



Joy in the Life of the Believer

By Paul Newman, MS, ATC

Philippians is well known as the book of joy in the Bible for the many times the Apostle Paul used 'joy' or 'rejoice' in his letter to the church in Philippi. Yet a deeper look at these God-inspired words teaches us that our joy in the faith comes from Christ, it is the bond that connects believers and leads to great unity. A leader's joy should not be in his own accomplishments, but rather in the spiritual growth and unity of his team. Unity flows out of our conduct with one another, which Paul calls the fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:11). He teaches that our conduct is borne out of our joy in the faith and our confidence in Christ (Phil. 1:25-26). The key to understanding this is found in studying the Greek text of the word 'joy'. The Greek word 'chara', a noun meaning "delight" is used in Phil. 1:25 but Paul used the Greek word 'kauchema' in verse 26. We have translated them both to mean 'joy', yet 'kauchema' is a verb meaning "to have confidence".

The cornerstone to building team unity is our conduct with one another. The three fruits of righteousness, or Christian conduct, are witness (Colossians 1:5-6), service (Romans 1:13 & Colossians 1:7) and praise (Hebrews 13:15). Through our praise of God flows joy in the faith, resulting in love and service to our brothers and sisters in Christ (John 15:13 & 1 John 3:16). It is this unified love which causes others to respond to the Christ that they see in our lives (John 13:35).

Paul ends the first chapter of Philippians with this discourse on joy and conduct. Then he begins chapter two speaking of unity and encouraging the believers to be "likeminded" and "one in spirit and purpose". Paul speaks of the spread of the Gospel through personal trials and courageous Christians, sometimes even through selfish teachers. Yet he teaches that the spread of the Gospel should always be celebrated with great joy. No matter what happens, we should "*conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ*" (Phil. 1:27). Paul's words lend a certainty that trials will come in life and times will be both good and bad. His encouragement to the Philippian church is that Christ is our sufficiency through the joy that comes from faith in Him which is the key to life and success.

Many in athletics tend to use Philippians 4:13 as a catch all verse to overcome trials in life and win games. However it is only when this verse is read in the context of the entire letter that we can understand its true meaning. God is the source of our joy. That joy results in our self-sufficiency as a result of Christ's work in our lives. We should want to pursue this without delay and with great enthusiasm. Not for our own gain, as Paul counted his fleshly accomplishments as rubbish, but for the glory and praise of God. We should each look to one another's spiritual and physical needs, having confidence that God will sustain us no matter what our circumstances.

In this way we will know how to live when we have plenty and when we do not; when we undergo trials and when we can celebrate victories. It is this confidence in Christ, that He can overcome any circumstance that leads to our unity which is expressed in our love for one another. This will open others eyes to see Jesus in us. Christ is our sufficiency and joy. He can overcome our trials, not for our personal gain or glory but for the glory of God.

Happy Easter!

From the AIA Sports Performance Staff