

When Living Means Christ, We Have Joy - Philippians 3:1; 4:4

The Bible doesn't have must to say about happiness - the feeling I may have in "right" circumstances, with all the "right" people, when I have all the "right" things. But, it does have an awful lot to say about joy - that holy gladness that is rooted in the unseen and eternal nature of God Himself (and, therefore, not quite so dependent upon the "happenings"!).

When Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always," it's the "always" that hits us so hard. That little word fully covers the "other" side of life - "wrong" circumstances, people, things. Paul is neither suggesting a blind indifference to life's "downers" nor recommending denial or repression of our feelings. He is directing us to pursue a joy in the midst of distressing events and depressing emotions. (Paul is writing this from prison!) The key, the "secret" (4:12) is in verse 13 - "I can make it through anything in the One Who makes me who I am" (Message).

Christian joy is not found in the absence of certain circumstances but in the presence of a Certain Someone (see Ps 16:11!). When Jesus Christ gives us Himself He gives us His joy - "that My joy may be in you" (Jo 15:11). Joy is always a gift of grace - we don't manufacture it, work it up. Since joy is internally deposited and not dependent upon the outer - "no one takes your joy from you" (Jo 16:22) - there is no one or no thing to blame if we are without it. (I know... ouch!) Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ - a divine doing in a human being (Ga 5:22). For this "fruit" to find its expression I must be willing to subordinate body and soul to spirit - to God and His truth. It is, in these verses, a choice. A choice to cooperate with His operation (within and without). As an expression of our worship one of our daily assignments in the kingdom of God (Ro 14:17) is the assignment of joy!

Why such joy-lessness then? Our friend Burt Rosenberg used to tell us about joy quenchers, joy killers - they are mostly lies... lies about God ("He's not loving me"), lies about ourselves ("I am what others say I am"), lies about life ("Life's supposed to be fair"), lies about faith ("By believing rightly I can use God for my purposes"), etc. These will certainly quench the flow of His joy and need to be addressed. But for our passage here, there's another joy killer - the unsurrendered life. Joy is the witness of God upon the self-surrendered life. How do we know that? From Hebrews 12:2 - "for the joy set before Him He endured the cross." One of the most stunning, mind-blowing statements in the Bible! When a human life is rightly related to His Creator there is joy (Lk 10:20 | I Pet 1:3-9). Surrendered to God - in union with God and the stream of His purpose - we celebrate the joy of "with-ness" (Ps 23:4; Ro 8:35ff). Surrendered to others, we experience the joy of self-expenditure, of God's life for others streaming through us - "This is my commandment, that you love one another... so My joy may be in you and your joy may be full" (Jo 15:10-11). Meaning what? Joy and self-preservation, joy and self-centeredness cannot breathe the same air! For you see, joy is not what we need to live the Christian Life - joy is what we have when we are living the Christian life... living by the life of Christ in us. When living means Christ, we have joy!



- **Tax-deductible contributions** -
may be made to *One In Christ, Inc.*
by mailing your gifts to the address above
- **Messages and sermons by Steve** -
can be listened to or downloaded at
www.stevepettitmessages.com
- **Conferences and events led by Steve** -
can be arranged by calling Steve at 386-418-0913
- **To receive this newsletter electronically** -
email your request to OICnewsletter@gmail.com

Praise Reports & Prayer Requests



Please inform us of any changes to your address



GREETINGS

What a joy to know that God and I are alright - nothing between us, not even space!
 What a joy to know the Christian life is not about managing sin, but being managed by the Sinless One!
 What a joy to know the devil works for God, he just doesn't know it!
 What a joy to know that God causes "all" things to work for our good, not just "some" things!
 What a joy to know "just me" died and that "Christ in me" lives!
 What a joy to know "greater is He who is in me" than whatever is "out there"!
 What a joy to know Light (not darkness), Truth (not error), Love (not fear) always wins!
 What a joy to know a God who will "right" every "wrong"!
 What a joy to know we are here by choice, not by chance!
 What a joy to know life, not death, has the final word!

"The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything." (Julian of Norwich, 14th C.)
 Have a joy filled August!

CALENDAR

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <u>AUGUST</u> | |
| 3,17,24 | CCF |
| 8-10 | Milton, FL (850-983-2494) |
| 12 | Alachua Study |
| <u>SEPTEMBER</u> | |
| 13-20 | Bozeman, MT |
| 25-28 | Binghamton, NY (607-625-4612) |
| <u>OCTOBER</u> | |
| 18-22 | Tyler, TX (903-561-9995) |

PRAISE and PRAYER

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
|  | The gift of joy |
|  | The joy of the Lord as our strength |
|  | CCF pastor search |
|  | To be living expressions of His joy |