

Paul's 7 Keys to Having Joy

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:3-8)

Joy is a theme of Philippians where Paul mentions joy or rejoice 16 times. He starts out his letter telling of the joy he has, and thanks to the Holy Spirit guiding his writing, we can get 7 keys to having joy ourselves:

- 1) **Being thankful for others and think positively about them.** It is always good to focus on the good things God has done for you (Psalm 37:3 says we are to feed on His faithfulness), which should bring joy and help us trust God, but it is also very beneficial to think of the good things God has done in others, or through others to you. So much so, that whenever you think of those people, you remember those things and thank God for them, which brings joy. Thinking positively about others and not on their mistakes or negative things (which takes self-discipline), makes this the first and most important key to joy. (Oh, and Paul met these people 11 years prior!)
- 2) **Focus on the well-being of others and pray for them.** When you think of others as in the first key above, a mature Christian will then want what is best for them and will pray for them. You do so with joy because you love them and care about them, and you know God does even more, and God has the power to give what is best for them.
- 3) **Have fellowship in the gospel.** What is the gospel? That assurance that your sins have been paid for by Jesus and you will spend eternity in Heaven. That in itself brings joy, and having fellowship with others that share that too - brings joy.
- 4) **Being confident that God will finish His work.** I think this passage brings joy more than any other. God does not give up, He doesn't waste His time, nor abandon someone, and He finishes what He has started - in you, and in others. This is joyous when we realize how powerful God is, and the promises He makes and keeps. True Christians are divinely preserved. Have confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. Confidence breeds contentment and contentment is the mature word for joy.
- 5) **Have others in your heart.** Having the well-being of others, and how God will fulfill His promises should be at the center of our thoughts and feelings. Proverbs 4:23 says to "*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*" which should be joy.
- 6) **Partakers of grace.** The more we know about the grace of God, the more joy we should have. The acronym I use to help me describe grace is **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Because of what Jesus did for us, God sheds His grace on us like sons get their father's inheritance, and we share that with others. (Revelation 21:7) That is a joyous thing.
- 7) **Have the affection of Jesus Christ.** We should have similar love and compassion for others as Jesus has for us. The word "affection" here comes from a Greek word meaning such intense emotion, our internal organs are affected. It is the strongest term used to describe a compassionate love that involves our entire being. We tend to not feel that way toward others in our culture, but Paul did, and it helped him get through 4 years in prison, where he wrote this. You really see in this verse 7 the **relationship** Paul had with these people. We should have those relationships too!