



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Pursue Joy - Part 2

SPEAKER Elder Goh Hock Chye

THEME Gems from the Book of Philippians

DATE 11 & 12 March 2017

MESSAGE SUMMARY

AN OVERVIEW ON THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

The Book of Philippians is on Paul's secret of Christian joy. Throughout the four chapters, Paul mentions the words 'joy', 'rejoicing', or 'gladness', at least 19 times. He also made references the mind 16 times, using the words 'mind', 'think', or 'remember'. Put together, the secret of Christian joy is found in the way the believer thinks, in his or her attitude. In the second of his two-part sermon, Elder Hock Chye highlighted 4 thieves that can rob us of joy, and how we can learn from Paul's response to them.

4 STEALERS OF JOY

1. CIRCUMSTANCES

A reason why Christians get upset by circumstances is because they do not cultivate single-mindedness. In comparison, Paul was clear about his mission in life. He was in an unfavourable position: enchained, troubled by some who preached Christ out of envy and rivalry (Ph 1:17), and at times hungry and in need (Ph 4:11-12). However, he chose to see his imprisonment as a stepping stone for the advancement of the Gospel, increased boldness by other Christians, and preaching of Christ. Having a single mind like Paul did means seeing past our circumstances to trust God, and recognising that His ways are higher than ours.

2. PEOPLE

Paul knew people who preached the Gospel to create trouble for him, those whom he called 'evildoers' and 'mutilators of the flesh' (Ph 3:2). He set an example for us to follow in dealing with them by remembering and committing them in prayer. He also quoted three other figures for us to emulate: Jesus – who offered up an act of sacrifice; Timothy – who placed himself in a position of service; and Epaphroditus – who burdened himself to bless others. Having a submissive mind that values others above ourselves (Ph 2:3) will help us overcome people who can drain us of joy.

3. FLESH / THINGS

Paul was not one who had confidence in the flesh. He points out that most people "mind" earthly things, and challenges us to have a spiritual mind which views the world through God's eyes. He cited three key words in Ph 3 – "count" (v 7-11), "press" (v 12-16), and

“look” (v 17-21); specifically, to *count* new values in the light of the Lord’s coming, to *press* forward with energy and passion, and to *look* beyond our present situation towards citizenship in heaven. As Jesus tells us in Luke 12:15, “...Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions”, because these belongings do not last into heaven.

4. WORRY

Against the backdrop of Paul’s imprisonment and encounters with trouble-makers, including believers who did not agree in the Lord, he had every reason to be worried. Instead, he exhorted the church not to be anxious (Ph 4:6-9). We are reminded that worry stems from wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people and things. If we possess a single, submissive and spiritual mind, we should not need to worry. What we need is a secure mind to guard the heart and mind so that worry will not enter. As believers, we are empowered and can avail of our resources in Christ: God’s peace (Ph 4:7), His power, and His provision.

CONCLUSION

In the four chapters of Philippians, Paul described four attitudes of mind that will produce joy in spite of circumstances, people, flesh/things, and worries. We must guard what we think, because our thoughts can influence the extent of joy that we experience. Paul’s letter teaches us that we have a hope for joy in God, as Ph 4:4-5 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand...” Let us be wary of theft, and pursue joy as we have been commanded.

QUESTIONS

We are called to pursue joy. How does it differ from happiness?

Which of these “joy stealers” mentioned in the sermon tend to affect you most?

How will you overcome that “joy stealer”? What is one practical step you can take today?