

THINK ABOUT JOY

Do you consider yourself to be characterized as a “joyful Christian?” What does it take to have joy?

Joy is one of the main themes of the Book of Philippians and something we will be discussing a lot in the weeks ahead. One of the points that Paul drives home in this book is the fact that life does not have to be easy to be joyful - - in fact, he points out that ease of living and joy of heart have little to do with each other. Look at the circumstances surrounding Paul - - look at what he says in **2 Corinthians 11:23-27** (he wrote 2 Corinthians about 5 years before Philippians):

“I’ve worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death’s door time after time. I’ve been flogged five times with the Jews’ thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I’ve been shipwrecked three times and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I’ve had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I’ve been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers, I’ve known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather.”

Paul’s message to us in the book of Philippians is that joy is not the absence of trouble but rather the presence of Jesus. Isn’t it surprising to us - - given all that Paul had been through, was experiencing as he wrote Philippians, and knowing that his execution was inevitable - - that his letter to the Philippians is dripping with joy?

Pastor Ken Baugh said,

We are made to wonder:

- 1. How did Paul do it?**
- 2. How did he live in a constant state of joy?**
- 3. Was he some kind of super-saint made with a faith made of different stuff than the rest of us?**
- 4. Did he live in a constant state of denial?**
- 5. Or did he live such a problem-free life that to be sad, depressed, or in despair never occurred to him?**

Ken Baugh continues, “I believe that Paul’s ability to be joyful was due to the source of his joy. Three different times in his letter to the Philippians Paul revealed that his joy was “in the Lord” (3:1, 4:4, 4:10) rather than in the difficult, painful, constantly changing circumstances of life. But what does that mean? Simply this: To find joy we must place our confidence and hope in the character and nature of God.”