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The Elements of Joy

1: 3-8

The elements of joy DIG: How does Paul feel about the church in Philippi? What does that show about his leadership style? How long had it been since Paul had ministered in Philippi? What had Paul remembered about them? Who is the object of intercessory prayer? How had the Philippians participated in Paul's ministry? What are the eight aspects of fellowship? What are the ten ways believers lose their joy?

REFLECT: Who do you have a fond recollection of in the Lord? Did they lead you to Messiah? Did they disciple you? Who are your prayer partners? Who do you pray for on a daily basis? What is your spiritual gift? How are you using it? What are you confident about in the Lord? What other believers do you share unity? How is the unity expressed? How much joy do you think the Lord feels towards your church?

Since we can do no works to gain our salvation, we can do no works to lose our salvation.

Paul's circumstances at the time **he** wrote **his** letter to **the believers** at **Philippi** were dire. **He** was imprisoned in Rome, possibly facing execution. As it turned out, **he** was released from this imprisonment, but **he** was not certain that would be the case when he wrote **Philippians**. He was under house arrest (**Acts 28:23** and **30**), chained to a Roman soldier (**Acts 28:16**) to prevent any possibility of escape. **The apostle** languished there, unable to do the ministry **he** loved, while others, taking advantage of his situation, were **proclaiming Messiah out of jealousy and rivalry** (to see link click [Ap](#) - Paul's Critics). However, **his heart** overflowed with **joy (1:18)**. If anything, those horrendous circumstances made **Paul's joy** all the greater, because **he** trusted the sovereign purpose of **his Lord** and turned to **him** even more to **Him** for strength and comfort.

True **joy** is an unwavering constant in a **Spirit-filled** life (**Romans 14:17**), not a transient emotional feeling that comes and goes depending on circumstances.

Because **Paul** was constantly near to **God**, **he** was constantly **joyful**. **He** experienced an inexpressible **peace (4:7)** and **contentment (4:11)** provided by **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** deep within **his heart** and soul because **he** had a conscience that was clear of offense against **ADONAI (Acts 23:1, 24:16; Second Corinthians 1:12; Second Timothy 1:3)**.¹⁵

The joy of recollection (1:3): I thank my God every time I think of you (1:3 CJB). It must have brought great **joy** to **the Philippians’ hearts** as **they** read how **the apostle** often thanked **God** for **them**. Here was a letter of commendation from one who was in Roman chains some 800 miles away. About ten years had passed since **Paul** had first ministered among **them**. Every time **Paul** thought of **them**, **he** thanked **ADONAI** for **them**.¹⁶ The phrase **my God** reflected **Paul’s** deep intimacy and communion with **the Lord**, to whom he belonged and served (**Acts 27:23**). **His** thankfulness for **the Philippians** was to **God**, emphasizing both that **the Lord** is the ultimate source of all **joy** and that it was **the Philippians’** relationship to **Him** through **Messiah** that caused **Paul** to **thank God**.

Paul’s recollection of **the Philippians** began with **his** Second Missionary Journey when the apostle came to **Philippi** (see **Acts Bu - Paul’s Second Missionary Journey**). **He** was specifically directed by **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** to go to **Macedonia** rather than **Bithynia**, as **he** and **Silas** had planned (**Acts 16:7-10**). **On Shabbat they went outside the city to the riverside**, where **they** expected to find Jewish worshipers. The only ones present were a group of women in **prayer**. One of them, **Lydia**, was a “**God-fearer**,” that is, a Gentile proselyte to Judaism (see **Acts Bb - An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53: God-fearers**). **She** accepted **Yeshua** as **her Messiah**, was **baptized** that day along with **her** newly believing household, and became the nucleus of the **Philippian** church. **She** then prevailed on **Paul** and those with **him** to be **her** guests at **her** home (**Acts 16:13-15**). The generosity and hospitality that **she** exhibited, characterized that congregation for years to come.

The joy of intercession (1:4): Another indispensable element of **joy** for believers is interceding before **ADONAI** on behalf of others. Those who are obedient to **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** will delight in the privilege of intercessory **prayer**. Faithful and sincere intercession is much more than an obligation; it is a **joy**. **Whenever I pray for you I always pray with joy (1:4 CJB)**. Faithful intercessors are more preoccupied with the needs and welfare of others than their own and ask **ADONAI** to pour out **His** divine blessing on **them**. **Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also the interests of others (2:4)**. Intercessory

prayer sometimes involves disappointment and pain. Nevertheless, **Paul's prayers for the Philippians** were offered with great appreciation and **joy**. Neither the unbelieving **false teachers**, nor the squabbling of believers such as **Euodia** and **Syntyche (4:2)**, could rob **Paul** of **his joyful** remembrance of that cherished congregation.¹⁷

The joy of participation (1:5): The Philippians had supported **Paul** with **their prayers** and **finances (Phil 4:14-19; 2 Cor 8:1-5; Rom 15:26)** while **he** went about **his** missionary ministry. **In view of your participation** (Greek: *koinonia*, meaning *fellowship*) **the Gospel from the very first day until now (1:5 Greek)**. In the broadest sense, **the apostle** rejoiced that **the Philippians** were saved and thus partnered with **him** in spreading **the Gospel**. That **participation** included **their** generous financial support **(4:15-16)**. The joint ministry of **the Gospel** had gone on from the first day when **Lydia** had opened **her** home to the preaching of **the Word (Acts 16:15)**, **until now**, the moment when **Paul** was writing this letter, **he** was grateful for **their** help.¹⁸

In his commentary on *Philippians*, William Hendriksen lists **eight elements**, or types, **of koinonia**. First and foremost is **the fellowship of grace**. This is not a natural, man-made fellowship, but one sovereignly designed and achieved by **YHVH** through **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; Romans 4:5)**.

Second is **the fellowship of faith**. On the human level, it is faith alone that brings sinners to salvation. **Paul** and **Silas** told **the jailer** in **Philippi: Trust in the Lord Yeshua, and you will be saved - you and your household (Acts 16:31 cf. Romans 10:9-10)**. Yet, as noted above, even human faith has a divine origin. **For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)**.

Third is **the fellowship of prayer and thanksgiving**. Nothing binds believers together more closely than worshipping **ADONAI** in corporate praise and thanksgiving. Believers are **always [to be] giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua Messiah to God, even the Father (Ephesians 5:20)**; and they are to **rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for them in Messiah Yeshua (First Thessalonians 5:15-18)**.

Fourth is **the fellowship of love**, the supreme virtue that encompasses all other virtues (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Cu - The Necessity of Love**).

Paul went on to say that **love is patient, love is kind and does not envy, love does not brag and is not proud, is not rude or selfish, it is not selfish or easily angered, does not keep a record of wrongs, rejoices in the truth, love covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things . . . the greatest of these is love (First Corinthians 13:4-8 and 13).**

Fifth is **the fellowship of contributing to the needs of others.** While we have the opportunity, **Paul** warned, **let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith (Galatians 6:10).** Even under the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on [Exodus Da - The Dispensation of the Torah](#)), believers were commanded: **Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it (Deuteronomy 3:27).**

Sixth is **the fellowship of sharing the Gospel.** That is done through preaching, teaching, witnessing, and supporting those whom the Lord has specifically called to those ministries. This fellowship is clearly the fulfillment of **Messiah's** Great Commissions. The first Great Commission was in **Genesis 12:3: I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you, and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed;** and the restatement of the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19-20: Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach Ha'Kodesh, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.**

Seventh is **the fellowship of separation from the world.** In **His** Upper Room discourse shortly before **His** arrest, **Yeshua** told the remaining eleven apostles: **You are not of this world, but I chose you out of the world (John 15:19).** A negative, but extremely important part of fellowship to **keep oneself from being contaminated by the world (James 1:27).** **John** encouraged believers: **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father, but from the world (First John 2:15-16).**¹⁹

Eight is **the fellowship of spiritual gifts.** Every believer receives a **spiritual gift** at the moment of salvation. Our **spiritual gifts** help to build unity within **the Body of Messiah.** **Messiah** has **generously divided out his gift to us (Ephesians 4:7 CEV).** Neither do you get to choose which **gifts** you'd like to have; **the Spirit of God** determines that. **Paul** explained: **It is the one and only Ruach**

Ha’Kodesh who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have (First Corinthians 12:11). Most people have one dominant **spiritual gift** and a lesser, or secondary **spiritual gift**. Because **God** loves variety and **He** wants us to be special, no single **gift** is given to everyone (**First Corinthians 12:29-30**). Also, no individual receives *all the gifts*. If you had them all, you’d have no need for anyone else, and that would defeat one of **God’s** purposes - to teach us to **love** and depend on each other. But a believer who willingly forsakes fellowship with other believers will inevitably be without genuine, **Spirit-driven joy**. There are no “lone-ranger” believers (**Hebrews (10:25)**).



The joy of anticipation (1:6). And **Paul** was **confident of their** future help. **And I am confident** (Greek: *pepoithos*) **of this very thing**. The perfect tense of the Greek word translated *being confident* indicates that **Paul** had come to a settled conviction earlier and that **he** was still confident that **it** was true. What was he so confident about? It was **that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day when Messiah Yeshua returns (1:6 Greek)**. That **good work** was **their** salvation. **The day when Messiah Yeshua returns** clearly refers to the time when believers will be glorified, when our salvation will be completed and made perfect (**First Corinthians 3:10-15; Second Corinthians 5:10**). Believers **are predestined to be conformed into the image of the Son (Romans 8:29)**. **We know that when Messiah appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is (First John 3:2)**. When **ADONAI** saves, **He** saves completely and eternally (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **He** has no unfinished works.

The joy of affection (1:7-8). So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. The Greek allows for the phrase **since you have me in your heart**. Certainly both **Paul** and **the Philippians** were in each other's **hearts**. But **since Paul** made a specific reference to **himself** in **verse 7**, it is better to take the **NLT** rendering. **His** affection for **the believers** in **Philippi** is also stated in **1:8** and **4:16**.²⁰ **You share with me the special favor of God, both in my chains and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News (1:7 NLT).**

For God is my witness, I love you and long (Greek: *epipotho*) **for you with the tender affection of Messiah Yeshua (1:8 Hebrew).** The word **witness** (Greek: *martus*) is where we get the word *martyr*. What a miracle of divine grace for the former proud **Pharisee** to have such **tender affection** for these former pagan Greeks! But that is not all. **He** tells them that this longing is in the bowels of **Messiah Yeshua**. The inner organs, here designated by the word **affection** (Greek: *splanchnois*), were regarded by the ancients as the seat of **tender affection**. We would say **the heart**. As a result, **Paul** describes **his longing**, not as an individual emotion, but as **Messiah's longing**, as if the very **heart** of **Messiah** lived in **Paul**.²¹

In his commentary on *Philippians*, John MacArthur lists **eight ways that believers lose their biblical joy**. First, believers lose their **joy** by **focusing on difficult circumstances**. Despite the abundant blessings all believers have in **the Lord**, many become dissatisfied because of their **circumstances**. They are unhappy with their appearance, the opportunities that come their way, or with the countless other things that they do not have, but think they deserve. **Yeshua** promised: **I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27 Greek).** **Paul** kept that promise constantly in mind, **his** attitude toward temporary, non-eternal things was therefore clear: **I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself in. I have learned the secret of living in every circumstance, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little (4:11-12 NLT).**

A second factor that hinders **joy** is **the influence of Satan and his demons** (see *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis). **Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (First Peter 5:8 NLT).** In many ways, including false teachers, **the wicked one** attempts to deceive believers. Although **he** cannot rob

them of their salvation, **he** can rob them of their **joy**.

A third cause of the lack of **joy** is an **inadequate understanding of ADONAI'S sovereignty**. For believers to worry about their **circumstances**, and to fear what the future may bring is equivalent to doubting **God's** sovereignty, as well as **His** power and love. In the Sermon on the Mount, **Messiah** commanded **His** followers not to be anxious about anything (**Matthew 6:25**). And perhaps the most cherished promise of all, **He** said: **Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God and also in Me (John 14:1)**. For believers, **God's** sovereignty is the overarching, all-encompassing reality that keeps everything in perspective (**Psalms 55:22**).

A fourth negative element that can steal our **joy** is **lack of prayer**. Believers who fail to pray inevitably lose sight of **God's** sovereignty, and **His** love and care for us. When believers fail to pray they either give up hope or try to fix **the circumstance** that they find themselves in. There are times when it's appropriate to **call on the elders** of your **congregation** for help (**James 5:14-16**). But that can never take the place of a believer's own **prayers**. As **Paul** makes clear in this letter: **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (4:6 NIV)**.

A fifth factor that robs believers of their **joy** is **ingratitude**. Few things are more distasteful than ingratitude. **Paul** commanded that our **prayers** and appeals to **YHVH** be made with **thanksgiving (4:6)**. In **First Thessalonians 5:18**, the **apostle** urged us to **give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Messiah Yeshua**. Rebellious sinners are indicted and sentenced to divine judgment because of their ingratitude (see the commentary on **Romans An - The Depraved Mind of the Gentile Pagan**).

The sixth cause of lack of **joy** is **forgetting the Lord**. Forgetfulness is not a mark of innocence, but of faithlessness and sin. David reminded himself and all believers: **Bless ADONAI, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits (Psalm 103:2 CJB)**. The spiritual chaos that causes division in the congregations of **God** today is not incited by new converts, but by those who have left their first love. **The Lord** warned the orthodox, hardworking, and persevering believers in **Ephesus: But I hold this against you . . . You have left your first love. Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I will come and remove your menorah from its place (2:4)**.

A seventh factor in the loss of **joy** is **living in the flesh instead of living in the Spirit**. **Paul** argues that the surrender of our own fleshly desires to the personal control of the indwelling **Ruach Ha’Kodesh** is the secret of victory over sin and of living a life in which divine love is the motivating impulse. **The Ruach** will suppress the activities of our sin nature as we trust **Him** to do so, and cooperate with **Him** in the process of being conformed into the image of **Messiah** as seen in the fruit of **the Ruach** (see the commentary on [Galatians Bv - Walk by the Ruach, and Not the Desires of the Flesh](#)).

The eighth and final reason for a lack of **joy** is **unwillingness to accept forgiveness**. On the surface, that attitude can appear to reflect humility, but it is the furthest thing from that. It is, in fact, an insult to **ADONAI’s** righteous character and the clear teaching of **His Word**. Our **Lord** made it plain that **if [believers] forgive others for their transgressions, [their] heavenly Father will also forgive [them]. But if [they] do not forgive others, then [their] Father will not forgive [their] transgressions (Matthew 6:14-15)**. David declared that **as far as the east is from the west, so far has [ADONAI] removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12)**, and John wrote that **if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9 cf. 2:12)**. That basic truth alone is enough for the believer never to be **joyless**. The fellowship of **God’s** people should be a fellowship of **joy**! The unbeliever’s **joy** must come from the outside; however, the believer’s **joy** comes from within. Despite the inevitable sorrows, disappointments, and pain of life, believers can always be **joyful**! Biblical **joy** is not built on **circumstances**, because it is **a gift of the Ruach Ha’Kodesh (Galatians 5:22)**.²²

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that You are so very wonderful! Living with **You** at the center of my life brings me such **joy** which comes from my very special relationship with **You**. It gives me such **joy** to know that **You** have said: **If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23)**. I also find joy in interceding for others (**Philippians 1:4**). I know I can trust **You** with absolute certainty that **when I seek You, I will find You, provided I seek You with all my heart (Jer 29:12)**. I can be filled with **Your joy**, even in the midst of painful circumstances. In **Messiah’s** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*