

## “Finding Joy In Everyday Living”

Philippians 1:12-14, 4:6-7

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We often lose precious moments because we are so busy doing everyday work. Would you recall your fondest memory: Can you capture that moment when you were so joyful? When was the last time that you felt joy? The true feeling of joy doesn't come from outside you, but it comes from your heart deep within you.

The book of Philippians is another letter among Apostle Paul's letters. This beautiful letter was written by Paul because he wanted to express his gratitude and thanksgiving to Christian brothers and sisters in the city of Philippi. He heard that the church was well established and growing well as a good example of one in Christ. This book is often called “Paul's epistle of joy”. Paul emphasizes throughout the book saying, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, Rejoice.” Truly, joy is the whole theme of this book. However, when Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians Church, ironically, he was a prisoner of Rome. In fact, the situation was not joyful at all. Rather, he was in danger of his life. He was aware that he might soon be sentenced to die. This is paradoxical. How could he write this beautiful letter of joy while he was struggling with his life in crisis? I invite us all to learn what joy truly means from Apostle Paul.

What is joy? When I think of joy, it immediately reminds me of a children's song, “*I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.*” If you look up a definition of joy in the dictionary, it says, “a source or cause of great happiness.” But this is not enough to describe the full meaning of joy. Joy is more than pleasure and it is more than happiness. **It is a spiritual gift from God.** Apostle Paul describes joy as a fruit of the Spirit. C.S Lewis, a well known Christian advocate, points out, “Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”

Joy is different from happiness. For happiness, we find happy feelings through objects like food, success, and other source of pleasure, but we cannot find joy through our self-satisfaction. Happiness is conditional and temporary but joy is permanent. Joy is like a spring welling up from our inner self. In other words, joy is a gift from God, when we receive it or realize that we find it within us, we are surprised by this joy. When we experience God, we can experience joy during trials, suffering, and in our life challenges. Without joy, we cannot possibly experience God. Therefore our Christian's goal is not to pursue happiness, but joy.

Apostle Paul found *this* joy, a precious gift of God, in the risen Christ Jesus. Paul says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21). In many places in his letters, Paul often says whether he lives or dies, all that is the same to him when seen from the standpoint of his relationship with Christ, which surpasses everything. He finally learned to be satisfied with everything, and how to rejoice always in every situation. In today’s second Scripture reading Apostle Paul says, “Do not worry about anything. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” I am sure that like everybody else, Paul had worries, fear and anxiety about the concern of his life and death. But instead of letting those worries destroy his soul, he places them through prayer in Christ’s movement from death to life, where thanksgiving always takes the first place. Apostle Paul advises us that a peace and fullness beyond words will enable us to go through everything and to remain in a constantly reawakened joy.<sup>1</sup>

Personally, last week was challenging. My mother underwent brain tumor surgery last Wednesday morning. Actually, this tumor was accidentally found through a CT scan the day before she was about to have Thyroid cancer surgery. It was a 5 cm golf ball sized large tumor in her brain. My parents thought they would treat the brain tumor first and deal with the Thyroid cancer operation later. I worried about her health and the dangerous operation. The surgeon told my mother that he would not try to remove the entire tumor but 80% of the tumor because of its dangerous location. The tumor was located right near a main vein blood vessel. As a son, I was anxious and nervous about this surgery. I was able to talk to my mom over the phone sharing prayer with her right before she was ready to move to a surgery room. She positively told me that she wouldn’t worry about the result even if surgery didn’t go well. Rather she comforted me with a joke saying, “Don’t worry. Jesus took suffering and crucified on the cross for me. Compared with him, I am in better condition than his case. Actually, I am joyful because a good surgeon and excellent medical team will take good care of me.” Thankfully, the surgery went well and the surgeon successfully removed 80 percent of the tumor as expected. It took nine hours to complete the whole process. I appreciate your concerns and prayers.

A theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich reminds us in his book, “The New Being” of the meaning of joy, “For the men of the Old and New Testaments the lack of joy is a consequence of man's separation from God, and the presence of joy is a consequence of the reunion with God.” The point of the Bible is very clear. There are two things that we need keep in our minds. First,

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<sup>1</sup> Taize, June 2001 reflection on Philippians 4:4-7 Unfailing Joy. See more at [http://www.taize.fr/en\\_article167.html?date=2011-06-01](http://www.taize.fr/en_article167.html?date=2011-06-01)

the Bible is all about the relationship between God and each of us. Second is that God wants you to be joyful and hopeful, no matter what situation we are in. Christ is our strength, joy through suffering!

God is the true source of lasting joy. Happiness and pleasure are fleeting when objects and conditions are gone, but the joy, once we experience God in our hearts, will remain in us forever. Our trials, suffering and even death cannot take away this joy from us. In our lives, there are lots of dangerous rocks on the way to joy. These are many events in our life which we have no control like death, illness and other unexpected pain or losses. And there are many stumbling blocks that can make us stop our journey to find joy. When you worry, turn your eyes upon Jesus. The book of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (12:2) Jesus experienced joy but it was also a focus for him while He suffered on the cross. Why worry? Almighty God is on our side and we are his beloved children. May you find God's joy in Christ and rejoice it always in your everyday living. Amen.