

“Real Joy” Philippians 4:4-7

Real Christian joy is not dependent on the circumstances of life. The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a clear example of this truth. When Paul wrote this beautiful letter, he was confined to a prison in Rome. But even under those dire circumstances, the Philippian letter has been called “The Epistle of Joy.” William Barclay is writing about Paul’s letter to the Philippian Christians when he affirms: “Again and again the words joy and rejoice recur. ‘Rejoice’ writes Paul, ‘and again I say unto you rejoice.’ Even in prison Paul is directing the hearts of his friends – and directing our hearts – to the joy that no man can take from us.”

In the Scripture lesson upon which this message is based (Philippians 4:4-7), Paul writes:
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice . . . The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Someone has wisely called these verses “Paul’s prescription for real Christian joy” which never runs out of date.

What are some of the spiritual lessons which Paul teaches in Philippians 4:4-7?

1. Paul teaches that one who would be blessed by real Christian joy must “rejoice in the Lord always.” This means rejoice all the time because your life is anchored in faith in Almighty God. This is not easy but Christ never promised that it would be.

Peter Marshall used to preach a sermon which he called “Singing In The Rain.” His main point was that real joy never forsakes the real Christian. This is what Paul is saying when he writes: “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

I believe that real joy would characterize our lives and we would rejoice in the Lord always if we could always keep in mind what Christ has done for us. Because of His great love, He willingly suffered death for our sins. The prophet Isaiah – even before Christ was born – paints a word picture of this for us when he says: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.”

Because of our sin Jesus went to the cross. Because of His cross we can find release and forgiveness. When we realize this great truth we cannot help but “rejoice in the Lord always.”

2. Paul says that the person who would experience real, lasting Christian joy must “have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving let his requests be made known to God.” Any feelings of anxiety should be erased when we realize that we have a loving Heavenly Father to whom we can make our requests known. Through prayer with thankful hearts we find peace of mind and heart – real joy. No wonder the hymn writer proclaims:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

In a world of turmoil like ours today, being faithful in our prayer life is the only way we can make sure that we have no anxiety about anything.

3. Paul describes real Christian joy when he says: “And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your heart and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Real Christian joy comes through Jesus Christ. When we are rightly related to Him through faith He keeps us in perfect peace.

Real Christian joy is beyond all human understanding. Abiding joy is a gift of God and finite minds will never be able to mentally understand such a gift of God.

How wonderful it is to know God personally, love Jesus Christ supremely, live for Him daily, and rejoice in Him always!

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