

Real Joy

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[0 : 00] Good morning, I'm John, if you haven't met me, I'm one of the staff here. We have been sitting under Paul's teaching over many weeks now, through Romans and now in Philippians.

And what kind of Christian would you say Paul is? Let's do a word cloud. The way it works is if you open your camera and point to this QR code, you'll get to your page.

Or if you actually open your browser and just type minti.com and then the number is 1964-3376.

Don't worry if you don't have a phone, this is an exercise that you can actually ask people next to you to do it for you. So, Wendy, maybe you can go to that page when you're ready.

Oh, okay. It's building in. So, if you don't have a phone, just ask the person next to you to put it for you. You can put it multiple times, as many as you like. Whatever comes to your mind and as often as you like.

[1 : 31] So, hardcore, faithful, good, loving, humble, passionate. Wow, it's going well. Going really, really well. So, what kind of Christian is Paul to your mind?

So, if you're in that blank, going, okay, wow, it's different. You still doing it?

Still having fun? It's getting bigger. Getting harder to read the word. Okay, let's pause there. Okay. What would you say about someone that's in this room?

How about me? So, Wendy, if you go back just on your keyboard, go to the right arrow. Yes. John Lau is such a word Christian.

You can be brutally honest, okay, or as kind and nice as you want. I'm ready to eat any humble pie that you throw at me for breakfast this morning. And it will be good for my personal growth, okay?

[2 : 41] Teddy bear. Wow. It's very flattering. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. All good. Now, we're going to go back to the presented slide. You can look at the result later on.

It actually, once you've done it, you've got a few days to go back to look at it. And you can feel free to keep going in, putting John Lau is such a word. So, give some time for Wendy to...

Cool. Finally, if you put your name... We go back to the... Yeah. If you put your name at the beginning of this sentence, what would you use in a space before Christian to describe your own life?

That's for you to think through. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, the word grace and thanks come from the same roots in the original language of joy.

[4 : 18] So, if you highlight those words and the related words like gracious, give thanks, rejoice with, or rejoice, as you read the letter of Philippians, it's very convincing that the theme of this letter of Philippians is joy, which James has...

our assistant minister have pointed out for us the last two weeks. Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter, but even as a prisoner, he was filled with joy, which permeated his letters.

But that being said, we just read chapter 3. Do you notice how many times the word related to joy appears? In the whole chapter of chapter 3.

Once. Right at the very beginning. Rejoice in the Lord. Once. In the whole chapter. This lack of occurrence does not mean I'm very bad at counting, or have contradicted myself about the theme of the letter, but it served to reveal a secret, the secret of Paul's joy.

The secret of Paul's joy was his relationship with Jesus Christ. The proof is in the letter of Philippians, which begins and ends with the name of Jesus.

[5 : 43] And Paul mentioned his beloved Savior 40 times in the letter, and 10 times in this chapter 3, which average at least once every two verses.

The reason for Paul's joy was his relationship with Christ. And we have observed two chapters of how Paul's joy was tested in Rome's prison.

Now, and how he held on to destroy his Savior Jesus. If Paul's relationship to his Master Jesus Christ could bring him joy under those conditions, then surely we who also love the Savior can learn to rejoice in any of our difficult times.

And if you do not know Jesus, as Nick had pointed out before, I hope you'll get to know him soon and share that joy. The last few years have not been easy for many people.

And I will be okay even to say that the last few years have been difficult for many people. However, difficult times should not prove to be our cute joys.

[6 : 55] But there are things that we must watch out for which will kill our joy. So let's check out a few of the cute joys today and look at the real joy that Paul wants us to know.

Please turn again back to chapter 3 of Philippians and we are reading from verse 1 to 4. Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boasts in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reason for such confidence.

If you look back on the word cloud about what kind of Christian Paul is, I wonder how many words are related to joy. I think verse 2 to 4 here should have more of my image of Paul hard line, strong word, and very to the point.

[8 : 11] But Paul was never harsh. He spoke strongly and compassionately on some issue to safeguard his audience because it can become a matter of life and death.

Paul gave a strong warning about a group of people. He called them dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh. They claimed to serve God by their teaching and boastful and put confidence in their flesh.

Further down in verse 18 to 19, he said, For as I have often told you before and now, tell you again even with tears. Many live as enemy of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthy things. Verse 9 hinted that they are people with a righteousness that comes from the law, from how well they observe the law and make sure others follow them in relying on their merit.

Paul gets very hard line about this intruder of faith. Legalists that legalistically follow the law, they are joy killers that Philippians and believers of God need to be aware of.

[9 : 28] Legalism and those that bring such teaching is the first kill joy. God has warned his people throughout the Bible to be aware of people or false teachers that are not of him.

In Isaiah 56, verse 10 to 11, God says, Israel's watchmen are blind. They all lack knowledge. They are all mute dogs. They cannot bark.

They lie around and dream. They love to sleep. They are dogs with mighty appetites. They never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding. They all turn to their own way.

They seek their own gain. The people that Paul was warning the Philippians about were teaching a form of work salvation, where people must work for their own redemption and believe that their seal in influencing others to follow them was part of their being accepted by God.

They required the believers to become a Jew by circumcision to be saved. They were a mutilator of the flesh of their brothers. Their teaching is not the gospel because it was teaching of a Jesus plus something.

[10 : 44] In this case, circumcision and observing rituals for salvation. A legalistic mindset is one of the earthly mindset that Paul refers to in verse 19.

Legalism is pursuing good works to earn God's favor to save oneself, which is not unique in Paul's time. It is the backbone of all kinds of religion.

It is in the air we breathe in this fallen world. It is so easy to fall into the trap of relying on good works and not believing that God justified us by our faith alone.

So Paul needs to warn believers strongly. A pastor once said, the essence of legalism is when faith is not the engine of obedience.

We are not operating with faith when we work hard to earn God's favor. Let me say that again. We are not operating with faith when we work hard to earn God's favor.

[11 : 54] We might not say it out loud, but our actions and ways of life are saying that we must add to the finished work of Jesus on the cross. His work wasn't enough. Therefore, we must work to

make God happy.

We must take it into our own hands to be accepted by God. Most new Christians, especially those that become one later in life or are not born into a Christian family, have a kind of legalistic way of what it means to be a Christian.

I know I did. We seem to believe if I surrender myself to Jesus, He comes to me and saves me and forgives my sin, but I have got to stay surrendered to Him.

I have got to keep being committed or He would somehow withdraw from me. A legalistic mindset or legalism is the first killjoy. It treats relations with God as a religious activity.

I believe the pandemic had turned the manifestation of legalism on its head. Instead of doing more to make us holy in front of God, we are also tired and stressed out that we are looking to do the bare minimum and crave a 1C and 3P life.

[13:12] People think that they will bring them joy, but they are the cute joys. Are you looking for a 1C and 3P life?

A comfortable, pressurable, predictable, and problem-free life. And what are you giving up to get them? We bargain with God about our time to build a relationship with Him vertically and with others horizontally.

As He's saying, as long as I make it to Sunday church or have watched church online, I tick the attendance box with God and give money and God should be happy with me.

Don't expect me to stay and reach out to others to have a real relationship. I have no time for that. We end up judging God's goodness based on how well life works out for us rather than on what He has done and is still doing to make good on His redemptive promise.

Some Nehemiahistic believers may come to a realization years later after they find themselves falling way down where even praying to God become hard.

[14:27] And they realize my relationship with God has got to be based on something beside the state of my heart, my prayer life, or how holy I am. It has to have an objective basis that doesn't change.

And that's when they discover that they are saved through the faith in Christ, not through their works. If you are believers, have you had your moment of realization yet?

What word did you put down to describe your Christian life earlier? One way to tell whether you are Nehemiahistic or not is when you look at your Christian life, does your heart fill up with joy?

Is your obedience motivated by your faith in Christ and the grace of God? All kinds of religions surround us. If you listen to or follow them, their teaching will eventually become our kill joys and kill us.

Their teaching manifested in different kinds of isms and mentalities. So let me list out a few. Consumerism.

[15:39] People become religious shoppers and they don't have operational loyalty to the plan of God. Looking for a comfortable religious experience that meets their failed needs, have no problem moving when they are dissatisfied, and end up moving from one dissatisfaction to another and kill their joy.

The good is good enough mentality. People are easily satisfied and thankful for the changes that grace has brought into their life.

A bit of biblical literacy and knowledge about God, a slightly better marriage, a little personal spiritual growth, or so on, are good enough.

They quit seeking and pursuing God, but God is far from finishing with transforming His people.

This kind of mentality kills a chance to experience transforming joy.

And these bad things can work mentality. People work to make the best out of what God says is not good. For example, a married couple learns to negotiate one another's idolatries and end up having their own thing outside their marriage rather than working towards a truly godly marriage.

[17:06] Their marriage life is no longer alive but dead, let alone enjoyable. And the fourth one, event versus process mentality. We all want instant fix.

People want God to do the good things He promised, but do not want to persevere through a lifelong process to get them. We want God's work to be an event rather than a process.

When it's not, our commitment begins to lag and we have no joy in growing together and belonging to each other. And et cetera, et cetera.

Humans are sinners living in a fallen world. We were made to glorify God with our life, but we rebelled against God's plan and bent on glorifying ourselves.

A Christian, a believer of God, would understand this predicament a little bit better than someone who does not believe in God, but is by no way completely free of this peril.

[18 : 15] The list of kill joys can go on and on in this world we are living in. We can let this fourth mindset or many others kill your joy or take up the safeguard that Paul lived with the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord for real joy is Jesus Christ.

If we go back to chapter 3, between verse 7 to 14, Paul repeated the idea to consider loss and take hold of three times.

And between these two ideas, there are verse 10 and 11, which say, I want to know Christ, yes, the power of his resurrection and the participation in his sufferings become like him in his death and so, somehow, attending to the resurrection of the dead.

To know Christ is what Paul wants to do at this point in his life, not because he's stuck in a prison and cannot go anywhere. He looks over his life before he met Jesus and over the 30 years that he has been living to make Jesus known, he concludes that to consider whatever things that were gained to him, his physical ancestry, his religious orthodoxy, his spiritual activities, his morality and social status, loss because of Christ.

He said in verse 8, what is more, I consider everything a loss because of the suppressing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be fine in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.

[20 : 08] to gain Christ and be fine in him, make sitting in a dark prison cell of Rome not just unbearable, but enjoyable.

Paul is thanking God for putting him in prison, for the opportunity to look back on his past and recount all the situation that Christ has taken him through.

And to consider the possibility of the future where he can press on to take hold of what Christ Jesus took hold of him. Not that I have already obtained all this or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Jesus Christ.

Paul wants to know Christ deeply by experiencing Christ with his life, even after being Christ's ambassador for 30 years.

[21 : 21] He wants to know the power of Christ's resurrection and participation in his suffering and becoming like him in his death. Paul decides to know Christ better and develop Christ's likeness in his life until his last breath.

The prize that he is pressing on towards is to permeate Christ Jesus through his life. It's like saying Apostle Paul is such a Christian without needing any adjective because he lives and breathes Christ.

The knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ sets Christianity apart from all religion. our faith is not one of system, doctrines, regulations, or ritual.

Christian faith is a personal and intimate faith. Christian knows a person who has changed their lives and they live in fellowship with him.

He lives with each Christian by his spirit and we can know him better and better as we walk with him daily. As Nick has suggested earlier, as you read his word every day.

[22 : 32] If you call yourself a Christian, do you have a personal and intimate faith with Christ? Have you been getting to know him better and better each day?

Have you been observing a religion like what the rest of the world are? Or are you enjoying your relationship with God? Real joy is only fun in relationship with God, so consider and take hold of Christ.

Paul wants to participate in Christ's suffering and keep maturing in his knowledge of Christ. Paul has set himself and others as examples of Christ's followers, as those that have taken hold of Christ and are being like-minded with him.

He calls in verse 17 to join together, he calls us in verse 17 to join together in following their examples as our model to keep our eyes on how they live.

When thinking about example of faithful followers of God, I cannot but think of Hebrews chapter 11 and 12 with the list of names including Moses, Enot, Abraham, Joseph, and Rahab, such a great crowd of witnesses.

[23 : 48] And Hebrews 11 and 13 said, all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

In verse 32 to 38 of Hebrews 11, give us, the readers, a vivid picture that those people are not afraid to suffer for their faith.

And I find something that's very encouraging to me in verse 39 to 40. These, which is those people, were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised them.

Since God had planted something better for us, so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Since God had planted something better for us, the readers, so that only together with us, those who come to believe in God after seeing their example, would their faith be perfect?

We are the key to their maturity in faith of being made perfect. Together with Christ, we are the keys for all these people's maturing in faith.

[25 : 09] You made Moses, Abraham's faith, perfect, perfect as you watch and imitate his way of life. You made Paul's faith perfect as you pursued knowing Christ's life, what he does.

That is so incredible and glorious. I'm lost for a word when I think of that. When I think of God using me to make perfect the faith of all those faithful people in the Bible, that fills my heart with joy.

Paul said back in Philippians 3, 20 to 21, that our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they may be like his glorious body.

Transformed to be like his heavenly savior, the Lord Jesus, is what Paul eagerly awaits and is what gives him hope and joy even in the prison of Rome.

He is certain that by the power that enables Jesus to bring everything under his control, Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious resurrected body.

[26 : 25] Paul's certainty comes from the fact that God alone made him right, not by anything he has or could have done. is that what you are looking forward to and living for?

Real joy is knowing Christ and being known by God. Real joy is pressing on to become more like Christ daily in suffering and maturing.

Many earthly mindsets will capture us and kill our joy if we do not watch out for them. Let's join with Paul and others, all these faithful people in the Bible to rejoice in the Lord and wait for our transformation in Christ.

I hope whatever you have filled for that space in front of Christians in your sentence at the beginning of today's sermon will become words related to joy, that people will see that you are a Christian, one that permeates joy.

May God make it clear to you and mature to the point that you can take such a view to rejoice in the Lord and take hold of Christ, the one that has taken hold of you.