

## The Tie That Binds | Philippians 1:1-8

As we have studied recently, joy is a Christian command (Gal. 5:22). It is also a consequence of trial (James 1:2) and a commodity of the Christian life (John 15:11). However, when joy-filled Christians come together, do we have corporate joy? The letter to the Philippians is a reflection of this kind of joy. The word joy is used five times in its four chapters. Often, we think unity is the primary issue facing the church, but unity should actually be assumed. Joy, corporate joy, should be the focus.

In the beginning of the letter, Paul demonstrates the blessing and virtue of memory. He is a praying Christian, and his prayers are marked by remembrances of the Philippian church that gave him such joy.

What about this church gave Paul joy?

### **1. A fervent commitment to the gospel (v. 5)**

The whole letter to the Philippians is a thank you note from Paul—not only for their financial gift, but for their commitment to gospel partnership. The Philippians get it. They have majored on the majors and minored on the minors. They understand that Jesus is God, that he lived a life we could not live, died the death that we deserved, and was raised again from the dead. They are about something bigger than themselves, and their joy is found in service and fellowship (*koinonia*).

### **2. The miraculous work of the Holy Spirit (v.6)**

Paul first thanked the Philippians for their work, then he thanks God for the work he is doing in them. How do we know that God is doing a good work in us? Because he continues what he began. The Philippians had already seen much that was good: the first Christian convert (Lydia), a demon possession overcome, the conversion of the jailer and his household. God is working in their midst and will continue to do so. May we pray, “Lord, give me eyes to see what you are doing in other people’s lives.”

### **3. A genuine love for one another (v. 7-8)**

A three-fold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12), and we see that demonstrated here. The first strand was the Philippian church, and the second was God. Paul is the third strand. He has made a choice to love the Philippians as brothers and sisters in Christ. He has chosen joy by choosing to hold them in his heart, to see these people as God sees them.

God wants joy in the local church.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Does joy in the individual Christian's life automatically translate into corporate joy in the church? Why or why not?**
  - 2. How did the Philippians demonstrate their fervent commitment to the gospel? What would such a commitment look like among the church today?**
  - 3. What is the relationship between unity and joy in the church? How can we cultivate joy by choosing to love?**



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