philippians* is written Paul is old and tired. He has been in prison awhile. He is ready to go to heaven. His friends are free but he is not. He is in chains. But, he is sure of his purpose in life!

Do you want to know what his purpose is? It is found in **verse 21**.

Paul is not suicidal – but he is ready to be in the presence of Jesus! He is not afraid of dying – he is not afraid to walk through the valley of the shadow of death! To him, death is only the doorway to better things!

*“To die is gain. But while I'm here,”* Paul says, *“I have a purpose for living.”*

How would you fill in this blank? For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_.  
What is your purpose in life? What makes life worth living for?

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**A. Some People Live For POSSESSIONS!**

Their attitude is, “*Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can!*” Get, get, get!

Many folks buy things they don’t need, with money they don’t have to impress people they don’t even like! Ain’t that dumb!?

Folks work to keep up with the Jones, and just about the time they catch up with them, the Jones get a raise and they’re in trouble all over again!

**B. Some People Live For PLEASURE!**

The attitude of “*If it feels good – do it!*” or the attitude of “*Grab all the gusto out of life that you can!*”

They believe that anything to make them feel good is OK!  
Anything to relieve their boredom for one little moment is fine!

The problem with living for pleasure – is that pleasure passes away – it will not last!

**C. Some People Live For POWER!**

Other words for power are: *position, prestige and popularity!*

They dress for success and/or drive to impress. With them image is everything! The problem is—one minute you can be the hero and the next minute you can be the zero.

There isn’t any lasting or ultimate fulfillment!

Paul had a long term goal in mind when he said: “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*”

Paul was looking at things in the light of eternity! He knew what his future held, because he knew the One who held his future!

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Paul was more interested in living his life with the eternal power of the Lord Jesus Christ on him than he was in attaining any fleeting earthly power of his own!

**Conclusion**

The best thing we can do in this life is to invest in the next one!  
This life, even for the ones of us who might live what’s considered to be a long life, is going to be over way too soon! But, every one of us is going to exist SOMEWHERE for ALL eternity!

There are only two places that the Bible mentions—HEAVEN AND HELL!

That is what the Bible teaches and we cannot change that fact! But we can have a say so in where we spend eternity! Without Christ there is mostly a joyless existence here and then an eternity in hell!

With Christ, we can **choose** to have joy both now and in eternity in the place He is preparing for us in Heaven!

Do you know Jesus Christ personally? Have you given your life to Him? Don’t you want a joy filled life? It begins by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

But even as a child of God this morning you may be missing out on His Joy!

- 1. If you’re not viewing your life from the Lord’s Perspective!**
- 2. If you’re not living your life with the Lord’s Priorities!**
- 3. If you’re not seeing the need of the Prayers Of Fellow Believers In Your Life!**
- 4. If you’re not Accessing The Lord’s Power In Your Life!**
- 5. If you’re not Living Your Life With God’s Hope!**
- 6. If you’re not Finding And Living Out God’s Purpose For Your Life!**