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Greetings Friends,

Grace Crews related an incident to which many of us can relate. When she was working in a U.S. Senator's office, one of her responsibilities was to conduct tours for visitors. One day she had just finished a tour and was told that another unscheduled group would be arriving soon, so she hurried to get lunch. While she was a bit frazzled at the last-minute change in plans, she was trying to get her thoughts together when she looked up to see someone staring at her from across the room. "That person looks familiar, I thought, glancing away. Again I looked up and the unidentified woman's eyes met mine. Finally, the third time, I smiled, raised my hand, and waved. The woman smiled and waved back. I don't have time to be sociable, I realized, concentrating on my lunch. Then my mind snapped into focus—the woman who looked so familiar was my own reflection in the mirrored wall."

Now many of us know what it is to get so caught up in the rush of life that we lose our sense of what's happening around us. Lily Tomlin made an wise observation: "The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win you're still a rat."

It seems that Apostle Paul always ends his letters with practical issues. He touches what we believe but then relates our beliefs to how we live. One of the problems of the Philippians church is still a problem for many today; our mental attitudes and how they affect our lives.

When Paul wrote the Philippians letter he was in prison in Rome waiting to learn whether he would be acquitted or executed. With Nero on the throne, he had every reason to think he may die. While in prison and facing the prospect of execution he wrote amazing advice for all of us, "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4 - NLT).

This was for Paul, one of the keys to a satisfying life. He said that we can live beyond the control of our circumstances if we learn to "be full of joy in the Lord."

Too often Christians have not manifested the kind of joy that draws people to faith in Christ. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers."

It's hard for some of us to imagine that we can have joy in the middle of trying circumstances. Now this principle is carried over from the Old Testament.

David was in a precarious position when he penned Psalm 63. He was in a cave, surrounded by Philistines, and was waiting for the stirring in the tops of the trees to indicate that God was moving ahead of him in battle. He wrote, "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands" (verses 3-4). Whether we are in prison or in a cave, whether we are enjoying God's blessing or struggling through a crisis, we can be full of joy in the Lord.

Paul doesn't tell us to rejoice that we are **in prison** or to be full of joy because we **are suffering**. He tells us that **our joy is in the Lord**. And we can always rejoice in Him. Christian joy is independent of things on earth because it has its source in the continual presence of God. Our attitude is connected to another person and another place.

Maybe you have observed this. At a sporting event the crowd is watching a game where their team is losing, but suddenly responds with a roar, having nothing to do with the game they are watching but a score goes up on the scoreboard showing another team they like that is winning!

We are watching a game that is played out in our lives, but the scoreboard we can not always see tells us that Jesus has won every battle. **I may not be able to enjoy today's events, but I can rejoice in the big picture. Jesus has won!**

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I pray that each of us will have days when joy comes readily, but the reality is that we may also face difficult days. But our circumstances do not determine whether or not we can be joyful. We rejoice in the Lord and no matter what is happening in our lives for the moment, He is still Lord. He stands above our troubles and we can draw our joy from Him. The world is hungry for that kind of joy. Paul says that we can sing and be joyful no matter what is going on in our lives and that kind of joy is contagious.

Join us in one of our services as we experience the joy of the Lord together!

For His Service,

Pastor Phil & Rhonda



Announcing Pastor Phil's new upcoming series:

"Outrageous Faith!"

The series begins

Sunday, August 2

Pastor Phil will explore the book of Hebrews to investigate the topic of faith and discuss making an "outrageous faith" your own.