



AN UPWARD COUNTENANCE IN A DOWNWARD COUNTRY

TO: **LEGISLATORS**FROM: **PASTOR RALPH DROLLINGER 661-803-7970 24/7/365**DATE: **NOV. 12, 2012**

For many years now, Barna Research has accurately documented the ongoing secular shift in American culture. Such came to roost in Tuesday's election; bottom line, it's correct to conclude that it was all about demographics. One party was keen to it, the other was not.

Short of a revival, given the secularization of the American voter base, both parties are now forced to appeal to the market or risk extermination. And, like all the nations and political parties before us (cf. Acts 17:26), when principle gives way to pragmatism Christians are necessarily ostracized. Nothing new here, believers were baggage in the Roman Empire.

As a believer, how will you navigate this coming storm? Where will you find your motivation, your contentment, your joy? In the book of Philippians the Apostle Paul finds it in those around him, not in the society that confounds him. Like Paul, we too can find sustaining joy!

Things are apt to get dicey around here, so let's examine Paul's prescription for joy in persecution as we survey Philippians in this regard. Read on.

WEEKLY MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF
FIRST-VOTES-BACK (MONDAY OR TUESDAY NIGHT)
Dinner Served • Capitol Room H324 • Spouses Welcome

CONGRESSIONAL SPONSORS

Robert Aderholt, *Alabama*
Todd Akin, *Missouri*
Spencer Bachus, *Alabama*
Michele Bachmann, *Minnesota*
Marsha Blackburn, *Tennessee*
Paul Broun, *Georgia*
Dan Burton, *Indiana*
John Campbell, *California*
John Carter, *Texas*
Bill Cassidy M.D., *Louisiana*
Rick Crawford, *Arkansas*
Jeff Denham, *California*
John Duncan, Jr., *Tennessee*
Mary Fallin, *Oklahoma*
John Fleming, *Louisiana*
Bill Flores, *Texas*
Randy Forbes, *Virginia*
Trent Franks, *Arizona*
Scott Garrett, *New Jersey*
Louie Gohmert, *Texas*
Tom Graves, *Georgia*
Ralph Hall, *Texas*
Gregg Harper, *Mississippi*
Pete Hoekstra, *Michigan*
Randy Hultgren, *Illinois*
Bill Johnson, *Ohio*
Jim Jordan, *Ohio*
Steve King, *Iowa*
Doug Lamborn, *Colorado*
James Lankford, *Oklahoma*
Mike McIntyre, *North Carolina*
Gary Miller, *California*
Sue Myrick, *North Carolina*
Randy Neugebauer, *Texas*
Steve Pearce, *New Mexico*
Mike Pence, *Indiana*
Mike Pompeo, *Kansas*
Bill Posey, *Florida*
Tom Price, *Georgia*
Ben Quayle, *Arizona*
Tim Scott, *South Carolina*
Steve Southerland, *Florida*
Lamar Smith, *Texas*
Marlin Stutzman, *Indiana*
Glenn "GT" Thompson, *Pennsylvania*
Scott Tipton, *Colorado*
Daniel Webster, *Florida*
Allen West, *Florida*
Lynn Westmoreland, *Georgia*
Joe Wilson, *South Carolina*
Steve Womack, *Arkansas*



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS

I. INTRODUCTION

While imprisoned for his faith in Rome (A.D. 60-62), Paul wrote this letter to the church he had founded in Philippi, Macedonia (upper Greece today). Even though he was being persecuted for his faith, having been imprisoned for several years, he was nonetheless afforded the opportunity to preach the Gospel (cf. 1:12-14; 4:22; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4).

This combination of persecution (to the point of imprisonment by the State) but nonetheless freedom of speech to proclaim the Gospel both near and abroad (this is one of his four prison epistles that would be circulated throughout the Empire) was sufficient for his never-ending joy.

As we trace that theme throughout this prison epistle, you should simultaneously read through the whole of the four-chapters. Otherwise, the highlighted passages will not make much sense. By doing such a study you will garner greater interaction and leading by the Holy Spirit.

II. CHAPTER ONE

A. THE SOCIETY OF JOY 1:3-5

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

As telegraphed in the introduction, Paul was **joyous** about other believers – the society of believers if you will – in light of their **participation in the gospel**. **Participation** could also be translated as “partnership” and is a reference to the believers who had assisted Paul in evangelizing the city of Philippi. Even though the laws and policies of that city were undoubtedly not to the liking of the Apostle, his basis for joy centered on the priority of having evangelized the city. This solace of mind is underscored by verse 7:

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

Notice this basic precept of his joy: The society of believers surrounding him, while simultaneously laboring together for the sake of the Gospel (cf. 4:1). You too will gain much joy in the capitol via fellowshipping with other believers on a regular basis with the common mission of evangelizing.

B. THE STAPLE OF JOY 1:12-14

Paul's joy was also based on his theology. As we will continually see, theology was his staple ingredient for ceaseless joy. As one called out by Christ himself (Acts 9) perhaps it was a bit easier for him to trust in the sovereignty of God in whatever **circumstances** he found himself. Notice and learn this way of thinking from the following:

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Trust in God's sovereignty was the staple ingredient of his joy. That's to say theology is important! He had the ability to see past his own plight and what God was doing in and through his **circumstances**, specifically in the lives of others who caught his infectious spirit of joy. Even though he is in the capitol city of the world, his central focus, his priority for living, was not on changing the government, but the **greater progress of the gospel**. Take this to heart given the election.



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS

AS A PUBLIC SERVANT WHO NAMES THE NAME OF CHRIST, ARE THESE PRIORITIES CLEAR IN YOUR HEART?

Scripture is clear that if we “seek first the Kingdom of God” the other things, like changing the Government for good “shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

**C. THE STANDARD BEARER OF JOY
1:25-26**

Later in chapter one, as Paul reasons aloud within himself about staying on in this life, or moving onto the next, he concludes that the former is more important, due in part to the need for other believers to catch his joyous spirit in light of their surrounding circumstances:

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

Paul’s desire is that other believers would learn to live joyously in persecution like him. Hopefully that ambition of his to be a standard-bearer of joy will resonate even today with us.

Paul concludes the chapter by highlighting the previously mentioned idea of conflict between joy and persecution that is ever present in the life of the mature believer:

For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Living in this world for the sake of Christ, and all the joy that brings will always be in **conflicted** with **suffering**. Paul says that such is normal for those heralding Christ. His continued physical presence,

being a standard bearer of joy, was a source of encouragement to those around him. Do you model joy to those around you?

III. CHAPTER TWO**D. THE SENSE OF JOY 2:2-3**

make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves...

In this passage Paul provides insights into how believers can **make** other’s **joy complete**. By being **intent on one purpose** (the ministry of the Gospel) and by **considering others as more important than yourself**, the body of Christ will count you as a blessing! The combined sense of being both unselfish and all about the Gospel provide the most joy to others as well as self.

E. THE SECRET OF JOY 2:19

But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

Paul did certain things in order to receive encouragement from others; he was proactive in keeping himself pumped up and joy-filled! Here Paul is saying he anticipates a positive report from those whom he had invested in spiritually for the sake of his own well-being. Accordingly, both you and I should make a practice of this.

DO MY BIBLE STUDIES MINISTER TO YOU? I NEED TO KNOW FOR THE SAKE OF MY OWN ENCOURAGEMENT

Such asking is not selfish; it is biblical. Does your ministry in the lives of others encourage them?



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS

Then don't think it's selfish to ask them to let you know for the sake of your own joy and encouragement! If Paul was not above asking others for encouragement then why shouldn't you do the same? In order to maintain joy in times of persecution, there are moments when you need to ask your supporters to bolster you. Don't think you're so spiritual that you don't need this from time to time; you and I aren't! Be proactive about receiving encouragement versus spending the same amount of energy stewing – falsely imagining no one appreciates you.

**ONE LITTLE PHRASE I TRY
TO LIVE BY IS THIS:**

**DON'T POUT,
IMMEDIATELY REACH OUT!**

This is a great secret insight into the mind of Paul that we should emulate: Seek joy from others!

IV. CHAPTER THREE

F. THE SOURCE OF JOY 3:8

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

Paul had vertical vision. Ultimately he lived to please the one who saved him (cf. Gal. 1:10) versus others around him. That idea is strongly communicated in this passage. The Greek word for **knowing** has more to it than a sense of knowledge; it means, “to experience personally.” Paul's joy stemmed not from a cold religious orthodoxy, i.e. keeping a bunch of rules; rather it came from a personal relationship with the living God! Such an insight into this passage provides a deeper understanding as to what (who) catalyzed, his joy.

The source of his joy and our joy is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, not a religious system.

G. THE “SET FREE” OF JOY 3:13-14

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul states yet another key to joyous living: **forgetting what lies behind.** This includes both virtuous achievements and sinful failures. If the self-described “chief of sinners” believed that the power of Christ enabled total forgiveness, then it stands to reason that he too should be able to forgive and **forget** in regards to himself. Based on his Christology, Paul, rightly so, did not allow his past (remember he murdered believers prior to his conversion) to affect his present state of being, his joy in the present and future. Such a practice of “flushing the toilet” should be normative for every believer today: If Christ forgives and **forgets** should not you also? Both arrogance and self-deprecation serve to defeat the presence of joy.

I should add that this principle is violated in marriage, where one partner continually brings up the past in ways that are unbiblical to the detriment of the marriage. Christ doesn't hold your past against you today (cf. Rom. 8:1)!

V. CHAPTER FOUR

H. THE STANDARD OF JOY 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God,



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS

which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As Paul begins his concluding remarks in his “Epistle of Joy,” he states the inviolate attitudes an individual needs to possess and practice in order to live joyously. Those include **rejoicing always** (based on the believer’s election in combination with the sovereignty of God) in contradistinction to being **anxious**. He must also possess a **gentle spirit** (versus combative) that stems from the **peace of God**, one of the characteristic attributes of the Trinity. Learning to stand on and attitudinally manifest these theological truths in one’s daily life enables continuous joyous living! A sign of maturity is when a believer chooses to manifest his theology over and above his aberrant, often wayward emotions. In 4:9 Paul underscores this idea when he says, “Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.” These are the minimal standards for consistent joyousness.

I. THE SATISFACTION OF JOY 4:11-12

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Material possessions and concern for social standing have the potential to obliterate joy. Paul states here that contentment should eclipse either prosperity or poverty, one’s standing in society or not; joy should be unrelated to these types of concerns; they should be of little matter.

This is an especially profound insight in our culture where the idols of materialism and social standing

are usually more important than holding to godly principles and serving Him in whatever circumstances one might find oneself. Satisfaction in Christ should make “the things of this world (like prestige and popularity) grow strangely dim.” Paul’s attitude is summarized in 4:18, “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance.” That is a refreshing perspective on life; it spells joyous satisfaction and contentment.

VI. APPLICATION TO PUBLIC SERVANTS

As we have combed over Philippians we have gleaned nine keen insights into how one can best possess joy. This biblical understanding of joy will hopefully provide you with the grist to withstand the most severe forms of persecution that may lie ahead as you lovingly stand for God’s ways. Here in summary are those nine inviolate principles:

A SUMMARY OF PAUL’S NINE CRITERIA FOR JOY

1. The **Society** of Joy is fellow believers
2. The **Staple** of Joy is the sovereignty of God
3. The **Standard-bearer** of Joy is the model of Paul
4. The **Sense** of Joy is greatest when evangelizing
5. The **Secret** of Joy is gaining it from others
6. The **Source** of Joy is the Lord Jesus Christ
7. The “**Set Free**” of Joy is forgetting the past
8. The **Standard** of Joy is theology, not emotions
9. The **Satisfaction** of Joy is continual inner peace

My prayer is that these insights into how one best possesses joy will help enable you to hold on to it at all times – and especially in the otherwise worrisome and extremely difficult days that seemingly lie ahead for our nation whom you have chosen to serve. Amen.