



MOMENTS TO PONDER
UNVEILING JOY:
EXPLORING THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Episode 91: Do you have joy? (Phil. 3:1-11)

Hi Friends! Welcome to Moments to Ponder.

Our world can be loud, busy and overwhelming making it hard to find the time to get into God's word, I get it, and it's that's why I designed this podcast. Thank you for joining me for a few moments to ponder verses from Philippians in this series titled, Unveiling Joy.

I'm Betsy Marvin and this is episode 91.

(music fades)

My beloved ones, don't ever limit your joy or fail to rejoice in the wonderful experience of knowing our Lord Jesus! Phil. 3:1a

That's the beginning of chapter 3 in Philippians. After reminding the Philippian church of the wonder of Christ's character and lifting up Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul returns to the theme behind this letter. Don't limit your joy! Rejoice in the wonderful experience of knowing Jesus!

When you hear – don't limit your joy – how do you feel?

Take a moment and just let that sit with you. (pause)

Rick Warren says that: *"Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright and the determined choice to praise God in every situation."*

Joy is a choice.

Breathe that in...joy is the settled assurance that God is in control. He is on the throne. Don't limit this joy.

(pause)

I'm using the Passion Translation today as we continue in chapter 3, I think it helps us hear this passage a bit differently. Paul says,

I don't mind repeating what I've already written you because it protects you—beware of those religious hypocrites who teach that you should be circumcised to please God. For we have already experienced "heart-circumcision," and we worship God in the power and freedom of the Holy Spirit, not in laws and religious duties. We are those who boast in what Jesus Christ has done, and not in what we can accomplish in our own strength. Phil. 3:1b-3

A little background here - there were most likely some Jewish Christians called Judaizers, causing issues around the Old Testament laws including those involving circumcision. They had invested so much time and effort into keeping the laws, they were having a hard time believing those efforts didn't matter when it came to salvation – a free gift of grace through Christ. They were telling the gentile Christians that they needed to be circumcised in order to receive salvation. Paul is reminding them that the physical act of circumcision has nothing to do with their salvation. It's not something done to us but for us, a "heart-circumcision" – being made new, that brings the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit.

He goes on to say:

It's true that I once relied on all that I had become. I had a reason to boast and impress people with my accomplishments—more than others—for my pedigree was impeccable. I was born a true Hebrew of the heritage of Israel as the son of a Jewish man from the tribe of Benjamin. I was circumcised eight days after my birth and was raised in the strict tradition of Orthodox Judaism, living a separated and devout life as a Pharisee. And concerning the righteousness of the Torah, no one surpassed me; I was without a peer. Furthermore, as a fiery defender of the truth, I persecuted the messianic believers with religious zeal.

Phil. 3:4-6

Achievements, accolades, titles, authority, earning potential.

Climbing the success ladder has always been a part of our world. How we go after this has definitely changed with innovation and technology, but moving up in rank, getting the higher paying job, earning the title or degree is a part of life for most people, especially in the western world. What we do, our efforts, earn us upgrades.

I'm curious, when was the last time you made a resume?

For me, it was 2009! I became an Adjunct professor for a season and they needed to resume on file for me, it'd been 22 years since I had made one. It was a bit daunting to put my life on a piece of paper for someone to evaluate.

I do have letters behind my name, certifications, endorsements, and titles, and of course, there is a piece of me that is proud of what I've accomplished and I know that's ok. But, I can honestly say that I'm not all about the list, in fact, every time I share my title, I falter a bit. Some of that is due to keeping my pride in check – but mostly it's because I didn't earn them just to have them...I just truly love to learn. The discovery, the teacher in me, and the desire to grow into the best leader, teacher, coach I can be – it motivates me. Yet, here's what Paul says of his credentials.

Yet all of the accomplishments that I once took credit for, I've now forsaken them and I regard it all as nothing compared to the delight of experiencing Jesus Christ as my Lord! To truly know him meant letting go of everything from my past and throwing all my boasting on the garbage heap. It's all like a pile of manure to me now, so that I may be enriched in the reality of knowing Jesus Christ and embrace him as Lord in all of his greatness. Phil. 3:7-8

This is a profound statement. All he had done, it's nothing. It's all garbage...in comparison to the delight of knowing and experiencing Jesus.

Ok, keep that in mind as I share this little tidbit: Paul began this section with a comment on joy so I had to look up what the internet says about what brings true joy? It said, *Here's the key insight in a nutshell: As human beings, we feel the most joy and fulfillment when we make progress towards something meaningful in our lives. This is one of the most groundbreaking discoveries scientists in positive psychology have made.*

According to scientists, we feel the most joy when we make progress toward something meaningful in our lives. Yet, according to Paul, the credentials, which many find meaningful, aren't where joy is found.

Putting this together, we will feel the most joy when we make progress toward what means the most in our life – a relationship with Jesus. Letting go of everything and embracing Christ as Lord.

Let that sit a moment.

Paul is saying that to know Christ should be the ultimate rung on the ladder – and – this brings joy.

Think about your life for a moment – do you feel joy?

Do you think your answer to that question has anything to do with the value, or priority, you've placed on your relationship with Christ?

This section of scripture has me really pondering what it means...

Unveiling the joy that I want to live into is directly connected to my confidence in and connection to Jesus.

(pause)

Paul will say in vs. 12 *"I admit that I haven't yet acquired the absolute fullness that I'm pursuing,"* and I can admit the same. I'm not there yet, but am I seeking to know him more than I seek to achieve or arrive in some way?

Paul said, *It's all like a pile of manure to me now, so that I may be enriched in the reality of knowing Jesus Christ and embrace him as Lord in all of his greatness.*

He continues in vs 9:

My passion is to be consumed with him and not cling to my own "righteousness" based in keeping the written Law. My only "righteousness" will be his, based on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—the very righteousness that comes from God.

And I continually long to know the wonders of Jesus and to experience the overflowing power of his resurrection working in me. I will be one with him in his sufferings and become like him in his death. Only then will I be able to experience complete oneness with him in his resurrection from the realm of death.

Phil. 3:8-11

Consumed with Jesus.

Longing to know the wonders of him and experience the overflowing power of his resurrection – the Holy Spirit – working in us.

Earlier I mentioned the Judaizers in Paul's day, and I can say that I get them. It can be really hard to believe that all our effort, titles, law keeping, doesn't affect how much God loves us. Our culture tells us that we have to earn everything.

Jesus was always counter-cultural so it shouldn't surprise us that he doesn't have success ladder. He has one step. It's a free step based on **his** righteousness – not our own and it brings with it a freedom and joy that will never be found in any earthly achievements.

For those of you that enjoy a little deeper look - If you were to step back and look at all the verses for today, 1-11, you might recognize the reference to chapter 2. Paul exalted himself, then took the form of a servant, being obedient even if it meant death, in order to honor Christ. He is using his own story, not to glorify himself, but to show the Philippians an example of what it means to seek to be like Christ. He's telling them - do the same.

It's not about traditions and laws, it's about living a life for and in Jesus. It's about deepening a relationship with Him.

Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright and the determined choice to praise God in every situation

Dear Ones, Unveil the joy that is within you because of Jesus. Choose to rest in knowing that God is in control, he loves you, and we can have confidence in His work in our lives. Do you feel joy today?

May you remember that Joy is an attitude of the heart determined by confidence in God. It is a choice. To unveil it requires drawing close toward who matters most – Jesus. And as Paul says, ...*don't ever limit your joy or fail to rejoice in the wonderful experience of knowing our Lord Jesus! Phil. 3:1a*

Amen.