

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Epistle of Joy Philippians 1:1-2 Part 2**

The theme of this epistle is joy. Biblical joy is a deep down confidence that all is well no matter what the circumstances might be.” It is a gift from God to all those who believe and is produced in them by the Holy Spirit as they receive and obey God’s Word. It is not diminished by trials. Trials only cause biblical joy to focus on future glory. Though as Christians we may or may not experience happiness which is related to circumstances, joy should be our constant companion.

Certainly Paul demonstrated this to be true. He wrote this epistle while he was imprisoned in Rome. He was facing the very real possibility of being executed, but in spite of these terrible circumstances he wanted to communicate to the Philippians his joy. Not only did he want the Philippians to know that he was rejoicing in spite of his circumstances, he wanted the Philippian Church to share in that joy.

Hopefully as we study this epistle, this is exactly what will take place in our lives. Hopefully, we will not only know about Paul’s joy in the midst of terrible circumstances, but we will share in his joy. Hopefully, we will share with him that deep down confidence that all is well no matter what the circumstances might be in our lives.

We have begun to work toward that goal by examining the introduction of this epistle. Let us read **Phil. 1:1-2 “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: (2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** I have divided these two verses into three different parts.

The first part that we have considered I entitled “The servants.” Let us look at **V. 1 “Paul and Timothy bondservants of Christ Jesus.”** Paul, the author of this epistle, identifies he and his traveling companion, Timothy, as bondservants of Christ. They were not forced into service, they willingly chose to enter Christ’s service. This should not be difficult for us to understand. Why? Because we also have entered Christ’s service willingly. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith we in effect became what? The willing bondservants of Christ.

Hopefully as professing believers, this is how we view ourselves. Hopefully as professing believers you can say this weekend with Paul and Timothy that you are a bondservant of Christ and Christ alone.

This morning we will be continuing on in our examination of the introduction of this epistle. We have looked at “the servants” and now we will look at “the saints.”

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### THE SAINTS

Let us look at **V. 1** again, **“Paul and Timothy bondservants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi.....”** Let us consider for a moment what Paul means by the word “saint.” Is Paul referring to a certain group of Christians who have somehow distinguished themselves through acts of personal piety or manifestations of power? And the answer is absolutely not.

The word “saint” (HAGIOS) is the noun form of the verb “sanctify”, meaning “to separate or set apart.” But there is a very important question that needs to be answered. How did the saints in Philippi become saints? Did they have to go to school and get a degree? Did they have to go through some kind of internship? Did they have to distinguish themselves through good works or distinguish themselves through signs and wonders? How did these saints in Philippi become saints? The passage tells us.

**“Paul and Timothy bondservants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus.”** Christians are saints because they are “in Christ Jesus.” You have never met a Buddhist who could say, “I am in Buddha” or a Muslim who could say, “I am in Mohammed.” But these Philippian saints could say this. And because they were **“in Christ Jesus”** they were set apart and because they were set apart they were saints.

Are you a saint? If you are “in Christ” you are a saint. If you are not “in Christ” you are not a saint. There are only two kinds of people in this world “the saints” and the “ain’ts.”

What does it mean to be **“in Christ Jesus?”** Being “in Christ Jesus” means that we have been joined to Christ and share His life (1 Cor. 12:12,13). When did this happen? It happened when we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior and were Spirit baptized into Christ. Listen to **1 Cor. 12:12,13** **“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body so also is Christ (13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...”** How many believers have been baptized into Christ Jesus? All believers have been baptized into Christ. Buddhists may follow the teachings of Buddha, but they are not “in Buddha.” And Muslims may follow the teachings of Mohammed, but they are not “in Mohammed.” But Christians alone, through the baptism of the Spirit are in Christ, fused together with the very life of Christ. This is why Paul is able to say what he does in **Gal. 2:20** **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of god, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”**

How important is it for us to understand that we are saints? How important is it for us to understand that through the baptizing work of the Spirit, we have been joined to the very life of Christ and have therefore been set apart from the world? I believe it is very important. People tend to live lives consistent with who they believe they are (Prov. 23:7). If a person thinks himself to be a winner he will tend to act like a winner. If a person thinks himself to be a loser he will tend to act like a loser. What does **Prov. 23:7** say, **“As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.”**

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So let me ask you this question? Who are you in Christ? The correct answer is, “You are a saint.” This is not a fairy tale this is the truth. And if we can embrace this truth it will make a difference in our lives.

Is it important that we be reminded of this? Apparently so! How do we know this. Because the scriptures are continually using this word to refer to Christians. In **Acts 9:13** “**But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem.’**” In **Acts 9:32** “**Now it came about that as Peter was traveling through all those parts, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydia.**” 58 times in the New Testament we find the word “saints” used to refer to Christians in general.

Who are you in Christ? You are a saint. You have been joined to the life of Christ and have been set apart for his glory. Let us therefore live accordingly.

Where are the saints living that Paul is addressing in this epistle? Philippi. Let us once again look at the verse. “**Paul and Timothy bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi ...**” Is this important? Yes. Philippi had special distinctives. And these distinctives help understand why Paul went there.

Philippi’s resources: Gold and Silver. Since the time of the Phoenicians it had tremendous gold and silver mines. And because of these mines it had become a boom town. In addition to it’s natural resources it was also located very strategically. Philippi’s location: Top of the Aegean Sea. The city was located at the top of the Aegean sea . Try and picture the Mediterranean Sea in your mind. You have Italy which protrudes down into the Mediterranean. Then you have Greece which protrudes down into the Mediterranean. And then you have Turkey which protrudes down into the Mediterranean. Between Italy and Greece is the Adriatic Sea and between Greece and Turkey (Biblical Asia) is the Aegean Sea. This means that any road going from east to west or from west to east from Europe to Asia had to run along the top edge of these two seas. This meant that all trade going from east to west or west to east would have to go through Philippi because Philippi was at the top of the Aegean sea between Greece and Turkey. This trade route was known as the Ignatian highway. Just as a point of interest it might be helpful to note that when the Ignatian highway got to Italy and turned toward Rome it became known as the Appian way.

So not only was Philippi rich in natural resources, but it also was very strategically located. So it is not surprising that this area got a great deal of attention. Philippi’s founding: 368 BC by Philip of Macedon. The city was built in 368 BC by Philip of Macedon the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi’s status: a Roman Colony. Though it was built originally as a Greek city, it became a Roman colony. The way this would occur is that once a city was determined to be strategic, such as Philippi, they would place 300 Roman soldiers who were about to retire and place them in positions of influence within that particular city. And after doing this it would not take very long before every Roman was quickly introduced into the life of that city.

As a colony they enjoyed self-government. They were not directly governed by Rome though they were under Rome. They enjoyed total freedom from taxation. The citizens of a Roman colony would be considered citizens of Rome. These colonies in effect became little “Rome’s.”

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But even though it was a special city set apart by its resources, location, and status we only today remember it because of this letter of the Philippian church.

How did the church begin in Philippi? The birth of the church at Philippi is recorded for us in Acts 16:11-40. After Paul received the Macedonian vision while in Asia, he eventually found himself along with Silas, Timothy, and Luke in the Macedonian city of Philippi. And their first recorded attempt at reaching the people of this city for Christ occurred on a Sabbath. **Acts 16:13** where it says **“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.”** Why didn't they go to a Jewish synagogue which was their custom. In order to have a synagogue there needed to be 10 Jewish men. Apparently there were not enough Jewish men in Philippi to support a synagogue.

We now know why they did not go to a synagogue, but why did they go to the river expecting to find people praying? It involved a Jewish tradition. Jewish people who had been displaced and who had no formal place to worship from the time of the Babylonian captivity would go to a nearby river to weep and pray (Ps. 137). Why did Paul go down to the river? Paul went to the river to find faithful God-fearing Jews who honored their traditions. Did he find what he had hoped for? Yes! He found a small group of women.

From this group of women Lydia was the first convert to Christianity in Europe along with her household (Acts 16:14.) After she was converted her whole household embraced the Christian faith and her home became Paul and Silas's base of operations.

A second possible convert to Christianity individually identified was a demon possessed slave girl who had been delivered by Paul (Acts 16:16-18). Apparently while demon possessed she had the ability to tell fortunes. And therefore this girl was a source of profit to those who owned her. With her special source of knowledge she followed after Paul and his companions declaring, **“These men are bondservants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.”** You might think this was a good thing but obviously Paul did not appreciate this kind of publicity, so he cast the demon out of her and ultimately put his owners out of business. Certainly it is not at all certain that this girl became a Christian as a result of this deliverance, but I would like to think that she did.

Though it is not clear whether she became a Christian it is clear that this deliverance did not go over very well with the owners and they had Paul and Silas drug into the marketplace before the magistrates of the city and were charged with being Jewish rabble rousers. As a result of this charge and the public outcry, orders were given for them to be beaten with rods and thrown into prison where the Philippian jailer was commanded to guard them securely. The Philippian jailer became the third convert to Christianity individually identified.

Were Paul and Silas happy about their circumstances? Of course not. But were they rejoicing? Yes, they had a deep down confidence that all was well. In **Acts 16:25** it says, **“But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”** Yes their bodies may have been battered and bruised.

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There future may not have looked very promising. But Paul and Silas knew that all was well in spite of their circumstances and they rejoiced.

Was their faith misplaced? The Philippian jailer certainly would not think so. Listen to the words of Acts 16:26-34 **“And suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened. (27) And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had been the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. (28) But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!” (29) And he called for lights and rushed in, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, (30) and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (31) And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.” (32) And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. (33) And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. (34) And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.”** The Philippian jailer was rejoicing greatly. Why? Was it because of his circumstances. The answer is no. Rather he knew that all was well regardless of his circumstances.

### CONCLUSION

Can you along with Paul and Timothy bondservants of Christ, and the saints at Philippi rejoice this morning regardless of your circumstances. Can you do this because you know that all is well regardless of your circumstances? Can someone say that all is well regardless of their circumstances? They can say this. They can only say this if they can sing the following words and know that it is true ..... **My sin - O the joy of this glorious thought - My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more: Praise the Lord praise the Lord, O my soul.** If you believe this, then you are well prepared this morning to rejoice regardless of your circumstances.