

I. Luke 2:8-14. The angels are very joyful and announcing something joyful.

A. Christmas is incarnational Joy...

II. Which is why Paul insists that the Lord's Joy is crucial. Phil. 3:1. Rejoice in the Lord...

A. By staying in the New Covenant. 3:1-11

1. Religion will not bring you to God or save you.
2. We are (in ourselves) always bankrupt. Stay that way.

B. By pressing on toward the goal. 12-16

1. Leaving behind what is behind and pressing on for the prize.

C. By following good mentors into the resurrection. 17-21

1. Follow (imitate) us. Our citizenship is in heaven. Jesus will return from heaven and we will be resurrected and follow him there and into the new creation.

III. By standing firm in the Joy of the Lord. Paul offers apostolic/pastoral instruction

A. Think together like Jesus. 2-3

1. Have the *same mind* set in the Lord.

a) to be wise and think—in the Lord.

b) In the Lord: It means more than just “get along” or “stop fighting.”

c) *It means think together like Jesus about what is important in life and let that be the texture of your relationships.*

Kingdom Think.

2. *We cannot produce unity by focusing on unity itself. We experience unity as a byproduct of thinking “in the Lord.”*

B. Live in the Joy of the Lord.

1. Rejoicing. Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, Rejoice! 4-9

2. The first of several instructions and foundational to stability in Christ.

3. We tend to think of joy as something that happens to us without our bringing it about -- like winning the lottery.

4. *But by making this an imperative, Paul is telling us that joy is both an intuition and a decision.*

IV. What is the Joy of the Lord? Four things to note:

A. It is more important than people think.

1. Jesus was giving away joy on the night before his crucifixion. **Jn. 15:11**

2. Paul was resting in joy while dealing with deep perplexity, sorrow. **2Cor. 6:10**

3. Even in the Old Covenant the Lord's joy is a strength in the presence of grief. **Neh.8:10.**

a) The Joy of the Lord is your strength.

B. Deeper than happiness.

1. *Not simply the feeling of happiness that comes in this age, but something deeper.*

2. There are many things that legitimately bring happiness in this life. They are all blessings from the Lord. (Jas.1:17)

C. Better than provision.

1. Material provision and blessing can bring a certain sort of happiness.

2. But relational love is deeper. And God's love is the deepest of all.

D. Stronger than relief.

1. *Not simply the absence of stress, but the presence of something that makes it bearable. Eph.3:14-19*

2. Something stronger than the stress and pain of our short lives here.

3. This is where the relational element is so crucial.

4. Like when somebody you trust enters the room while you are under stress and their friendship and presence changes your perspective.

E. It is the Lord's personal presence. His love poured out within us. Titus 3:4-7

1. *It's Him. Himself. Him loving you from the inside of your heart.*
2. We tend to think of joy as separate from the Lord. Something he has, like toothpaste in a tube, which He dispenses to those who are good today.
 - a) But joy comes from knowing Him, because He is the source and essence of all joy.
 - b) The more thorough and radical our trust in Him, the more our joy.

F. Maturity flows from thinking like Jesus together and living in His Joy. Phil.4:1-9

V. Six Characteristics of stable and joyful Christians. Phil.4:1-9 (a matrix of interrelated characteristics)

A. They are peace makers. 2-3

1. Like bandages, like shock-absorbers. They promote peace in relationships.

B. Because they are magnanimous: Reasonable ESV; Forbearing NAS; Gentle NIV. 5

1. Reasonableness Magnanimous: Generous in forgiving an insult or injury, free from petty resentfulness and vindictiveness.
2. To be tolerant or patient in the face of provocation. Thoughtful, considerate, decent, gentle, kind, fair, willing to yield and co-operate. NIV = gentleness. Titus 3:1-2
 - a) Jesus had this quality. 2Cor. 10:1
 - b) Spiritual Leaders must have this quality. 1Tim. 3:3
 - c) It is an ingredient of God's wisdom. **Jas. 3:13-18**
3. Want to increase joy? Give up your resentments and grudges.

C. Because they are conscious of the Lord's nearness. 5

1. He is returning soon. He is here right now in the Spirit.

D. Which makes them pray specifically and thankfully. 6

1. *Everything that bothers or worries them—they pray about.*
 - a) **Pray** = proseuchomai = addressing God personally, intentionally, directly, worshipfully.
 - b) **Supplication/Petition** = deeseis = ask for, concrete, specific
 - c) **Request** = aiteo = to ask for something
 - d) **Thanksgiving** = eucharistos = thanksgiving, gratitude.
 - (1) Not a technical period of time when you say "thank you" for things, but a general ethos of gratitude for life and eternal life as gifts.

E. Which gives them counterintuitive peace. 7

1. *The peace that passes understanding.*
 - a) Huperexousa noun = transcends human understanding. It doesn't have a human explanation.
 - b) It supplies a protection for your inner self. (heart and mind)
 - c) It comes from trusting the Lord. **Rom. 15:13**
 - (1) *Not always by solving the problem right then, or by figuring out a way to solve everything, or by "analyzing" and placing blame.*

F. Which enables them to think clearly about goodness. 8

1. mind dwell = focused, logical thought. THINK.
 - a) True, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy.
2. When we meditate on anger, lust, fear, we undermine joy, wisdom, and stability in our lives.

G. Which motivates them to practice the mature virtues they see in others. 9

1. Take every opportunity to learn from quality believers, mentoring.
2. *Copy the virtues of others.*
3. *Living wisely in the gospel is a skill we learn by practicing.*

VI. If you know the Lord Jesus, the Spirit is in you and He is joyful.

A. The joy of the Lord is already and always in us.

1. But it becomes obscured by the struggles and traumas and griefs of life.
2. Also by legitimate joys of life. When the happiness points rise, they tend to overshadow the deeper joy. But it is still down there.

VII. All of this is possible because Jesus went to the Cross and came back victorious and Gospel. The Gospel is a message of Joy.