

The Epistle of Joy

John MacArthur

I. Introduction.

- A. Text: Philippians 1:1-2.
- B. Happiness for men is related to happenings. It is something one cannot plan or program.
- C. Joy is different. It is the flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the king is in residence there.
- D. Only Christians know true and lasting joy.

II. A theology of joy.

- A. It comes from God. (Psalm 4:7-8; 16:11)
- B. It is a gift to those who believe the gospel. (John 15:11)
- C. It is produced by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17, Galatians 5:22)
- D. It is produced as a believer receives and obeys the Word. (Jeremiah 15:16, 1 John 1:4)
- E. It is real in contrast to trials. (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2 Corinthians 6:10, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1)
- F. It sets its hope on future glory. (Romans 12:12, 1 Peter 4:13, Jude 24, 1 Peter 1:8)

III. Background.

A. Servants.

1. Paul was a Jew who gave himself to Christ and spent the rest of his life proclaiming him.
2. Timothy was Paul's companion. He is added to the letter because he was important to the Philippians, to validate him as the letter carrier, and to authenticate the letter—Paul may have dictated the letter to Timothy. (Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16:21, Colossians 4:18)
3. They were willing servants out of affection and love. (Exodus 21:5)
4. Service to Christ is a perfect freedom. (2 Samuel 15:15)
5. Paul wrote this letter in prison.

B. Saints.

1. Saints refer to all believers—those who are made holy by Christ's salvation. (Mark 9:13)

2. Philippi was a Roman colony that was freed from taxation and enjoyed citizenship.
3. Paul helped to build the church at Philippi. (Acts 16:1-3)
4. Paul had a special bond with them—they were always sending him gifts.

C. Salutation.

1. Paul wishes the best for the Philippians.
2. He was a man who was concerned about others.

Application Questions:

1. What is the difference between joy and happiness?

2. Do you think that only Christians can experience true joy? Defend your answer.

3. How is Paul's relationship with the Philippians a model for us in our relationship with others? Explain.
