

Joy in the Gospel of Christ – Philippians 1:12-18
July 31st, 2022

Title Slide

Good morning church! I'm Grady Adkins and I serve as the Executive Pastor here. It's great to be with you this morning. Before we dive into the Word this morning I wanted to say thank you to Pastor Rob for allowing me to stand in his place this weekend. He and Becky are finishing up their well-deserved vacation. And let me just say, even though Pastor Rob is on vacation and is not here with us physically, he hasn't stopped thinking of you. I don't think he ever completely unplugs or detaches himself from all of you because his love for you and his continual prayers for all of you. And he considers it all joy to do so.

Speaking of joy, let's open our Bibles this morning to the book of Philippians. If you need a copy of God's Word simply raise your hand and one of our ushers will get a copy to you. Philippians is found in the New Testament. If you have difficulty remembering where Philippians is located just remember this statement - George Eats Pork Chops. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. George eats pork chops. You're welcome. Today we are going to look at Philippians 1 verses 12-18 and see how Paul has joy in the middle of difficulty - because of the Gospel of Christ...and how we can too. How we can have Joy in the Gospel of Christ.

But, before we start dissecting this passage, let's talk about what is going on to gain a better understanding of the context. Philippians is an epistle (which simply means a letter) that was written by Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi while he was in jail following his third missionary journey. Today, Paul's letter to the church in Philippi would be similar to a missionary update. For example, last weekend we watched a short video update from one of our missionary couples who were sent from our church. In it we learned what they have been doing this past year, their way ahead, and how we can support them. But obviously, in 60AD, when Philippians was written, Paul didn't have access to technology, so he wrote a letter to his first church plant in Europe, the church in Philippi. And rather than focusing his letter on his prison life, he takes a different approach. It is Paul's desire to encourage the church and let them know that the advancement of the gospel is still being accomplished in spite of the fact that he is in prison. Actually, Paul turns the suffering of his imprisonment upside-down and finds joy in the gospel of Christ. And what we will see in this passage is when we elevate the gospel, when we elevate Christ, we will have much joy. That's the main idea this morning. Elevating Christ and the Gospel brings joy.

So let's read this passage together. Look with me at Philippians 1, starting in verse 12.

(12) I want you to know, brothers, (this is Paul speaking to his Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi) that what has happened to me (his imprisonment) has really served to advance the gospel, (13) so that it (the gospel) has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. (14) And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

(15) Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. (16) The latter (the ones preaching out of good will) do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. (17) The former (the ones preaching from envy & rivalry) proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. (18) What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense (a false claim) or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

I rejoice! I rejoice! Or in other words, I have joy - even in the middle of suffering, even when things aren't going according to plan, even when ... whatever. You fill in the blank. I have joy because of Christ.

And in this passage Paul shows us three ways that we have joy in the gospel of Christ. The first of which is that we will have joy when we elevate the gospel over circumstances.

Elevate the gospel over circumstances

Look with me at verse 12 again. Paul says, (12) I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,

When Paul says "what has happened to me," he might simply be referring to his current situation in Rome – which was not good, which was enough hardship. But he also might be referring to everything that has happened to him from the time he left Jerusalem up until now. Paul could very well be referring to the riot in Ephesus, the 2-year imprisonment in Caesarea, the threat on his life, his shipwreck on the way to Rome, his house arrest with restricted freedom, and his impending trial. And he says that this (whether his current arrest, or everything since Jerusalem) that this has really served to advance the gospel. And then he continues in verse 13. Look with me. Paul says all of this happened, here it is. Verse 13.

(13) so that it (the gospel) has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. (14) And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Did you catch what Paul just did? Rather than taking the opportunity to write about all his trials, difficulty, and suffering; of which there was plenty to complain about, Paul elevates the gospel over his circumstances. He took the focus off of himself and placed it on the gospel, which had three results for Paul and his fellow Christians? It prevented him from falling into self-pity. It lifted others up. And he remained on mission. Let's talk about these three things quickly.

First, When we elevate the gospel over circumstances, it prevents self-pity. And self-pity is not a good look for anyone. I mean, who wants to be around someone who complains all the time, who is so self-absorbed they can't look up to see what's going on around them? You know this type of person I'm talking about. They are the Eeyore.

Eeyore Video Clip

“That looks nicer than the rest of me.” Poor me. Life is coming after me. Nothing ever goes my way. - Even when the person standing next to you is bouncing up and down ready to help...by giving you a new tail.

Listen, self-pity is not attractive. In fact, it is repulsive - repulsive in the sense that people won't gravitate to you or your message. But, when you elevate the gospel over yourself – look at the result. Verse 13 says **The gospel became known throughout the whole imperial guard!** Paul's message was attractive. People, even his adversaries (the imperial guard) were attracted to it. This is because Paul didn't elevate his circumstances. He didn't elevate himself. He elevated the message of the gospel. And it became known. When we elevate the gospel over circumstances it prevents self-pity.

Secondly, when we elevate the gospel over circumstances it **lifts others up**. Look again at verse 14. Paul says, **And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.** Those who heard Paul's message became confident and emboldened. It lifted them up.

Paul very well could have chosen to complain here. But he didn't. And I'm so thankful he didn't because if he did the believers in Philippi would have reacted much differently. Can you imagine what it would be like if pastor Rob got up here each week and talked about the news headlines that are happening in our country and world and followed it up with ALL HOPE IS LOST? You might start to believe that and eventually you may wander away from the church. But when we elevate the gospel over circumstances it helps us remember that the Lord is sovereign, that he is in control, that all things are working together according to his plan. It lifts others up. It encourages them. And keeps them focused on the mission. Which is actually the third result. When you elevate the gospel over circumstances

You **remain on mission**. – The Great Commission – Matthew 28:19, Go into all the world and make disciples. Tell them about Jesus. Share the gospel and do not become distracted by circumstances. That's what Paul did even in the middle of his suffering. And so can we.

When we are in the middle of suffering, difficulty, or even just an inconvenience, trust that God is sovereign and that He can and will advance the gospel through our trials. Elevate the Gospel over circumstances. And when we do that, we will receive much joy. We should view circumstances as God-ordained opportunities to share the gospel. So elevate it!

In verses 12-14 Paul appropriately views his circumstance as given to him from God. It's a divine perspective. He understands that God was using his imprisonment for the advancement of the gospel. It advanced because Paul proclaimed it and others followed his example. Because Paul elevated the gospel over his circumstance – or his desire for comfort, ease, or anything else, he didn't freak out in the face of opposition. In fact the opposite happened. He made the best of his circumstances and was filled with joy. Paul found Joy in the Gospel of Christ. Let's follow his example.

If you want joy in your life, elevate the Gospel over Circumstances. And secondly, Elevate Christ over Self.

Elevate Christ over Self

Look with me again at verses 15-17. Paul says, (15) Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. (16) The latter (the ones preaching out of good will) do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. (17) The former (the ones preaching from envy & rivalry) proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

In these next verses Paul writes about two different types of people. In verse 15, Paul identifies a type of person as one who proclaims Christ (telling us they are probably believers) They proclaim Christ from good will. Verse 16 identifies that they do it out of love. That's their motive. Love. They understand Paul's mission and empathize with him, or as Paul says, they "know he is imprisoned for the gospel." This believer has the right motive. They truly love God and others. They desire to come alongside other believers and ministries for the advancement of the gospel. They are the type of believer when things get difficult, they come alongside to help you and show others the love that Christ has for them. They have joy in the gospel of Christ.

And then Paul identifies another type of person. In verse 17 he says there are those who speak from envy or rivalry. And then in verse 15 he identifies their motive. Check it out. They proclaim Christ (which again, tells us they were probably believers) They proclaim Christ for selfish ambition, not sincerely, and hope to cause more harm to Paul while he is in prison, or as Paul says - to afflict him. This is, I would say, a nominal believer who proclaims Christ in order to move up the ladder of success. They are envious of other successful Christians. They see other Christians as competition, and therefore are not truly sincere about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For them, proclaiming Christ is merely a means to an end - and that end is their own advancement.

There is no joy in that! They elevated their own success, their own advancement – their own self, as more important than Christ. Their motives are out of whack which results in a loss of joy. Let the glory of Christ be your motivation. When you elevate Christ over self the gospel moves forward, you are fueled, and your joy remains full. Be motivated by elevating Christ over self.

I want to make mention of three ways to help keep your motivation in check, because sometimes it's difficult. Sometime our motivation is not pure. And we need to stay vigilant and intentional in keeping our motivation in check.

First, Celebrate the success of others. Get in the habit of lifting you head up and see what's going on in the lives of the people around you. And celebrate their success. This might be more difficult than you think. Charles Spurgeon stated, *"How often, if one Christian brother does a little more than his fellow-workers, they begin to find fault with him; and if one is blessed with*

greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightly! This spirit of envy is, more or less, in us all."

There is some envy in all of us. Does it bother you when others are praised, promoted, or recognized more than you? Are you envious? Are you so concerned with your own success that you steal Christ's glory and fail to rejoice in His work? Ooof. That's tough. Satan will come at you from every angle and try to steal the glory that belongs to Christ. Don't let him in. In his book "Liberating Ministry," Kent Hughes tells a story that has been passed down from generation to generation. This story goes like this:

"An ancient story from the fourth century tells of inexperienced demons finding great difficulty in tempting a godly hermit. They lured him with every manner of temptation, but he could not be enticed. Frustrated, the imps returned to Satan and recited their plight. He responded that they had been far too hard on the monk. "Send him a message," he said, "that his brother has just been made bishop of Antioch. Bring him good news." Mystified by the devils advice, the demons nevertheless returned and dutifully reported the wonderful news to the hermit. And, in that very instant, he fell – into deep, wicked jealousy.

Don't go down the road of jealousy. It's a dark road of constant and continual comparison. It's a road that sucks the joy out of you. If you want to keep your motivation in check celebrate other people's success. It will create habits of focusing outward. Celebrate the success of others.

A second way to keep your motivation in check is to, **ignore the detractors**. The Lord might give you great influence. That influence can serve as an avenue for others to become jealous of you. And when people become jealous of you they often look for ways to bring you down – They disassociate with you, they speak against you, they disrespect you, and they criticize you. These people are the detractors. Ignore them. Just like Paul did. Paul doesn't spend precious time defending himself to the envious. He doesn't let the detractors pull him away from his mission. He doesn't get wrapped up in all of that, because he knows that God will ultimately judge the hearts of others. So he ignores them. Don't let proving people wrong become your motivator and detract you from proclaiming Christ and the Gospel. If you want to keep your motivation in check celebrate the success of others, ignore the detractors

and thirdly, **serve with love**. You automatically put yourself in a posture of humility when you serve Christ. Listen, serving Christ is hard. On one side you might come in contact with people who have their own agenda, who want to be recognized, who think their way is THE way – basically difficult, prideful people. And you have to be willing to serve with love. Raise your level of love and lower your pride to ensure that Christ is glorified rather than nullified.

But on the other side, you might encounter people who are hurting, going through incredible difficulty, unimaginable things. And oh, do they ever need your love. Actually, they need Christ's love pouring out through you. So serve with love. Serving with love forces you to depend on Christ which automatically makes it less about you. When your motivation is love,

Christ is glorified. If you want to keep your motivation in check celebrate the success of others, ignore the detractors, and serve with love.

Basically, elevate Christ over self. Remember, the heart of the gospel is about a Savior who emptied himself for sinners. He emptied himself. He didn't try to build himself up. He emptied himself for you. Make it your ambition to elevate Christ over Self. And when you do that, your heart will be full of joy! Because Elevating the Gospel and Christ brings joy. There is Joy in the Gospel of Christ!

If you want joy in your life, Elevate the Gospel over Circumstances, Elevate Christ over Self, and thirdly Rejoice when Christ is Proclaimed.

Rejoice when Christ is proclaimed

That's the third point today. Look back with me at verse 18. Paul asks, (18) *What then?* (he's asking...What about these 2 types of people, should I care about them? No. Look, he says...) *Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth,* (whether people are making a false claim about me or speaking the truth about me...that doesn't matter. What matters is that) *Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*

I absolutely love this verse. It provides priority for our mission. The priority being that Christ is proclaimed. That's what matters. Let the speaker fade away and let the message move to the front. For Paul, the message mattered more than the messenger! And that should be true for us too. Because there is joy every time we hear the gospel proclaimed!

And this is an import principle for the Christian community. Often we are quick to vilify Christian leaders. We have this voyeuristic mentality that we want to catch a Christian leader in their sin. There might be preachers out there that make you cringe. Or small group leaders in here that give you pause. But Paul says the question should be, "Are they proclaiming Christ?" If so, we should rejoice. We shouldn't focus on trying to take them down or get so bent out of shape that our joy is sucked dry. Rejoice when Christ is proclaimed.

Listen, this doesn't excuse their questionable actions or characteristics that gives you pause. It should serve as a reminder to pray for them. To pray for their hearts. To pray for their motives. It is a reminder that our hearts can be deceived. This has been true since the beginning of time, in the garden. Sometimes good preachers do dumb things. Sometimes great small group leaders, women's leaders, men's leaders, deacons, elders, you name it...sometimes we screw up. And that is a reminder of how the gospel should be the center because of our weakness as human instruments.

And we need to pray. Pray that we proclaim a clear, Christ-centered message. Pray that we are molded more and more into Christ-honoring people. Pray that we love people the way that Christ loves us. In fact, let's do that right now.

Father, we need you. We need you in our suffering, our trials, when things are good and when they are great. We need you. Lord I pray right now for the people of this church. I pray that we would boldly preach your gospel always, both from this very room and also in the rooms of our homes, workplaces, schools, and throughout this community. Father help us to proclaim a clear, Christ-centered message. // And Lord help us to be a people who honors you more and more - the things we say, the things we do, the things we think. Lord help us to bring honor to your name. And would you rid us of everything else? We don't want the glory, but we to give it you. // And Father, help us to love people the way that you love us. Sacrificially. Lord let us be your humble servants who bring unity among believers and sinners to the foot of your cross. Help us to love that way. And Father would you give us great joy in all of these things? Joy as we elevate the Gospel over our circumstance. Joy as we elevate Christ over ourself. And Lord Give us unspeakable joy when Christ is proclaimed. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Listen I just made mention to it in my prayer, but in verse 18 Paul says to rejoice when Christ is proclaimed. So let's proclaim him now! And pour out joy as we do so that all may hear.

Because there is all joy in the gospel of Christ! Joy in the message that God, in the form of man, came to this earth. He came to earth because the world was broken with sin and only he could fix it. He came to earth because he loves us. He loves us so much that God sent his one and only son to die in our place. Even though he knew no sin. Even though he never sinned. Even though he was completely perfect. In his perfection he bore the weight of the world. He took on our suffering. He took on our pain. He took on our difficulties. He bore my sin, your sin, our sins in the perfect way and gave himself for us on a cross to settle the debt that we could not pay, cannot pay, will never pay. Only He can pay that debt. And he did. All we can do is believe. All we can do is put our faith in him. All we can do is trust him. And when we do that, we are forgiven. We are cleansed. We are declared righteous. And check this out, when he died on the cross he did not stay down. Three days later he arose. Proving that he is the messiah. He is the savior He is God. He is my God. He is your God. He is THE God. He is creator and protector and healer. Who was not defeated. Cannot be defeated. Will not be defeated. And he loves you. He loves me. He loves all. And in him there is ALL joy. In the gospel there is ALL joy. And when the Gospel is proclaimed I rejoice. I thank God! Because he picked me up. He turned me around. He placed my feet on solid ground! He healed my heart and he changed my name. Forever free, I'm not the same. I thank the master. I thank the savior. I thank God.

So get out of your seat! Let's raise our hands in worship and proclaim that truth together and experience the joy that only comes from the Gospel of Christ!

Worship – I Thank God