

JOY: FAR BETTER THAN HAPPINESS

(Philippians 3:1)

Series: "Philippians: The Joyful Letter" (Part 16)

...If you ask most people they will tell you that what they want most from life for themselves and their loved ones is happiness. Many pursue this utterly illusive goal and become disenchanting in the pursuit, though it is sought through acquiring wealth, possessions, position, sex, health, travel, and more. It is good to hear again Solomon's wise counsel, "Life, under the heaven, is vain. All is vanity."

...Paul wrote this "Joyful Letter" to his dear friends at the church in Philippi and repeatedly called them to have joy, "To rejoice in the Lord." In essence, joy is the birthright of a believer in Jesus. It is God's sweet gift to His children, and it is far better than the passing feeling of happiness. Joy remains even through the worst...

...In chapter three, before stressing the serious danger of placing confidence in the flesh, Paul calls for a spirit of rejoicing in the Lord. (3:1) We do well to consider Joy... What is it? How do we get and keep it?

TWO QUESTIONS HELPING US TO HAVE AND BE FILLED WITH THE JOY OF THE LORD ...Don't settle for the cheap stuff. Go for the Joy!!! Let His Joy be your strength.

I. What Is Joy?

- A. Joy is "The supernatural delight in God and God's goodness."
 - 1. It is very different from happiness. Happiness is from the Latin word "fortuna," and is closely related to chance. If things are going my way, happiness... if not then...
...Totally related to one's circumstances.
 - 2. Joy is not related to circumstances but is the inner quality of delight in God, and is meant to spring up within the Christian in a way totally unrelated to the adversities or circumstantial blessings of this life. (Illustrated: Sick and dying saints...)
- B. Every Christian virtue has its counterpart in a so-called virtue of the world. A cheap imitation!
 - 1. The world strives for security, the Christian has trust.
 - 2. The world has sex, but the Christian has love.
 - 3. The world seeks gratification, the Christian knows peace.
 - 4. The world seeks happiness, the Christian has joy.
- C. Jesus promised joy for those who followed Him. This joy is a birthright of all true believers.
 - 1. The angel announced at His birth..."Tidings of great joy..." (Luke 2:10-11)
 - 2. Jesus, "I have told you this that my joy might be in you..." (John 15:11)

II. What Is God's Remedy For The Joyless Person? (3 Steps)

...It is a sad confession and no doubt true that many Christians are joyless, and battle depression.

...The solution is found in God's wonderful Word, and must be followed like a doctor's prescription.

- A. Step one: You must become a Christian. Note two classes of people needing to face this:
 - 1. Those who are not Christians, but think they can have the fruit of Christianity without becoming a Christian. Know that joy is supernatural and is given only to those who have surrendered their lives to Him. You cannot work it up by your own power...No!
 - 2. Those who are not Christians, but think they are, perhaps because they were raised in a church-going family, etc. Such ones do not understand the heart of the Gospel, and therefore cannot understand their failure to experience the fruits of...
 - 3. The Gospel: You must realize that you have no righteousness of your own, but God has provided a righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus. This is step one!

- B. Step Two: To experience God's JOY, you must first know His righteousness and peace.
1. This means that a life of holiness and trust are prerequisites. (Romans 14:17)
...Note the order of these here: "Righteousness, peace, and joy."
 2. Sin keeps us from fellowship with the Lord, who is the source of joy. Anxiety also works against joy. Instead of sin and anxiety in our lives, we should be living a life of holiness and peace, and this comes by submitting all aspects of our future to Him. (Philippians 4:6-7)
"The peace of God...which is beyond understanding..." This is step two.
- C. Step Three: To have a life of continuous, supernatural JOY: Fill your mind with God's Word. (Psalm 19:8) "The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart." (John 15:10-11)
...The Bible tells that Joy is to be found in a knowledge of God's character and commandments.
...If you have not known much of this joy the reason may be a neglect of a study of Scripture.

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN MY LIFE?

1. If you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord God desires you to abound with His joy. This is for all believers, not just a few. It is supernaturally produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit as we fill our hearts and minds with God's wonderful Word. It does not depend upon the circumstances of your life. Even in times of tears, though subdued, there is an inner sense of God's abiding joy.
2. It is not rocket science, live daily by walking in obedience to God's Word and give yourself, your loved ones, and your future to the Lord...and His joy and peace will flood your soul.
3. This week, will you commit to spending more time reading God's wonderful Word? Try to spend an hour reading, meeting with the Lord and you will discover, rediscover, a joy like you have not known for sometime. God's Word and Joy are forever linked together. Be careful, doing this is life changing.
4. Perhaps you lack joy because you have never become a genuine Christian by placing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today Jesus is calling, will you receive Him as your Savior? Don't fall for the cheap substitutes to the genuine thing.