

*Read kept at  
Please indicated  
in notes*

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN JOY  
Phil. 1:3-7

Intro: No one who knows the Scriptures would deny that joy is one of the most vital ingredients of the Christian life.

The Lord Jesus spoke of joy at a most unusual time--in the Upper Room (John 15:11). However, a careful reading of His words will reveal that joy is the result of other things. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy . . ."  
It is interesting to study the Upper Room Discourse to discover what "these things" are.

Likewise, in the book of Philippians, Paul speaks over and over again of joy and rejoicing--some 16 times in all! But again, a reading of these four chapters shows that joy was not Paul's immediate objective (and it should not be ours), but it was the by-product of other things. He, like his Saviour, speaks of joy in very unusual circumstances: he is writing from a Roman prison!

The question I would like to raise tonight is: WHAT FACTORS IN PAUL'S LIFE MADE HIM A HAPPY CHRISTIAN?

Perhaps unconsciously, but very certainly, he answers that question for us in his letter to the Philippians. The answer has many parts. We do not have time for them all tonight, but I do want to consider with you that starting point--the foundation. We cannot experience the results that Paul had unless we start where he started.

I would like to read Phil. 1:3-7. (Read.)

Verse 6 is my text tonight. Look at it closely. Some of you know it well.

This verse gave Paul all the encouragement he needed to pray for the Philippians--and it even enabled him to do it with joy while he was a prisoner of Rome.

How would you describe the contents of this verse? See if you agree with my description.

If you begin reading the verse with the word, "he," you will see that this is a statement of what Paul believed--a statement of doctrine, if you please. So we learn first of all that joy in my experience is definitely related to my understanding of the truth of the Word of God.

Then, secondly, you will see that the doctrine that he is

concerned about here is the doctrine of salvation. This is the "good work" he is referring to, as we shall see.

Finally, he is talking about salvation from God's standpoint, not from ours, the human standpoint.

So it is very easy to see that if Paul had not understood the doctrine of salvation from God's point-of-view, he could not possibly have had any joy in his heart at this time under these circumstances, and if he could have prayed for the Philippians at all, it would not have been with joy, but with a great deal of anxiety.

What did he believe about the divine side of salvation? I would like to point out five things in this verse (v. 6).

I. Paul believed that salvation was and is a work of God.

He believed this so completely that he knew that God could work and would work in Philippi even when he, the Apostle, was a prisoner in far off Rome.

Earlier this year I read J. I. Packer's book, Evangelism And The Sovereignty of God--required reading for every Christian as far as I am concerned. It is excellent.

In this book Packer attempts to prove that every Christian is a Calvinist!

Historically Christians have divided themselves into two camps doctrinally: Calvinists and Arminians. An Arminian is one who believes that salvation can be temporary because it is partially dependent upon good works and obedience. A Calvinist believes that salvation is eternal because it is entirely a divine work. He believes that a Christian will work because he is saved, and not to keep himself saved.

This controversy has raged from the very beginning of the Church's history. How does Packer attempt to put everyone into one camp, making us all Calvinists?

In this way. He says that we all are ultimately Calvinists because:

- (1) We all thank God for our salvation, taking no credit for it ourselves.
- (2) We pray for the salvation of others.

Paul would agree. He believed unswervingly that salvation from start to finish was all of God. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5.

II. Paul believed that salvation was God's work in us.

Cf. Phil. 2:13. Also in Heb. 13:20, 21 we read, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus . . . make you perfect . . . working IN you . . ."

We are always interested in what God is doing FOR us, or THROUGH us. God all the while is working IN us. We need to understand this about salvation.

Even Job knew this. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth" (not with) "as gold" (Job 23:12b).

*See top of p. 4.*

III. Paul believed that salvation was a good work.

In what sense was it good? Surely everything in a Christian's life considered by itself is not good!

One way this word is used in the NT expresses the idea of that which is beneficial for us, to our advantage, in the accomplishment of some purpose. Cf. Thayer, p. 3. This is what makes it good.

Ill. Discipline of children. Or surgery.

Ill. Joseph with his brothers after Jacob died: "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:19, 20).

Cf. also Rom. 8:28 with 29.

IV. Paul believed that salvation is not now complete nor will it ever be in this life.

Now you are ready to accuse me of being a heretic! But is this not what Paul is saying?

The Gk here points back to a specific time when this work of salvation began. Cf. also v. 5. And that work had continued without completion to the present time. Do you understand this about salvation?

Now let me be very clear. Salvation is something past, present, and future. The moment we trusted Christ we were saved eternally. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 Jn. 5:12a)--right now and for ever!

But there is also a sense in which I am in the process

Included  
under  
II.

of being saved. How can we say this? BECAUSE SALVATION INCLUDES NOT ONLY WHERE I WILL SPEND ETERNITY, BUT ALSO WHAT I SHALL BE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

As long as we live here there is progress to be made, and God will be working to that end.

V. Finally, Paul believed that the work of salvation would be finished at "the day of Jesus Christ."

Cf. Phil. 3:20, 21.

John also believed this. Cf. 1 Jn. 3:1, 2.

III. Dr. Bach's story about the construction of the building.  
Under construction,  
Open for observation,  
But do not pass judgment until the  
job is finished.

What will it be to be like Him?

Concl: But the whole force of this is lost if we cannot say what Paul said at the beginning of v. 6: "Being confident of this very thing." It was a matter, not just of doctrine, but of personal conviction, of assurance.

In 3:3 Paul says that he has "no confidence in the flesh"--not even his own!

These two statements complement each other.

He could never have been confident about salvation if it had depended upon him. And neither will you. But the foundation for experiencing the joy of the Lord when we become confident that salvation is a divine work: conceived by God, introduced into our lives by God, carried on by God, and to be completed by Him.

This is the foundation of all joy in the life of a Christian. It is not the only factor, but it is the foundation stone, the knowledge of what salvation really is and the assurance that it is all of God.

May God Himself make the truth of Phil. 1:6 a personal conviction with all of us who know the Saviour!