EPISTLES

Five Keys To Joy

Message Notes

Philippians 1 - Five keys to joy

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Philippians is the last of the four prison letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon & Philippians) and was written at the end of Paul's time in prison in Rome, around the year 62. The church has thus existed for about 10 years.

Philippians is not written as a response to a spiritual crisis or challenge in a church, such as Galatians and Colossians. It is instead written in a warm tone of joy and gratitude, and is perhaps Paul's most personal letter - one that clearly shows how precious this church was to him.

The strongest theme of the letter is the joy in Christ - the words 'joy' or 'happy' appear 16 times in the letter! So special that joy was actually one of the first fruits, already when the gospel first came to Philippi.

Joy is a spiritual force (Nehemiah 8:10) and one of the main themes of the New Testament

- the word 'joy' is mentioned 88 times in the NT. God wants you to be happy!

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The world:

Joy is a consequence of positive circumstances.

Kingdom of God:

Joy is a consequence of our choices.

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Romans 14:17 (NKJ) - **For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace andjoy in the Holy Spirit.**

Luke 17:21 (NKJ) - **For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.**

(Second scripture appears on screen separately, but will the first one still visible)

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The first chapter of Philippians gives us five keys - five such choices - to unlock joy in our

lives:

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1. Choose gratitude

Phil 1:3-4 - ***I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.—***

Paul thanked "every time" and "always." In other words, there must have been times when there were things to thank for, and when there were not. Paul thanks anyway. Everyone can be grateful when everything looks good. But the sign of a man of God / woman is that he / she chooses gratitude regardless of the circumstances - 'every time' and 'always'! The first time Paul was in Philippi, he himself gave a great example of this:

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Acts 16: 22-26 - ***The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered*** *them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged,* ***they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened*** *their feet in the stocks.* ***About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose.***

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If you choose gratitude no matter the circumstances, you will always carry with you the power of God to open every closed door and smash every shackle!

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2. Choose the perspective of faith

Phil 1:6 - ***being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

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One thing that wants to steal our joy, is that we do not see as much finished and completed in us and around us, as we would like. We often focus on what is still not perfect in our sanctification, the answer to prayer we have not seen yet, the salvation of the city we have have not yet experienced etc. But in the kingdom of God, the key to our joy is not found in which processes are completed, but in which has begun! We do not rejoice when the tree is fully grown - we rejoice when the seed is sown, because we know that in this seed lies a power that no one can stop.And if we can only trust that God has begun a work (in you, your children, the church, the city, the land), we can be sure that this work will be completed! Therefore, you can rejoice already here and now.

(’Dance’ story)

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3. Choose to let love abound

Phil 1:9 - **And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more**

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’Abound more and more’ - greek ’Perisseuó, ‘ go far beyond what is necessary ’

Ps 23: 5 - "my cup overflows” (no screen)

John 10:10 - "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (no screen)

He has given in abundance to us, therefore we can give in abundance to each other and others!

’*This is my prayer… may…*’ - means this does not happen automatically (if so, Paul would

not have to pray it would happen). It is something we choose to do or not do.

How can you let your love abound this coming week?

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4. Choose what is important and what is not

Phil 1:10 - ***… so that you may be able to discern what is best***

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('best' = greek 'Diapherónta' - most important, carries most weight)

Everything wants to seem important in life, but not everything is important. Stress comes from not knowing the difference.

Decide on what is most important in your life, what has eternal value:

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a. Your relationship with God ('only one thing is necessary… the good part', Luke 10:42)

b. Your family

c. Your church / your part in building the kingdom of God—And learn to say a liberating 'But what does it matter?' about whatever you don't have time for, and whatever you can not influence anyway.

Phil 1:15-18 ***It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.*** *The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the* ***gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter?*** *The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ* ***is preached. And because of this I rejoice.***

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5. Choose to focus on heaven

V 21-25

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this ***will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith***

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One of the greatest thieves of joy in a Christian's life is to forget the reality of heaven. If we lose that perspective, the here and now becomes far too important for us.

It sounds to Paul that life here on earth is something he has to put up with for the good of the church, but to be with Christ would be 'better by far' for him.

Heaven has always been the greatest focus of the heroes of faith and martyrs. If we have our eyes fixed on the goal that lies ahead of us, our perspective changes, and we can rejoice already here and now, even in the midst of suffering.

(House story)