



A Simple Choice = Joy

Crystal L Ratcliff

When Mrs. Twila asked me to write the newsletter article, I had just started studying Philippians. While she had assured me that my article didn't necessarily need to follow her theme of *Living the Simple Life*, it became clear as I prayed about it and continued my study that the two would most definitely intertwine.

There are two themes in the book of Philippians. The first, and most well known theme, is Joy. Joy, or a form of it, is found eighteen times in the book. While Mind, Think, and Remember are found sixteen times. Our thinking is directly linked to experiencing true Christian joy.

Joy is a choice we make with right thinking. ~Mark Trotter

The secret of Christian joy is found in the way the believer thinks.

~Warren Wiersbe

We know that Paul wrote Philippians while being in prison. According to Warren Wiersbe,

"Paul's situation was such that there appeared to be no reason for him to be rejoicing. He was a Roman prisoner, and his case was coming up shortly. He might be acquitted or he might be beheaded!"

We know from Acts 28:30-31 that he was a prisoner in his own hired house, but he was chained to a Roman soldier. He was not permitted to preach in public, but he was able to share the Gospel with many people he would not have otherwise had the opportunity to reach. His imprisonment opened opportunities for the "furtherance for the Gospel".

I love this description found in Richard Hester's New Testament Bible History Book:

"Chains are clanking on the writer's wrists and ankles, but he makes them sound like bells of heaven! The bells ring right

Continued on Back



Verse Challenge

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.
If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,
and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,
is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:
but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

September 2025: 1 John 2:15-17



through all four chapters {of Philippians} until they give a triumphant final peal in the last paragraph: But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

As I've continued my study in Philippians, it has become apparent that the reason Paul was able to experience joy despite his dismal circumstances is because he made one simple choice. His mind was focused on sharing the Good News.

We learned in the last newsletter the definition of simple is single, consisting of one thing.

Paul recognized that the single most important thing was reaching lost souls for Jesus Christ!

As Christians, we are commanded to share the Gospel with others. Unfortunately, we are often distracted by the demands of living in this world. We are too busy, too rushed. Our focus is on the temporal things that consume our time and energy. Or it could be that our focus is only on ourselves. Our situation, our problems. When our focus is on anything other than the ultimate goal of sharing the Gospel, it will rob us of the joy that God intended for His children.

When you read through Philippians 1, you will note the gospel mentioned several times. Paul says, “...understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;” (vs. 12). He was able to keep an eternal perspective and acknowledge that all of the things that he had suffered were for the sake of the Gospel. He saw those difficulties as opportunities!

He reminds us of our common goal in verse 27, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”

This is where we see the importance of the work of the local church. We come together to encourage, edify, and exhort one another. Our church services give us the opportunity to come together to praise the LORD and be challenged by the preaching of God's Word. We should enjoy the fellowship we have with fellow believers. It's important to have likeminded friends (see 2:19-30). But we must remember our purpose of striving together “for the faith of the gospel”.

Philippians 2:1-11 continues to show the attitude, or mind, that is needed to reach others for the cause of Christ and to maintain

joy in our Christian life. Paul starts out by presenting Jesus Christ as our greatest example of the submissive mind and encourages us to be likeminded, having the same love, of one accord, and one mind. Jesus used His heavenly privileges for the sake of others which begs the question...

Is it costing you anything to be a Christian?

~Warren Wiersbe

In the next verses (2:12-18) we see that while God is working His plan in us and for us, we are to “Do all things without murmurings and disputings;” (vs. 14). Paul explains that this is what will allow us to shine as lights in the world and hold forth the word of life. This is what will set us apart from this world that is so quick to complain and find fault. When we choose instead to be thankful for all things, content in all circumstances, and keep an eternal perspective, we will rejoice!

As I considered all of this, I realized that sometimes I put too much emphasis on my church involvement and not enough on the “furtherance of the Gospel”. Dr. H.A. Ironside used to talk about a group of believers who did that same thing. Their focus was on fellowship with one another and they had little concern for reaching the lost. In front of their meeting place hung a sign that read JESUS ONLY. But the wind blew some letters away until it read US ONLY. 😞 (Wiersbe, 1974)

This story is an example of one of the greatest dangers of a church – becoming too inwardly focused that we lose sight of our common goal. It has been said that “The problem in our churches is that we have too many spectators and not enough participants.” So let me ask you this, when it comes to our common goal of spreading the Gospel, are you a spectator or a participant? 🌱

Interested in studying more about the mind and joy? Continue in Philippians and see the Spiritual Mind in chapter three and the Secure Mind in chapter four.

Warren Wiersbe's outline of Philippians:

Chapter 1 – A Single Mind

Chapter 2 – A Submissive Mind

Chapter 3 – A Spiritual Mind

Chapter 4 – A Secure Mind