

1. Learning Why We Can Have Confidence in Our Lives

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to experience the joy of the Lord in their lives. Many people do not understand the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on the things that are happening around us. Joy depends on what the Lord is doing in our lives. As we help our children learn how the Lord is working in their lives, they will begin to experience a greater and greater joy in their daily lives. We will see that the book of Philippians has many lessons to teach us about joy.

In Philippians 1:1-2 we read, “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We see that this letter is sent to the church in the city of Philippi from Paul and Timothy. Paul was the one who dictated the letter and Timothy was probably the one who did the actual writing. We see that they call themselves the bondservants of Jesus Christ. The word that is translated “bondservant” was a common word in the Roman Empire because about half of the people in the empire were bondservants (slaves). Usually, a slave was in bondage to a master. However, for Paul and Timothy, it meant that they viewed Christ as their Master and were His willing servants in spreading the Gospel. Several of the other New Testament writers also use this word to describe their ministry.

We see that this letter was written to all of the saints in Christ Jesus who lived in Philippi. The word that is translated “saints” is much more frequently translated by the word “holy”. In Ephesians 1:4 we read, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Here, we see that Christ chose all Christians to be saints or holy ones. A saint is any person who has accepted the payment of their sins by Christ through repentance and faith. As a result, every true Christian is also a saint or holy one. That does not mean that we do not sin. Instead, it means that our sins were placed on Christ and He paid the penalty for them.

We see that the letter is also to the bishops and deacons. In Acts 20:17, we see that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus so he could talk with them. Then in Acts 20:28 we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” In this verse, the word translated “overseers” is the word that is translated “bishops” in every other usage. The word that is translated “shepherd” is also used in 1 Peter 5:2 when Peter is talking to the elders. Then Titus 1:5 uses the word “elders” and 1:7 uses the word “bishop”. We see that elders, bishops, overseers and shepherds are the same and used interchangeably, because all of these terms are used to speak of the leaders of a local church.

The word that is translated “deacons” speaks about those who assist the leaders. It is most commonly translated “ministers” or “servants”. Colossians 4:7 says, “Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.” In this verse, we see that the word is translated “minister”. In Romans 16:1, we read, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” In this verse, we see the word is translated

“servant”. As a result, we also see that the words “ministers”, “servants” and “deacons” can be used interchangeably because they assist those who are the leaders of each church. Paul reminded the Philippians that we have grace and peace from the Father and from Christ. “Grace” means that *we have spiritual life from God because of the loving-kindness of God*. That grace causes us to have peace with God because our sin has been paid for and removed.

Philippians 1:3-7 says, “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.” Here, we see that Paul continually gave thanks to God every time that he prayed for the Philippians. In fact, he was filled with joy as he prayed for them. The word translated “joy” speaks of the gladness and inner joy that we have because of our right relationship with the Lord. Here, Paul was filled with joy because of the spiritual growth of the Christians in the church at Philippi.

Paul had great joy every time that he prayed for the Philippians because he remembered their fellowship or participation together with him in the Gospel from the day that they became Christians up to the moment when he was writing this letter. This participation in the spreading of the Gospel caused Paul to be very confident as he thought about the Philippians. The word that is translated “being confident” means *to be persuaded*. 2 Thessalonians 3:4 says, “And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.” Paul was persuaded that both the Philippians and the Thessalonians would do what the Lord commanded them to do.

Paul had this confidence because of what God had begun in the lives of the Philippians when they placed their faith in Christ. He knew that the Lord would continue to carry out the good work that He had begun in their lives at the time of salvation. 2 Corinthians 8:6 says, “So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.” Just as Paul was confident that Titus would complete what Paul had asked him to do, Paul was even more confident that Christ would complete the good work that the Lord had started in the lives of the Philippians.

Paul said that he had the Philippians in his heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.” Here, we see that the heart is our inner being. Paul is expressing the deep love that he had for the Christians in Philippi. Paul had this great love for the Philippians because they had been a part of his life and ministry at many of the critical times in his ministry. In fact, in the last part of chapter two of Philippians, we see that they had sent Epaphroditus to help Paul with his needs while he was in prison in Rome. They had also sent financial gifts to help Paul at various times in his ministry. In this way, they were sharing in his imprisonment and in his defense of the Gospel before the Roman emperor.

Paul went on to say in Philippians 1:8-11, “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more

in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Here, we see the great love that Paul had for the Philippians. The word that is translated “affection” is a word that was used to speak of the inner organs of a person. As a result, it became the word that people used to speak of the great love that they had for a person because it was like saying that this love came from the deepest part of the inner person.

Paul also told the Philippians about the things that he prayed as he prayed for them. First, we see that he prayed that their love would continue to grow. Paul wanted them to come to a full knowledge and understanding of the love of Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8 says, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that a full knowledge of the love of Christ will guide us in everything that we do.

Second, Paul prayed that they would approve the things that are excellent. The word that is translated “approve” means *to test something to make certain it is genuine*. Galatians 6:4 says, “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” In this verse, the word is translated “examine”. As a result, we are to test our own works to make certain that they are genuine. The word that is translated “excellent” in this verse means *to test and to examine things that are different to determine the things that are truly important*. We also need to pray that our children will be able to determine the things that are really important.

Paul also prayed that they would be sincere and without offense. The word that is translated “sincere” means *pure*. The word that is translated “without offense” means *not led into sin or blameless*. Paul used this word of his own life in Acts 24:16 where we read, “This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” Paul wanted his conscience to be without offense or blameless in all that he did. Finally, Paul prayed that their lives would be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Proverbs 11:30 says, “The fruit of the righteous *is a* tree of life, and he who wins souls *is* wise.” Here, we see that the fruit of the righteous causes us to become a tree of life. That means that our lives draw others to Christ so that they can have eternal life. Just as Paul wanted the Philippians to live lives that were pure and blameless so that they would be fruitful, we should have the same desire for our physical and spiritual children. Then they can have lives that are filled with joy. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop lives that are pure and blameless so that you can have confidence that the Lord will continue to work in their lives.