**Lesson 1: Find Your Joy in Christ**

Text: Phil. 1:1-5; Acts 16:6-34

**Introduction**

Jesus Christ. The very name ought to stir the heart of every believer! He is our risen Savior! He is the coming King! He is the first and the last! He is the very reason for our existence. He is the source of our hope. Knowing and loving Jesus is a wellspring of joy in the life of today’s believer. It certainly was in the life of Paul and the Philippian believers. We will see in our study of Philippians that *joy is a result of a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ*. Joy is rooted in a Person, not in a person’s circumstances.

The word joy is most often defined as gladness and delight. It is first used in the New Testament when the wise men from the east saw the star over the place where Jesus was born. Thus, by the principle of first mention, joy is connected to the Lord! Warren Wiersbe’s commentary on Philippians, “Be Joyful”, has this subtitle: “Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy.” Let’s face it: difficult situations arise frequently in the life of every believer. I’m sure you will agree that our problems seem small in comparison to those of the Apostle Paul. Just read 2 Cor. 11:23-28 to gain perspective on our suffering. Although Paul encountered incredible difficulties, he was clearly a joyful servant of God. How did he maintain joy under such circumstances? Paul’s source of joy was in his relationship with the Lord. (Phil. 3:1; 4:4, 10).

I would like to invite you to consider Paul’s letter to the believers at Philippi. Joy is an obvious theme. It can be a theme of our lives as well if Christ is the source of our lives. In this first lesson, we will recall the time in which the Philippians found joy in Jesus Christ. I hope it will help you to remember the day of your salvation and find your joy in Christ.

1. The people of Philippi lived without joy prior to trusting Jesus Christ.
   1. The Lord led Paul and the missionary team to Philippi to preach the gospel. (16:6-12)
      1. Philippi was the major city in the northern region of Greece.
      2. It was named in honor of Phillip II, father of Alexander the Great.
      3. Because it was a Roman colony, the Philippians enjoyed the benefits of Rome.
      4. Like other Gentile cities, it was home to the worship of many gods.
      5. Like other cities, it was filled with people whose lives were filled with despair.
   2. After surveying the city, Paul and the missionary team discovered a riverside prayer meeting that provided an opportunity for the gospel. (16:13-15)
      1. Lydia and others who gathered in this meeting listened intently and trusted Christ as their Savior.
      2. Joy filled her home and it became a base of operations for the gospel. (16:40)
   3. Despite those immediate results, the spread of the gospel encountered resistance.
      1. Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the city and were cast into a Philippian jail. (16:16-24)
      2. While in the jail, they prayed and sang praise to the Lord. Their circumstances did not determine their joy. Their joy was in Christ—not in their situation. (16:25)
      3. Following an earthquake and what appeared to be a jail break, Paul intervened in the life of a suicidal prison guard. He led this man and his household to Christ. (16:26-33)
      4. They were so filled with joy that they rejoiced late into the night. (Acts 16:34)
   4. The new believers were baptized and assembled together as a new church.
   5. W.B. Knight said, “Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of our hearts, announcing that the King is in residence today!” The banner of joy was clearly displayed in the lives of Paul and the Philippians.
2. **Central Idea:** The Philippian believers were filled with joy when they came into a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. **Application:** Joy is a result of a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
   1. You must be in a right relationship with Christ to experience joy.
      1. Have you trusted Christ as your personal Savior?
      2. Are you walking in daily fellowship with Him?
      3. Is He the focus of your life?
   2. Consider: When do you find joy in other relationships in your life?
      1. You experience joy in marriage when you are in a right relationship with your spouse.
      2. You experience joy in family life when you are in a right relationship with the members of your family.
      3. You experience joy in your work when you are in a right relationship with your coworkers.
      4. You experience joy in life when you are in a right relationship with Christ.
   3. An absence of joy in your life indicates a problem in your relationship with Christ. Give careful consideration to that which may be hindering that relationship. We will give more attention to “joy thieves” in the next lesson.
   4. Recall the day of your salvation. Do you remember the joy that followed trusting Him as your Savior? If you have the opportunity, express gratitude to the person who led you to Christ.
   5. Return to a place of finding your joy in Christ. There are many things that can distract our attention away from Christ. It is possible to serve the Lord and to fail to focus on a loving relationship with Him. Remember how wonderful Jesus is! What do you love about the Lord? Spend the time necessary reflecting on his greatness as it is revealed in His Word. Schedule time to spend an afternoon with Him in prayer. As your relationship with Jesus is renewed, your joy will abound.

**Conclusion**

We have observed in this first lesson that joy is rooted in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that the Lord will help each member of our church to simply love Him more and live for Him every day. If you find your joy in Christ, you will never be disappointed!