

**JOY when Life Is Hard | Phil 1:12-18 | Dave Geldart | Nov 8, 2020**

- A) Welcome
- B) 2 Songs : NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD & COME THOU FOUNT
- C) DISMISS KIDS TO SPROUTS, MINGLE
- D) Announcements → Elisha, Guys Group
- E) Orphan Sunday
  - a. A chance for us to pause and prayerfully focus on this great need and opportunity all over the world.
    - i. And indeed in our very backyards
  - b. Over 140 million orphans around the world this morning
  - c. Almost 112k awaiting adoption here in the US
  - d. Almost 428k children currently in the foster care system in the US
  - e. With almost 21k children aging out of the foster care system annually.
  - f. Nearly 1000 kids in Kansas alone waiting for someone to adopt them
  - g. Number of adults it takes to make a profound, life-long difference for a child: 1
  - h. James 1:27 says “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”
  - i. God has a special heart for orphans. And adoption is his idea. It’s the main theme of the Gospel!
  - j. Ephesians 1:5 -- God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.
  - k. We believe the church is God’s answer to the orphans and foster children in our world.
  - l. We can’t do everything. But we can do something.
  - m. I’ve been proud of our church’s heart for adoption and foster care since we started.
  - n. From the beginning we set aside money each month, a percentage of the funds you give to support TG church goes to our Adoption Fund
    - i. Set aside to help offset the cost of TGians willing to adopt
    - ii. Been little bit since our last adoption, fund has now grown to ALMOST \$17K!
  - o. As a church we’ve also been Giving to Orphan Helpers monthly – Ron shared about last week
    - i. Ministry to orphaned and incarcerated youth in central america
  - p. Neighboring Fund focus on \$500 ONE TIME monthly
    - i. LIFE CHOICE a few months ago
    - ii. This Month: Hope for the Holidays – helping get Christmas gifts and cards to older kids who have aged out of the foster care program and never been adopted.
    - iii. MORE about this in a couple weeks! Including how you and your family can participate by adopting a kid with gift cards and written notes.
    - iv. Last year this was especially meaningful for our family and we’ve stayed in infrequent contact this year.
  - q. I ask each of you to prayerfully consider how God might want you to be a part of his great work to give a loving home to all the children in need around the world and at our doorstep.
    - i. That could be through opening your hearts and home to foster children
    - ii. Or adoption
    - iii. Or helping support and fund those who do foster and adopt
- F) PRAY for orphans and foster care --- RICKY
  - a. Pray that God would use our church to care for and bless them

- b. Pray that God would direct some TGians to adopt and foster with the love of JC
- 

- 1) We're about a month into the book of Philippians
- 2) So far in Phil 1: THANKSGIVING AND PRAYERS!
  - a) Joy when relationships are GOOD
  - b) Partnership in the Gospel
  - c) Yearning for them with affection
  - d) Love abounding more and more
  - e) Growing in maturity to live and love with excellence
  - f) God be praise and glory
- 3) Now we jump into the nitty gritty of Paul's situation
  - a) Read Phil 1:12-18
    - i) <sup>12</sup>I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup>so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.  
<sup>14</sup>And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
    - ii) 15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former 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 or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.
  - b) It's NOT easy, rosy – NOT prob what he'd been praying for
  - c) Paul is Writing this letter chained to Roman Imperial Guards
    - i) IN PRISION – unjustly, languishing for years awaiting a trial before Caesar where he could very easily be executed
  - d) While Paul is taken out of the limelight, others are selfishly seizing the opportunity to ride his coattails to stardom. Preaching the Gospel in order to gain power, status, and even to stick it to Paul in his imprisonment.
- 4) But Paul is confident it's all going to be OK. He even rejoices!
  - a) NOT BECAUSE He's certain everything will get easier
  - b) But because he believes God is able to use the bad FOR GREAT GOOD
    - i) Not that God CAUSES the bad
    - ii) But that he takes what men (and satanic forces behind them) meant for evil and makes even that work for good – for the cause of the spread of the Gospel of Jesus to humans
- 5) Cross Ref! (Acts 16) – The first time Paul was in Philippi
  - i) Paul has a dream that God wants him to come preach the Gospel in the district of Macedonia
  - ii) So he travels there with Silas to Philippi, one of Macedonia's leading cities
  - iii) Paul & Silas started this church in Philippi → and are soon wrongfully accused of sedition against Rome after they freed a young slave girl from demonic possession (her owners weren't too happy about it because she didn't have her lucrative powers anymore),  
So they're dragged before the Philippian rulers, who unjustly beat them severely by
    - (1) Heavy rods (close to baseball bats)
    - (2) People frequently died of these kind of beatings

- (3) VERY severe injuries, broken bones, organ damage, internal bleeding
  - (4) THEN thrown in the prison --- dungeon in stocks.
- iv) Midnight saw these agonized men – restricted by stocks after such a beating would make the stiffening pain tremendous.
  - (1) THEY were doing something very different from what you or I likely would have done
  - (2) Instead of praying loudly for God to save them
  - (3) Instead of condemning the unjust rulers, or loudly shouting their innocence to the guards and fellow prisoners,
  - (4) They were singing praise songs to God
  - (5) HOW?
    - (a) WHY?
    - (b) Because they knew that God had led them there, and must be up to good
- v) Maybe you know the story
  - (1) When a mighty earthquake popped open their shackles and doors.
- vi) And they decided NOT to escape
  - (1) THEY STAYED
- vii) Witnessed to jailor (who was about to commit suicide thinking he'd lost them) about the Gospel
- viii) Philippian jailor and his whole family trusted in JC → CHURCH!
- b) So even though he was following JC, he and silas came into INTENSE adversity.
  - i) He didn't throw up his hands and question whether he'd heard God right
  - ii) He didn't subtly (or not so subtly) think that Jesus had promised an easy comfortable life free from difficulty!
  - iii) Instead he knew that they were living and working in a world that didn't work right. That was bent and twisted by sin and death. And that they were also in enemy territory – knowing this world is under the dominion of Satan.
    - (1) And were being actively opposed by evil people and spiritual forces behind them
  - iv) And he KNEW that the same God who sent them there was not surprised by this difficulty
    - (1) He remembered Jesus' words to his followers in John 16:33 that in this world they WOULD HAVE TROUBLE and PERSECUTIONS
    - (2) But not to worry about that because he had overcome the world's fallen kingdom. To TAKE HEART because the world's system ultimately in slavery to sin and death and satan had NO HOLD ON them because of JESUS impending triumph on the cross
  - v) Paul knew this. So he wasn't overly surprised by adversity and trial and pain and injustice and hardship and suffering
  - vi) Because he saw life for the Believer as a military campaign raiding enemy strongholds. Rescuing and liberating men and women held captive by the kingdom of darkness. A fight in an army.
    - (1) So that for him, life was like being in an army, on constant mission for Christ. With occasional respites away from the front lines to recuperate.
- 6) He wasn't like us in this
  - i) WE in our culture have come to think that life should be basically smooth sailing, with a few unfortunate bumps and bruises along the way.
    - (1) The polar opposite of Paul's perspective.
  - ii) We think life should be basically smooth sailing
  - iii) And so we revolt pretty quickly when life becomes difficult or painful or unfair.

- (1) SOMETHING'S WRONG we protest!
  - (2) And, there must be a solution I can apply QUICKLY
  - (3) Because, Jesus is nice! He loves me. He wouldn't want me to suffer.
  - (4) HE WANTS ME TO BE HAPPY
  - (5) There's got to be a way to fix this. QUICKLY!
  - (6) So we twist the classic phrase and ask WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?
    - (a) NOT – as originally meant – WHAT WOULD JESUS DO in each moment of my life if he were I?  
What would Jesus do in my shoes to advance the Kingdom of Heaven?
    - (b) But WHAT WOULD JESUS DO TO FIX THIS problem of mine?
    - (c) Not What would Jesus do for others?
    - (d) But What would Jesus do for me?
      - (i) AMEN? (or OH ME?)
  - (7) I most definitely default to the expectation as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century American that life should be basically comfortable and smooth. Anything painful or difficult MEANS SOMETHING IS WRONG
  - (8) It's easy for me to get pretty rattled when life throws me curve balls
    - (a) To get really anxious and depressed when facing adversity or difficulty
    - (b) To fill my conversation with others about how hard things are
      - (i) How surprisingly bad things are going
      - (ii) How busy or difficult or unfair my situations are
    - (c) Joy is the last thing on my lips
  - (9) When you're squeezed, what's inside comes out
    - (a) What comes out when you're squeezed?
    - (b) Is it this American self protectionism?
    - (c) This expectation of comfort?
    - (d) Is it anger or despair or grumbling or complaining?
    - (e) Or is joy, overflowing from the Gospel?
- 7) Back to Paul's story in Philippians 1:
- a) He's in prison AGAIN.... Writing Philippians around 62AD
    - i) You can read this background account in Acts 22 onward
    - ii) Arrested in Jerusalem, guilty of nothing except sharing the Gospel, almost killed in a mob beating, and in order to save himself on the spot from death, he pled to be tried before Caesar, as was his right as a full Roman citizen
    - iii) Held in Joppa and forgotten for 2 yrs
    - iv) AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS COMPETENCY. Planting churches that plant churches. Spreading Gospel all over the Roman empire.
      - (1) Likely most USEFUL and productive single person on whole earth at that time
      - (2) In the prime of his life and ability
      - (3) Sitting in prison again. For two years.
    - v) Finally sails to Crete, SHIPWRECKED in a storm
    - vi) Then after floating to shore was bitten by poisonous snake, but lived
    - vii) Finally make way up to Rome, awaits trial → usually a LONG backlog of cases waiting to be tried before an usually uninterested and unhurried Caesar

- viii) Able to rent own house in Rome under house arrest (prob with the funding given by philippians, his reference to their gift and their partnership both in the Gospel and in his imprisonment) FOR TWO MORE YEARS. Chained to roman guard
  - (1) Had to pay for guard food and upkeep
  - (2) Way Rome kept praetorian guard funded – hiring them out for private prisoner detail
- ix) Paul on death row
- x) And as Paul writes to the Philippians, he thinks its coming up soon (and he'll either die or be freed)
- b) After 4-5 years of seemingly wasted time.
  - i) Surely Paul wondered from time to time, WHERE Did God lose control of this situation?
  - ii) Languishing for 4-5 yrs on death row for nothing
  - iii) Clamped in irons, kept from planting churches, kept from discipling, and preaching and evangelizing.
- c) Paul confused, frustrated likely. Prayed many times to be released.
  - i) Years went by
  - ii) God whats going on? – challenge to his faith for sure
- d) PAUL says, however, to Philippians,
  - i) This is actually working out pretty good for the Gospel
  - ii) Paul is captive – and had a captive audience in the soldiers
  - iii) Talked to them constantly about WHY he was being held. And the Gospel
  - iv) They being converted telling their friends and family
  - v) THE WHOLE PRAETORIAN GUARD talking about JC and many coming to Christ
    - (1) Praetorian Guard – Legion of elite troops kept in rome. 6000 men.
  - vi) The WHOLE praetorian guard is talking about christ!
  - vii) AND ALL THE REST – roman officials & family
- e) Not God WHY is this happening to me?
  - i) But WHAT are you wanting to do here
  - ii) **What unique opportunities for Good Works do I have HERE, in this situation**
  - iii) Saw the STRATEGICNESS
- f) Roman legionnaires served 20 yrs b4 retireing. Then got plot of land somewhere in provences by gov.
  - i) They'd then journey our to their spot. Spreading roman influence out into the provences.
  - ii) Now as believing Xians, these soldiers, went out, with high social influence, and spread the Gospel
  - iii) Early Church history proves that one of the main ways the early church spread was through Roman Soldiers.
  - iv) So Paul's prolonged imprisonment ended up being VERY strategic for the advance of God's Kingdom
- g) Also Paul during this time wrote 4 Prison Epistles in our Bible:
  - i) Philippians
  - ii) Ephesians
  - iii) Colossians
  - iv) Philemon
  - v) Lots of unlooked-for time for a busy guy like Paul to write.
    - (1) Also Luke & Acts – written by Luke for Paul's legal defense
  - vi) And untold Billions of people through the centuries have been impacted for Christ through these books of the NT
    - (1) On down through the centuries, to the other side of the world, 20 centuries later, in a gym in Manhattan KS, to you. And me.

- h) Paul's imprisonment also had a positive Impact on Roman Church for boldness as well
  - i) Apparently some Roman believers initially were intimidated to speak about Christ, seeing Paul imprisoned for the Gospel.
  - ii) But as Paul continued to speak and preach about Christ to the Roman soldiers and authorities, they were **EMBOLDENED** to do the same!
- i) Paul knew he was in a fight, a spiritual battle. And that Jesus was working, even when his life got very difficult. Even when it was unfair. Even when he couldn't see what was going on.
  - i) Such that in Adversity, he **OVERFLOWED** with Joy
  - ii) When he was squeezed, **JOY** came out
- j) **HOW DO I GET THIS KIND OF FAITH?**
  - i) Where I can overflow with joy even in the midst of great adversity and suffering?
  - ii) A big part is cultivating a Vertical perspective
    - (1) A conscious awareness that life isn't only about what I see going on but also what's going on in the unseen spiritual realm
      - (a) There's far more going on than meets the Eye
      - (b) We **ARE** in a warzone, whether we realize it or not.
    - (2) And that he has vertical access to God through Christ in it all
- k) Some say (partly rightly) that adversity is to make us stronger believers, to build our character
  - i) Certainly can be true
    - (1) Rom 5:3-4 "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope"
  - ii) But often God's purpose through our adversity is for the blessing of **OTHERS**
    - (1) Seeing this is another major component of having this kind of faith
    - (2) Of fighting for Joy in the midst of adversity
- 8) Of course Paul didn't know the full effect of his imprisonment **OR HIS LIFE** at the time of this writing. Couldn't see it. Had to trust – faith
  - a) He could pick out a few things (Praetorian guard, Roman church emboldened, opportunity to preach the Gospel to scores of top Roman officials, including Caesar!)
  - b) **BUT** there was **SO MUCH MORE** that God was doing that he didn't see
  - c) Yet he was still able to have joy
  - d) Because he chose this perspective **FIRST**.
    - i) **BEFORE** being certain of the outcomes.
    - ii) We too have to choose the Vertical Perspective **FIRST**, before the joy can take root and overflow our hearts
- 9) Pain can ferment into **PATIENCE**
  - a) Where we begin **LISTEN** to God, rather than tell God.
- 10) CS Lewis: God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." – The Problem of Pain
- 11) **THIS IS GOD'S TYPICAL PATTERN FOR PEOPLE HE USES:**

- a) Joni Erikson Tada – paralyzed from the neck down after a diving accident as a girl. GREAT adversity. Yet through her trust in Jesus, overflows with joy, and has led and encouraged millions to do the same through her books and speaking
  - i) I saw her speak a few years ago in Ohio.
- b) Dietrich Bonhoeffer – German pastor during the rise of the Nazi party leading up to WW2. He paid a tremendous personal cost in order to keep training leaders and shepherding churches. Even cost him his life in a concentration camp.
  - i) But his legacy and writings have gone around the world, pointing men and women to a joyful and steadfast faithfulness to Christ in the midst of adversity
    - (1) A message that has almost disappeared in our day!
    - (2) ONE that is so DESPERATELY needed
- c) Biblical characters – HALL OF FAITH listed in Hebrews 11 Read it! Here are just a few
  - i) Noah
    - (1) Though the whole world was destroyed around him, held on to trust in God and became the grandfather of the whole human race
  - ii) Abraham & Sarah
    - (1) Disconnected from family support because they followed God
    - (2) Baren and far too old to have children
    - (3) Waited for years and years....Trusted God – and eventually received a miracle. Became the parents of God’s chosen people, the Israelites and ancestors of Jesus Christ himself
  - iii) Joseph – terribly dysfunctional family
    - (1) Brothers sold him into slavery and told his father he was dead
    - (2) Wrongfully imprisoned in Egypt for YEARS
    - (3) But he let those times refine his faith in God, and choose to hold on to God.
      - (a) And as a result, he was able to save not only his entire family from death
      - (b) But the whole nation of Egypt
      - (c) Overflowing with Joy
  - iv) David
    - (1) Rejected by his father and brothers
    - (2) Wrongfully pursued to be killed over and over by King saul
    - (3) Lived in exile though he was the rightful king
    - (4) But held on to God through it all
      - (a) And was credited by God as being a man after God’s own heart
      - (b) Wrote most of the psalms, which overflow with an admixture of lament over adversity and rich joy in God.
  - v) Daniel
    - (1) A teenager, orphan of war, captured and led away by his parent’s murders, to a faraway pagan land of Babylon
    - (2) Constantly under threat of death pressured to assimilate into Babylonian religion
    - (3) But he held on to his faith in God. Took steps and stands of great trust, and RISK on that faith
      - (a) Thrown in a lion’s den for it!
    - (4) But God not only delivered him but used him to shine like a star in the midst of a pagan culture.
      - (a) Even so that the wicked king Nebuchadnezzar eventually trusted in the God of Daniel
      - (b) And he got to write one of the most important books in the Old Testament

- (i) With uniquely clear visions from God about the future
  - (ii) Unique self-authentication markers unlike anything else in the scriptures
- vi) Mary Magdeline
  - (1) A woman possessed by 7 demons
  - (2) But who was freed by Jesus
  - (3) Had the privilege of supporting Jesus directly out of her account
  - (4) And was the first human eyewitness to His resurrection
    - (a) Giving her to popular title → the apostles TO the apostles
- vii) Peter
  - (1) A headstrong messup. A struggling fisherman (never seemed to be catching any fish!!!)
  - (2) Made tons of mistakes and blunders
    - (a) EVEN Denied even knowing Jesus right after saying he'd stick with him to death
  - (3) But overflowed with joy as he was restored by Jesus
  - (4) and became the author of 2 books of the Bible and the father of the early church. One of the most influential men in Christian history!
- viii) PAUL probably the other most influential men in Church history.
  - (1) A former persecutor of Christians
  - (2) Turned church Planter
  - (3) He endured nearly every type of adversity imaginable
    - (a) From chronic health issues to beatings, to imprisonments, to betrayals, to starvation, shipwreck, abandonment, injustice, fear, exposure, YOU NAME IT
  - (4) Paul in Phil 4:11 – I've learned to live content IN ALL SITUATIONS!!!! Not just the pleasant ones.
    - (a) I CAN DO ALL THINGS --- not football poster
      - (i) Holding up with joy during suffering for JC
- ix) JESUS – God himself, who came here not to be served, but to serve
  - (1) And to give his life as a sacrifice for many
  - (2) Who didn't hold on to his rights as God
  - (3) But emptied himself, and submitted to death on a cross, for you, and for me.
    - (a) FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM → resurrection. (Heb 12)

## 12) What about you? -- APPLICATION

- a) Nonbelievers - We can't assume God is working through our adversity unless we have an established relationship with Him through JC
  - i) God makes all things work together for good FOR THEM WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSES (Rom 8:28)
  - ii) Conditions for this good – relationship with God through JC
    - (1) Not enough to attend church, you have to personally receive Christ as your savior and Lord
    - (2) And called according to his purposes – so I define good not ONLY for what seems good to me, but what HE defines and sees as Good
  - iii) Come to JC – GOSPEL PRESENTATION
- b) THE REST - None of you here are currently in prison
  - (1) Though some have been and some, including those watching may be imprisoned later
  - ii) But all of you experience adversity that's not directly your doing
    - (1) Some of you experiencing significant health challenges
    - (2) Job and financial difficulties



- (3) Family struggles
  - (a) Cold marriage
  - (b) Divorce
  - (c) Wayward children
- (4) Loneliness and relationship disfunctions
  - (a) Paul reports real relational pains he was experiencing from supposed fellow Christian leaders
  - (b) And in other letters he shares how most all of his disciples and closest friends had deserted him
  - (c) Loneliness and relational brokenness can really crush the human spirit if left unattended.
- (5) Some of you have experienced some level of persecution because of your faith in Jesus
  - (a) How you live that out
  - (b) How you share with your friends and coworkers
  - (c) How you make decisions in your business and your personal life.
  - (d) And it's costing you. There's difficulty there. There's pain there. Loss.
- (6) ALL of us have been impacted by the sins of others
  - (a) And we're left with the difficult and painful work of forgiveness and healing from traumas and wounds in our past through counseling and soul care.
  - (b) The pain and adversity here can be truly overwhelming and staggering.
- (7) But no matter what cocktail of adversity you're facing,
  - (a) Each of you have the same opportunity Paul did, to choose to trust that God can lead you through each and every situation and use it for great Good, many of which you may not see
- iii) God can do far more than you could ever ask or imagine through your difficult circumstances, especially if you'll let him.
  - (1) And flood your heart through a vertical perspective, so that you overflow with joy NOW.
- iv) So that you no longer have to live as a victim
  - (a) No longer do we have to react to them with bitterness and hate (Gen. 50:15-21).
  - (b) No longer do we have to be cynical.
  - (2) And as you practice this patient trust – CHOOSE this MISSION mindset:
    - (a) Experience the deep and abiding Joy of the Lord
    - (b) So that when you're squeezed what's inside comes out.
  - (3) A resource I've found helpful is this book by Ajith Fernando: The Call to Joy and Pain
    - (a) Rich little book. Could use in your devotions.
    - (b) We have 5 copies today at the resource table subsidized for \$10 each

13) How are you going fight for joy this week?

14) **PRAY**

15) 2 SONGS:

- a) WAY MAKER & TIS SO SWEET
- b) Benediction