

# Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

© 2009 Dr. Edgar Pierce



## 3- Finding Joy with Purpose of Life ..... Philippians 1:19-26

*Php 1:19-26 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*

The joke about the hippies in the 60's was that they were off in the woods trying to find themselves. Some say that in a lifetime we will all change careers two or three times. Others say that it is hard to track how often people change careers. Regardless, most of us want to engage in meaningful occupations and endeavors. We want to find ourselves, so to speak. We want our lives to count for something.

Having said that, if I asked you what your purpose in life is what would you say? What is your passion in life? What makes you want to get up and get you energized for a new day? I think Paul would tell us that when we find our purpose in life in God we find ultimate fulfillment and thus joy.

### **I- Suffering Led to Purpose:**

We talked last time about the suffering that Paul had endured for the sake of the gospel. Like a fire that tempers steel, or the heat of the oven that hardens and make clay usable the fire of persecution and troubles makes us useful for the kingdom sake.

*Php 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*

Paul knew that all the suffering was leading to God purpose in his life. The early church is the ultimate example of this. Notice *Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* The suffering led to the purpose that became the passion of the life of these early believers, the spread of the gospel. *Act 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

One of the things that suffering or persecution causes us to do is to take a long look at what is most important in our lives. An illness may turn our hearts toward the things that we have neglected. God uses suffering to help us find a focus on our life's purpose many times.

# Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

© 2009 Dr. Edgar Pierce



## II- Exhalation of Christ:

**Php 1:20** *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

Peter said it like this: **1 Peter 4:11** *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

We should live our lives with such a fervor that when it comes time to die that we can say we left nothing on the table. I have heard it asked, are we spending our life on earth or investing it in eternity. One of the great purposes of life is that Christ would receive the glory from our lives.

We should also set our goal to bring glory to Christ even in our passing. After all when a loved one passes or when we pass from this life we have a great promise in Christ of life eternal.

*Arthur Brisbane once pictured a crowd of grieving caterpillars carrying the corpse of a cocoon to its final resting place. The poor, distressed caterpillars, clad in black raiment, were weeping, and all the while the beautiful butterfly fluttered happily above the muck and mire of earth, forever freed from its earthly shell. Needless to say, Brisbane had the average orthodox funeral in mind and sought to convey the idea that when our loved ones pass, it is foolish to remember only the cocoon and concentrate our attention on the*

*remains, while forgetting the bright butterfly.*

So we can look to glorify Christ in both life and death.

## III- The Ultimate Purpose:

So if we as Christians are to find our ultimate purpose in life what is it. May I suggest it is as we have talked to glorify Christ. Notice what Paul said in **Php 1:21** *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Paul understood that if his life were to be over then if he would just continue to experience Christ. The gain here is a word that means cashing in the interest. The investment Paul was making was in the next world not this one. AT Robertson in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* said, "To die...is to cash in both principal and interest and so to have more of Christ than when living. So Paul faces death with independence and calm courage."

**Php 1:22** *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*

Do you have a desire to be with Christ. Sure life is good on this earth but life with Christ in heaven is even better. Have you noticed how we hold on to life in this world. I have often wondered why. Perhaps it is that this is the only existence we have known. Or perhaps the fear of death. If we begin to look at life and death from the eternal point of view, it might bring us joy.

## IV- Why Does God Leave Us Here?

Someone said it this way, "What heavenly good are you on earth." Are we

# Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

© 2009 Dr. Edgar Pierce



just taking up space and spending our days, breathing up the oxygen waiting to die.

The person who finds his place in the work and kingdom of God will find the fulfillment in life. I will even go so far to state that if we do not find God's purpose for our lives we will never experience the fullest joy that God has for us.

***Php 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.***

Paul understood that the reason God left him here was not for himself but for others.

In some ways this can be related to the reason God gives us spiritual gifts. He gives spiritual gifts for the benefit of others not the one who receives them.

***Ephesians 4:11-13 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:***

Many times the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us is one that causes us to have to give of ourselves to others. For instance the gift of teaching. Is it for the teacher, I would hesitate to say that because the teacher must give their time and energy to prepare and be committed to teaching. The gift is for the ultimate benefit of others.

Do you know what the Holy Spirit has equipped you to do? Have you taken the time to seek the face of God to understand

what He wants to do through you? The ultimate joy will be found in doing what God has called you to do.

***Php 1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.***

We see one last thought in closing this section. Paul realized that his joy was comingled with others.

Are you living your life in such a way that it brings joy to others?

Bruce Larson, *Luke*, p. 43 tells the following story.

*A conference at a Presbyterian church in Omaha. People were given helium filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. Since they were Presbyterians, they weren't free to say "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over 1/3 of the balloons were unreleased. Let your balloon go.*

We will find joy when we find our purpose in life. For Paul it was helping others live our the faith and grow. I have a feeling that this is also the purpose for us as well. Let us let our balloon of life go begin a new purpose in Christ. After all we are here for God's use not our own.

10