

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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8- *Finding Joy* with a Fresh Start in Christ..... *Philippians 3:12-21*

Php 3:12-21 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Have you ever wanted to erase a mistake? It seems constantly men and women that people have faith in from pastors, deacons, teachers, politicians among others are constantly doing something that is boneheaded and out of character based on their reputation and promises. This is not relegated to only public figures it in some ways touch the masses. All men and women have regrets. Has everything you have done in life been without regret? We all at times need a redo or make over, do we not? It is only those who are self-deceived that think they have arrived at full maturity spiritually and fail to see they have a ways to go.

I- Constant Fresh Starts:

One of the things that is hard to do most of the times is to take a look at ourselves honestly and openly. We have a tendency to either judge ourselves too harshly or puff ourselves up to what we are not.

Notice Paul's self-assessment. *Php 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ...*Now this is a man who is beginning to understand his own heart. He understood that he had not arrived yet where he felt he and most importantly God wanted him to be.

I concede the fact that the Scriptures talk much about the heart of men in a positive light at times. The Bible also has many warnings about the heart. Notice a couple from the Proverbs.

Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Pro 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

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Paul was honest when he confessed that he had not arrived at the point that God wanted him to be. I would say to those who do not feel they need a fresh start day by day to hear the words of Jeremiah the prophet. ***Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?***

Beloved may I suggest that we all need a fresh start with God every day in our lives.

II- Focus on the Future:

Over the years, I have observed many Christians who have experienced some failure in the past that they just seem not to be able to let go of it. The enemy wants us focused on the past, and especially our failures, and not reaching toward the future. Paul was not encumbered by any such thinking. He said, in ***Php 3:13...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***

Now I am going to make a statement that at first may seem irrational. Let me flesh it out. ***"I have done things in the past that God does not know about."***

Notice I did not say, He never knew them, only that He does not now. Let me explain. The Bible teaches me that God's forgiveness is so complete that our sins of the past are wiped from His memory.

Psa 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

If you go east you will never go west. It does not say north from the south because when you cross over the pole you are going the other direction. It is not so with east and

west. It is not possible to go far enough east to ever head west. Our sins are always behind us in this analogy.

Isa 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Isa 44:22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

If God has so completely removed our sins, what petty selfish right do we have to allow ourselves, or the enemy, to bring them back into play in our spiritual life? Praise God that is a foundation for building joy on the future and not the past. When we have a fresh start with God it indeed is a fresh start without having to worry about Him throwing our past failures up to us.

III- Maturity Helps with Joy:

I have a thought that I often state. A man has nothing to prove but a boy constantly must prove himself to himself and he thinks others. Paul talks about being mature in Christ. He calls it perfect here but it mean mature. Mature faith produces joy beloved.

Php 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Now notice a statement that we often misstate in our lives. Have you ever said do as I say not as I do. Paul told them to do as he did and to look for others who were examples for them.

Php 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For

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many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

A mature believer should help others to mature so that they can find joy in Christ in freshness in their relationship with Him.

IV- Citizens of Heaven:

As we walk with Christ in this life we hold also to the hope of eternity. NASB says in *Hebrews 12:1-2* *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Paul writes to the Philippians in *Php 3:20* *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

The word translated in KJV conversation is found only this one time in the original Greek. It literally means our citizenship. Now this is a cause of joy for sure. We have a fresh start with God here and need the constant freshness to be added to our walk because of sin. Remember Jesus told Peter in *John 13:9-10* *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10 Jesus*

saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit...

The Messages says Jesus said, "If you've had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you're clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you're clean..."

Now the source of joy is that we will have a totally new and fresh start with Christ when we close our eyes in death and cross to our real home in heaven. Let me close with an illustration of how our citizenship should be written on our lives.

While serving as a missionary in Laos, I discovered an illustration of the kingdom of God. Before the colonialists imposed national boundaries, the kings of Laos and Vietnam reached an agreement on taxation in the border areas. Those who ate short-grain rice, built their houses on stilts, and decorated them with Indian-style serpents were considered Laotians. On the other hand, those who ate long-grain rice, built their houses on the ground, and decorated them with Chinese-style dragons were considered Vietnamese. The exact location of a person's home was not what determined his or her nationality. Instead, each person belonged to the kingdom whose cultural values he or she exhibited. So it is with us: we live in the world, but as part of God's kingdom, we are to live according to his kingdom's standards and values.

(John Hess-Yoder, Portland, Oregon. Leadership, Vol. 7, no. 3.)

Have you experience a fresh start with God in salvation? Do you need a fresh start over with God? He waits...

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