



SERIES: Philippians (May / June) “Finding Joy in the Journey”

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

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Scripture: Philippians 3:1

TITLE: The Secret to Lasting Joy

What if you could be at peace when you find out your spouse is leaving you? What if you could be joyful when the diagnosis is terminal? What if you could be confident in the face of job loss or economic uncertainty? The good news, according to the Apostle Paul, is you can ALWAYS rejoice in the Lord! Listen to his exhortation in Philippians 3:1 (NLT):

“Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.”

If you're like me, you want to reach into the Bible and slap Paul across the face. “Are you kidding me, Paul? *Whatever happens... ..rejoice in the Lord.* I mean, Paul, I've heard of the power of positive thinking, but this is insulting.”

Or is it? The theme of joy is an important theme in Philippians and the rest of the New Testament. You will find it over 150 times. James said this in James 1: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you experience trials of various kinds.” (James 1:2, NIV)

Now, here's the deal. James and Paul aren't discounting the painful trials that pop up. James called them trials for a reason. Paul has been writing while on house arrest awaiting trial. Paul's companions faced trials, illness, and setbacks. So, the problems are real.

What Paul is saying is, in the midst of the pain, you can be joyful. You can have lasting joy, no matter what happens to you. This is a mark of saving faith. You can experience and display true joy in all circumstances.

The question is, how can we experience this kind of joy? Well, it is supernaturally produced. It's supplied by the Holy Spirit. But just like when a friend drops by offering help for a project, I can welcome them in, or send them back home. I have a choice in the matter. Well, we have the same choice today with supernatural joy.

One commentator said, “The result is a supernaturally produced emotion, the fruit of walking in the Spirit. Thus, rejoicing marks true believers.” (MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 216). Chicago: Moody Press.) So we have to choose to receive it.

Friend and professor, Clay Jones, reminds us that when we compare our trials, and even the span of our lives, to the glorious, pain-free, tear-free, hurt-free eternal future in Paradise with Christ, joy can begin to appear. In 1999, I underwent a major jaw surgery and it meant pain, discomfort, and having my jaw wired for 2 weeks. It was painful. It wasn't fun. But that temporary

discomfort provided a better life. How much more so for the pains today and the Paradise in the future.

So here's my challenge for you today: Read Revelation 21-22 and begin to think about Heaven. Heaven and Paradise are coming. We, as Christians, will be there reigning with Christ for eternity. The disciple Peter, when he took his eyes off Jesus, began to sink. However, when he was focused on the truth- on Jesus –he *walked* on water! Likewise, we can walk through any trial with joy. When we focus on Heaven, we will have lasting joy. I want it. You want it. My prayer is that we receive it.