



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Pursue Joy - Part 1

SPEAKER Elder Goh Hock Chye

THEME Gems from the Book of Philippians

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

AN OVERVIEW ON THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

The Book of Philippians is also known as the Epistle of Joy. Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison, and the church of Philippi that Paul was writing to, had witnessed first-hand the joy that Paul and his team had in their ministry, and their great determination to praise and worship God, even as they encountered persecution and imprisonment for His sake.

As Paul wrote this letter, he revealed his human sensitivity and tenderness, as well as his deep conviction and enthusiasm for the message of Christ as the key to life and death. He shared his deep love for the congregation in Philippi and was able to share his hopes and convictions for them even while encouraging them to stand firm against anxieties and firms. He revealed his total confidence in Christ and wrote much about his rejoicing of faith, based on the true understanding of Christ's unique role in the salvation of all who profess His Lordship.

Most of all, Paul showed his emphasis on Christian Joy. Throughout the four chapters, Paul mentions the words 'joy', 'rejoicing', or 'gladness', at least 19 times. Similarly, Paul uses the words 'mind', 'think', or 'remember' 16 times in the four chapters. In other words, the secret to Christian joy is found in the way the believer thinks; in his or her attitude. Elder Hock Chye unpacked 5 myths about joy, and how Paul responded to these myths. We must guard what we think, for it is what we think that will determine our joy!

5 MYTHS ABOUT JOY

1. MYTH : True joy is dependent on my personal situation

The reality is that we have no control over many things in our life. The weather, the traffic, even how people react to what we say or do is something that we cannot control. If our joy is to depend on these circumstances, we are going to spend much of life being unhappy. Paul's joy, however, is completely independent of his own situation. Even while he was in prison, Paul always prayed with joy.

2. MYTH : In order to find joy, I must only look out for my own interests

While the secular world might believe this to be true, one of the paradoxes of the Christian life is that the more we give, the more we receive from God. Paul exhorts the congregation in Philippi to '*do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value*

others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others'. (Ph 2:3-4) We also see that Paul is consistent in this message as he cited examples of how Timothy and Epaphroditus likewise shows genuine concern for the welfare of the Christians in Philippi. (Ph 2:20-21)

3. MYTH : Joy is an emotion / a feeling that I have no control over

Here again, the reality of Paul's imprisonment is a reminder to us all. That even while in chains, Paul chooses to rejoice. It is a conscious decision that he makes for the sake of Christ. In Philippians 1:18b, Paul declares that he will continue to rejoice, and later, he commands the church to do everything without grumbling (Ph 2:14) ... and be glad and rejoice with him (Ph 2:18). Clearly, joy, to Paul, is a choice, rather than an emotion that he has no control over.

4. MYTH : My lack of joy affects only me

Sometimes in our Christian walk, we tend to think that everything is okay so long as we can stoically carry on with our life. We write off our lack of joy as part of our personality that cannot (or should not) be changed and believe that it does not (or should not) affect anyone else, and so justify our continued lack of joy. Paul reminds us that choosing joy is part of our Christian responsibility to shine as lights in the world that we are in, that we may be without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. (Ph 2:15)

5. MYTH : Joy is incompatible with sorrow

Through the trials and challenges of life, there will always be times of mourning and sorrow. At times, we are unable to understand how Paul can tell us to rejoice always even during the times of mourning. Yet Paul actually emphasises this very fact in his letter to the Corinthians. That as servants of God, they ought to commend themselves in every way, "known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything." (2 Cor 6:9-10) The opposite of joy is not sorrow, or suffering, or hardship. Rather, it is despair in life. It is despair in sorrow, suffering, and hardship.

CONCLUSION

Paul's letter to the Philippians teaches us that joy is not dependant on our personal situation, it is not found in seeking only after our own interests, nor is it an emotion that we have no control over. Lack of joy in our lives, not only affects us, but the people around us, many of whom we should be witnessing to and showing them the joy that overflows in our lives when we are in God's presence. Finally, joy is not incompatible with sorrow. It is not the opposite of sorrow or suffering or hardship. Joy can be found despite sorrow and suffering and hardship, and Christians have a hope for our joy.

Our hope is in Christ, that beyond our Calvary, one day, we will be complete in Him. Our hope is in God, and in His promises, even as we look beyond the trials and challenges in our current situation and cling on to our rock and strong foundation. Even as we pray for God's love to continue to restore us and dispel our fears so that we can live the life that He meant for us, the life that He has prepared beforehand for us to live.

QUESTIONS

The sermon is about pursuing joy as part of the Christian life. What is the purpose of joy?

The sermon mentioned five myths about joy that can cause us to believe that joy is impossible for us to achieve in our life. What are some things in your life that are “robbing” your joy?

How do you intend to pursue joy instead of despair? How can your CG members pray for you and help you in carrying out your plans?