

## Daily Devotional, June 5, 2020 Partnership in Joy

*<sup>3</sup> “ I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, in view of your participation in the gospel . . .” Phil 1:3-5 (NIV)*

Although Paul was writing this letter from prison, his joy is exuded throughout this letter. Paul’s joy was grounded in his relationship with Jesus. In our present circumstances, we desperately want to be happy, but we allow our short term successes, our failures, and our inconveniences (some have coined the coronavirus to be our “Great Inconvenience”), as situations that create turmoil, robbing us of our joy. Because of the presence of Christ in our lives, we as Christians are to be joyful in every circumstance of life, even when we feel like complaining, even when things are going badly, even when no one else around us is feeling joyful. We must remember that Christ still reigns, and we still know Him, and so we can rejoice at all times.

The first lesson of Christianity that we all learned was love, a love that was to join all people into one body and obliterate prejudices and pride, racism, and hatred. This new Christian church formed the community of the faithful, a holy empire designed to draw all people into the heart of Christ. Paul established this church in Philippi ten years before, forming a partnership with its people. When Paul calls them partners, he is pointing out the valuable contributions they have made in spreading the Gospel. Not only did they help Paul in establishing the church there and keeping the ministries of the church strong, but they supported him financially while he was in prison. Likewise, as members of the church our support of ministers, missionaries, Christian and even public social services through prayer, hospitality, volunteer work, and financial donations make us partners with them.

Paul knew that the only hindrance to spreading the gospel was the absence of the Spirit of the gospel, and therefore, he put all his strength into awakening the Spirit of the gospel in the lives of all who listened. Paul had staked the success of the mission, not on an organization, but on the fellowship, the partnership, of the faithful.

The church is less an organization and more like an organism. The roots, the stems, the soil are all intertwined. The good news of Jesus Christ, along with His fellowship with the Father through His church, continues to produce eternal life in the hearts of its partners.

Jesus is the taproot through which eternal life flows. Think of the springtime showers as the love of God, nurturing and growing faith, and the church is the fruit. For Paul, the Gospel was the call of spring. The rising of the sun, the clouds of the earth, all the handiwork of God’s creation work together to bring God’s kingdom into our midst.

The Gospel announces the coming of Christ’s kingdom, ruled by His ways and for the ends which He intended. For its part, the church was established as a colony, an outpost in the world. As a partnership of the faithful joined together as one in this service, as citizens of the kingdom.

Let us remember that furthering the good news means actually finding and living in joy in the freedom of God’s presence, not by imposing upon others a rigid system of beliefs which by themselves create no real change in life or the world. Good news by its nature cannot be forced upon the mind, it must be born in the heart. The individuals who make up the church are a testimony to this fact.

The Philippians were remembered with joy because they were partners with Paul in helping Christ’s cause. They were willing to be used by God for whatever work God wanted them to do and they did their work with ever joyful hearts. When others think about you, are you remembered with joy by them? Do your acts of kindness lift others up? May the springtime of God’s love continue to nurture your faith, bringing you the joy of knowing and living out your salvation in Jesus Christ!

***Paul's prayer for joy and peace: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit Romans 15:13, (NIV)***