

INTRODUCTION.

- A. The story is told of a grandmother and her granddaughter. The driver's license said she was 69 years old and that she got an "F" in sex.
 - B. Sometime between that age of childhood innocence and right now, life has become a grim marathon of frowns--a major downer for far too many adults (Swindoll, LA, xv).
 - C. The theme of Philippians is Xian joy. Even chained to a Roman soldier and knowing terrible pain, Paul writes of letter that resounds of joy. Yes, 104 verses of relief and laughter. Notice:
 - 1. He prayed with joy (Phil. 1:3-4).
 - 2. He faced his dilemmas with joy (Phil. 1:21-25).
 - 3. He asked others to be joyful with him (Phil. 2:1,2).
 - 4. He preached the message with joy (Phil. 3:1).
 - 5. He wanted to do everything with joy (Phil. 4:4).
 - D. Paul says we ought to be and can be JOYFUL:
 - 1. There's great joy in living... in spite of difficult circumstances.
 - 2. There's great joy in serving... in spite of being used and abused.
 - 3. There's great joy in sharing... in spite of losing all things.
 - 4. There's great joy in resting... in spite of worldly materialism.
 - E. To have a lack of joy is to have a lack FAITH:
 - 1. If hardship comes... it's only because God permits it.
 - 2. If pain dogs our steps... it's only because God allows it.
 - 3. If troublesome times are upon us... remember that God is still in sovereign control.
 - 4. If it seems there is no way out... God knows you are troubled.
- Have faith and be joyful!**
- F. I will not deny that prayer can be a very difficult spiritual work! But any work that can be done with joy is easier and enjoyable. Those who enjoy their jobs do not see it as work!

I. YOU CAN HAVE JOY IN YOUR PRAYERS.

- A. Be careful how you pray, too many times we ask amiss (Jas. 4:4).
- B. How many of us, looking for greater joy and happiness, have prayed, "If I only had..."
 - 1. More money, I would laugh more.
 - 2. More talent, I'd laugh more.
 - 3. More beauty, I'd laugh more.
 - 4. A more fulfilling job, I'd laugh more.
 - 5. Better physical health, I'd laugh more.
- C. But JOY and HAPPINESS are not things to be prayed for--HAPPINESS is a choice.

"I have discovered that a joyful countenance has nothing to do with one's age, occupation, education, marital status or circumstances. Joy is a matter of choice. It is an attitude that stem's from one's confidence (faith) in God. If you believe that God is at work, that He is in full control, and that He is in the midst of Whatever has already happened, is happening, and will happen--then it's time to laugh again" (Swindoll, LA, p. 22).

II. THREE JOY STEALERS.

- A. **Worry** is a joy stealer.
 - 1. Worry is an inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur.

It has been my observation that what is being worried about usually does not occur. Worry is an acid that eats away our joy until we know the outcome of our situation. "Worry is an old man with bended head, With a load of feathers he thinks is lead." See Mt. 6:25ff.

2. What qualifies as a worry?
Anything that drains your tank of joy! It may be something you cannot change, you are not responsible for, you are unable to control, that frightens or torments you, or that agitates you.
 3. Worry robs us of our joy because worry forces us to focus on the wrong things.
- B. **Stress** is a joy stealer.
1. Stress is the intense strain over a situation over which we have no control. It is trying to control things over which we have no control. Instead of turning loose of it to God, we churn over it. Many times the thing that plagues us isn't as severe as we make it out to be.
 2. We need to realize that many times the safest place for something is to be out of our control (M. 11:28-30).
- C. **Fear** is a joy stealer:
1. This is different than worry and stress; fear is a dreadful uneasiness over the presence of danger, evil or pain. The Bible says "be not afraid" or "fear not" some 365 times.
 2. I've no right before God, to be called His child, and let fear steal my joy (Jn. 14:1,6).
- D. **Circumstance** is a joy stealer:
1. Some critics would be quick to point out that our times do not lead themselves to such an easygoing philosophy. They would ask, "Under these circumstances, how could I be anything but grim?"
 2. Our reply is, "What are you doing UNDER the circumstances, a Xian is to live ABOVE their circumstances!"

III. HOW TO FIND JOY IN PRAYER.

- A. In Phil. 4:6, Paul uses three words to describe prayer:
1. Prayer--the general term for making requests known to God. It carries the ideas of adoration, devotion, and worship.
 2. Supplication--is the earnest sharing of our needs and problems. There is no place for half-hearted, insincere prayer.
 3. Thanksgivings--giving thanks is something that God desires to hear (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:15-17).
- B. But in these verses of Phil. 4, Paul tells we can do three things in our prayer life. These three things will help us to find joy in prayer:
1. **Rejoice** (4:4).
Rejoicing is clearly a scriptural command. Can we afford to ignore it? In place of worry, start spending your time enjoying the release of your humor. Find the bright side, the sunny side of life. Deliberately look for things that are funny during your day. Loosen up and laugh freely.
 2. **Relax** (4:5).
We would say, "Be easygoing." It is a "sweet reasonableness," the idea of a relaxed, easygoing lifestyle. A worry-filled world can increase tension to a dangerous level. If you will "Let God be God" then you can relax.
 3. **Rest** (4:6-7).
Prayer allows a person to rest. Notice, TLB translation of 4:7; "as we pray and cast our cares on God, we should feel our souls at rest with the worries of life."

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Look at Jn. 15:7-11. Notice that joy is a choice; a choice that Jesus has made in your behalf. He wants you to have His joy in your life.
- B. And that includes your prayer life.
- C. Is there any joy in your faith? Is there any joy in your prayers?

- D. Story of the church which was being petitioned against their loud singing. The rabbi wouldn't sign it because if the Messiah had come, you couldn't contain his joy.
- E. You are praying to the Almighty God, there can be great joy in that!
- F. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.