**The Joy of Christians**

 *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,****2****which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,****3****concerning his Son, who was descended from David[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rom+1&version=ESV#fen-ESV-27918b)*] according to the flesh****4****and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,****5****through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,****6****including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,*

***7****To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:1-7, ESV)*

 The joy for Christians is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

 May the joy and peace of the Lord be with you all, dear brothers and sisters, as we focus for a few moments on the joy that is linked with the Christmas event. To tell the truth, this passage was read because the birth of Jesus was in fact the beginning of the Gospel of God, which represents that greatest joy for us as believers. Jesus’ presence among us means that we will be free of our hopeless, sinful, and weakened states. Keeping this in mind, it is important for us to see and understand this cause for our joy and its effects on our lies. Again, our joy is the Good News of Jesus Christ. Let’s see why that is…

 The advent of Jesus is our greatest joy because He is the one that changes our individual worlds. The Apostle Paul presents to us his most important truths in his first few lines of the letter to the church in Rome. Those few sentences show us the entire picture of his faith. First, they show that the Apostle know who he is now through Christ. He is a servant, called to a specific work, appointed to preach the Gospel of God. He is aware of the prophecies about the gospel; He knows Jesus Christ as God’s Son, as the descendant of David, as the Risen Savior, as the Means to God’s grace, as the Giver of his mission. He knows that his own mission is for all nations, specifically to lead them to obey Christ, and he does this by inviting them to faith in Jesus. In other words, his life, his joy, his entire lifegoal is the Gospel. All the above happened because He recognized Jesus, whom he literally saw (in a vision) on the road to Damascus. It happened because Jesus entered his personal life. In a way, Jesus was born in him.

 When someone changes his life for a specific purpose, we can see the fruits of that decision. Perhaps that one is an athlete and is looking to be successful in their sport. Their whole life becomes structured around training for that event or game. Or let’s say that someone is going to be writing their thesis in college. They stop everything and focus on that one goal – they eat, drink, and live for that thesis.

 The Apostle Paul’s focus is an example of joy in the presence of Christ. Yes, he begins the letter with standard greetings, but within this one, we see his faith and devotion very clearly. The faith that he had, which he also saw in the Roman church was a source of joy for him. That is why he could thank God for them in the prayer that followed.

 Today our joy ought to be that same faith. The season of Jesus’ Advent is our joy because Jesus represents salvation, forgiveness, healing, emancipation, and the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of Jesus started with Jesus’ birth: knowing this not only brings joy and peace to our lives, but also freedom and grace to participate in the same mission as the Apostle, according to our level of faith.

 We will experience the joy of Advent based on our individual understandings of Jesus’ identity. If you can say that the Apostle’s faith is also yours, then you can pray the same thanksgiving prayer when you see those around you have begun to obey the Gospel.

 So, our task, dearly beloved, is to rejoice in the Gospel and to make that the compass of our life. That will happen through our works and words of love, and our open expressions of faith. May the Lord guide us so that our joy will be connected to the Gospel, just like the Apostle’s was. May the Lord Bless you all. Amen.