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1 | PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2; ACTS 16

JOY IN JESUS

Rejoicing in God when you are lonely

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Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Philippians 1**. The title of our study this morning is: “Joy in Community.”

Paul’s overarching concern in Philippians is with the **gospel**, a word that appears more in Philippians than in any other letter (per hundred words), as scholar Gordon Fee points out.¹ The word “**gospel**” means “good news”. The theme of the book of Philippians is “joy in Jesus.” Joy comes through sharing in Christ’s presence in a new community that God has created through the Gospel.

There is almost no correction in the book of Philippians. It is a book that is written to maturing Christians. The key to Christian maturity we find in this letter is to: rejoice in the Lord. Get your focus off yourself; get your focus off your circumstances, and rejoice in Christ, in your forever family, and in all the spiritual blessings God has given you. We see this taught and lived out in this letter.

BACKGROUND OF PHILIPPIANS

Paul is going to have a number of things to say about his forever family in Jesus. Here is a guy who should be, by all accounts, absolutely **depressed** because of **loneliness**. He has nothing that you and I would seek to cure our loneliness. He’s writing from **prison**. He has no wife. No kids. No grandkids. No home. No hometown he can return to. No home church that is nearby (he was sent from Antioch). He’s in prison. He’s not in proximity with people.

Philippi

His **friends** are far away in a town called **Philippi**. Philippi was founded by the father of Alexander the Great, **Phillip II of Macedonia**. It had a population of about 2000 people. It became established because it was considered a port city, not too far from the Mediterranean Sea. It also was supplied with gold mines nearby.

Paul is writing the Philippians a letter from Rome where he is **imprisoned**. There in the cell he is shackled next to a Roman soldier under house arrest. It’s normally a lot worse, but Paul is a Roman citizen. There he can receive guests and write letters. He’s wrote four letters called the “**prison epistles**”: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.²

¹ Gordon Fee. *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, vol 14, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 82.

² You can remember the prison epistles with the mnemonic device: General Electric Power Company, the initials for the prison epistles – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

He doesn't have a lot in common with these people. Most are married. He's single. Many of them have children. He doesn't. They are going to work. He's going to jail, right? They're really at different phases of their life. And he writes them a letter, as a friend, and he talks about how much joy he has because of their Gospel partnership with him. Here is a striking fact in our text: **Paul is not lonely**. He rejoices in the fellowship he has with God's people everywhere. He rejoices that God is building his community, his forever family, even though he's in prison. As Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (**Mt 16:18**). He rejoices in Christ who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (**Heb 13:5**).

Paul was never totally alone, because Christ was always with him. Paul reminds us that joy isn't derived from comfortable circumstances, but from a living, encouraging encounter and communion with Christ.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read our passage today, Philippians 1:1-11,

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (1:1-11).

This is God's Word.

Why are we people so lonely? Theologically, to get you to understand why we're in this state, I'll briefly summarize for you the Bible's teaching of why isolation, loneliness, is our state. And that is, to begin the character of God. God, by definition, according to Scripture, is Trinitarian in nature. One God, three persons. Father, Son, Spirit. Mysterious? Indeed. But, the Bible says that within the very character of God, there is love, community, respect, relationship. God never gets lonely. God did not make mankind because he was lonely. That would be impossible since God is completely fulfilled within himself. God made man for his glory.

Loneliness is ultimately caused by sin which separates us from God. That's why even if you are in a **crowd** of people, you can feel lonely. You can be a **mother** in the home with a husband and many children and be lonely. The cure for loneliness is salvation in Jesus. When you come to know Jesus, he takes away your sins. He takes away the

separation. He unites you with himself and you are adopted and chosen into God’s family. You are never alone again. And at that moment God brings you into fellowship with all Christians. *Fellowship* is **sharing in the presence of God**.

Paul’s “Lonely” Imprisonment

Paul is sitting in prison, facing death, lonely, hurting. He is hungry. He is broke. He is beaten. He is probably sick, and he writes a letter to his friends. And he opens with this word to explain to the depth of the relationship that they have in their Gospel partnership. He opens with this. “Grace to you.”

Paul knew about the grace of God. He spoke of it at every opportunity. He was under house arrest in Rome, and he shared his testimony of Jesus “throughout the whole imperial guard” (1:13). The imperial guard, known as the Praetorians, were the **elite of the Roman army** and were paid double a normal soldier’s wage for their service. There were 10,000 specifically to guard the emperor of Rome. Paul’s testimony spread throughout the Praetorian Guard, and even saints deep in “Caesar’s household,” i.e., those in and about the emperor’s palace and among his family (4:22).

Paul was held a bit at Caesarea Maratima on the Coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the capitol of Judea at the time. He was likely held there in a broken cistern that is still there today. There is even a plaque there dedicated to Pontius Pilate. He was then transferred to Rome and was there under house arrest for two years (Acts 28:30) with some of the imperial guard, very elite. Paul was a Roman citizen and got great treatment. Non-Roman citizens, even of high status, were often harshly treated. In contrast, house arrest was typically more comfortable for the prisoner, who was usually physically chained to a guard but could still host visitors.

Upon entering the city of Rome, “Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment” (Acts 27:1) handed Paul over to the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard (the commanding officer). The official duty of the Prefect was to keep in custody all accused persons who were to be tried before the Emperor. “Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him” (Acts 28:16).

Evangelism: Paul had been delivered to the Praetorian Guard to await trial before the Emperor. Paul is twice referred to as having been “bound in chains” (Acts 28:20; Eph 6:20). The *chains* referred to were a short length of chain by which the wrist of a prisoner was bound to the wrist of a soldier who was guarding him, so that escape was impossible, both for Paul, *and* the guard!

THE MACEDONIAN CALL

Every congregation has a beginning. The church at Jerusalem began on Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the apostles (Acts 2). The church in Samaria began with Philip’s preaching the word (Acts 8).

The church at Philippi began with Paul hearing the **Macedonian call** (Acts 16:9). Paul and his team of missionaries were going to circle Asia and head back East, but the

Holy Spirit forbid them to preach in Asia and **Bithynia**. The Spirit gave Paul a vision of a man saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9).

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “**Come over to Macedonia and help us.**” ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:6-10).

In obedience Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke went straight through Asia to Macedonia (modern day Greece, Macedonia and Bulgaria). It seems the Lord wanted the gospel to impact Philippi, an important port city. For the first time the gospel was preached in Europe.

Paul shared a special friendship with the Christians at Philippi. That friendship started in a strange way, which is described in the 16th chapter of Acts. Paul and his companions had been on a missionary journey. They had an itinerary—they knew where they were going. Bithynia was the next place on the list. They travelled so much and were ready to go east to Bithynia. But when they tried to enter Bithynia, Acts says, “the Spirit didn’t allow them” (Acts 16:7).

Then, during the night, Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him, “Come over into Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Paul and his companions caught the next ship to Macedonia, and proceeded to Philippi, its leading city.

1. THANKFUL FOR OUR FAMILY **TREE!** (1:1-2)

Joy comes because we are God’s forever family.

PEOPLE IN GOD’S FAMILY

Every family has its structure. You have mom and dad, children, sometimes Grandma and Grandpa. Everyone knows their place.

Ten years ago, my oldest brother gave me the book of the genealogy of my family. How many of you have done research in your family tree? You can find interesting characters in every family tree.

- DAD’S SIDE (William Black)
 - Growing up, I remember listening to stories from my grandfather, **Charles Cunningham Black**, who everyone called “Scottie” because he was from Scotland, born in 1899. “He was 15 years old when he joined the British Army and fought in World War I. His sister Mary signed the papers for him so that he could get away from his father, who he didn’t get along with. He was caught in a battle and spent 3 months in a prison camp. After the war

ended he was sent to Cairo Egypt.”³ Once his service was ended he opted to go to the United States. He landed at Ellis Island on the 4th of March, 1923. Later he would put on three round exhibition fights for Al Capone, who paid him \$50 a night (a very good wage back then!).

- Genealogies are fascinating! On my grandmother’s side, I found out that 150 years ago (in 1866), my great grandfather **Henry Becker** moved to 248 North Street, Elgin, Illinois, about 2 miles from where I presently live.⁴
- Mom’s side (Barbara Hyde-Butt Black)
 - Some of my ancestors were saved in the **Great Awakening under the preaching of John Wesley**. People used to say they that my family [the Butt family] were born with hymnbooks in their hands – “singing instead of crying!”⁵
 - My mom had a great aunt (through marriage). We all think our Aunts are great! Unfortunately this great aunt was an outlaw. So I’m also related to **Belle Starr**, one of the most famous female outlaw in the Wild West.⁶ In 1941 a famous movie was made about her.
 - As I went back, I found out I’m related to **James Scott, Duke of Monmouth** whose father was **King Charles II of England** (through Lucy Walter – via the VanStone / Butt families⁷)
 - **James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, Usurper of the English Throne:** Of course, my most famous relative is James Scott, Great Grandson of King James I (King James Bible fame). Duke James Scott of Monmouth (a protestant), actually tried to usurp the throne from his uncle King James II (a Catholic).

We don’t choose our family, that’s for sure! But we also don’t choose the church. Jesus promised: “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). As Paul writes to these Philippian friends, let’s look at the family structure.

Slaves (1:1a)

Paul and Timothy are writing, and they introduce themselves as **slaves** [*doulos*] of Jesus.

Paul and Timothy, **servants** of Christ Jesus (1:1a).

Though we are sons spiritually, adopted into the family of God, when it comes to obedience and holiness, we are **slaves** of righteousness for Christ.

³ From werelate.org. http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Charles_Black_%2811%29 . Accessed December 8, 2012.

⁴ http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Henry_Becker_%285%29

⁵ From werelate.org. http://www.werelate.org/wiki/MySource:Srlac/Hannah_Butt_Taylor_Letter Accessed December 8, 2012.

⁶ http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Alma_Becker_%282%29 . Alma Becker was married to Jack Reed. Jack’s uncle was James C. Reed, whose mother was Myra Maybelle Shirley, AKA Belle Starr.

⁷ http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Charles_II_of_England_%281%29

Timothy had a very special relationship with **Paul**. Though he was somewhat young, he radical commitment to Christ and was Paul's **spiritual son** in the faith.

This is a beautiful picture of spiritual leadership. At other churches, they have to say, we are God's ordained apostles, but here, we have a church that is spiritually mature, and you see this in so many ways in this letter. When leaders are good and gentle and kind, you know you have a mature church. You see this tenderness in all of Paul's letters. He says, I'm a **slave** of Jesus. I want to wash your feet, like he washed his disciples' feet.

Saints (1:1b)

Who are these people he calls "saints"? A saint is simply a "holy one." It means "one separated unto God, set apart for God's service." If you are a Christian, then you are a saint.

To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the **overseers** and **deacons** (1:1).

Elders and Deacons (1:1c)

These **saints** at Philippi are overseen by the pastors and elders. The word overseer here is one of many words used for elders: pastor, bishop, overseer, teacher, shepherd. These are all good words used for the same office.

It had been 12 years since the jailhouse conversion of the Philippian jailer, the slave girl, and Lydia and her family, and now there is an established church in Philippi. There are **elders** overseeing them. There are **deacons** caring for the needs of congregation.

We don't know who these church leaders were. Perhaps one of the elders is the Philippian jailer. It's been 12 years since the night he was converted.

FAMILY PURPOSE (1:2)

Paul greets the Philippians with Gospel words:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2).

Grace is not only God's unmerited favor but also his infinite power to help his children. **Peace** is that reconciliation with God. We are no longer enemies, but have been brought into a sweet relationship with YHWH through his Son Jesus.

So we get an example of how God grows the church here and around the world. How does Jesus build his church? First through the grace and peace of conversion. That's how Paul starts his letter off.

Have you been converted? Have you placed your faith in Jesus? Are you a saint? This position of sainthood is not like in the Roman Catholic church where has to prove that you've done two authentic miracles before you are canonized as a saint. To be a saint, you need trust Christ with repentant faith, and your robe of sin is put on Jesus, and he robes you in his righteousness. That's sainthood, and it is possible through a total surrender to Christ. You surrender your sin to him, and you receive his righteousness. You are justified before a holy God because of the blood of Christ.

Transition: I want you to remember the words of Jesus who said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). Jesus promised to build his church but let me show you how it began.

2. THANKFUL FOR OUR **FAMILY** STORY (1:3-8; ACTS 16)

Joy comes because we are God’s forever family.

FAMILY STORY (1:3-8; ACTS 16)

We read of Paul’s deep affection for the Philippians.

I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:3-8).

Paul has this deep affection. He compares his love for the Philippians to Christ’s love, it is so strong. Paul can remember how extraordinary this church is. I want to look at it from Acts 16. Would you turn there?

In **the Jewish Mishnah** (collection of Jewish history and traditions) it is said that a Jewish man would thank God daily for three things: that he was not a **woman**, a **slave**, or a **Gentile**. That’s interesting because that was the founding group for the Philippian church.

The Female CEO, Fashionista experiences the Wisdom of God

If we look to Acts 16, Lydia we find is from Thyatira, but has a home in Philippi. She’s a rich woman. She has a booming business in selling purple fabric for clothing. A “seller of purple” (Acts 16:14) meant Lydia sold purple clothes or cloth. At the time, such clothes were so expensive they were only worn by royalty and the rich. Let’s read about her. They came to a city, it says in Acts 16:12, named...

...Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have

judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us (Acts 16:12-15).

Thyatira and Philippi are cities with booming economies. Lydia then is basically a Greek fashionista, CEO, on top of some fashion empire. Today we might say she has a house in Chicago and in Paris. She’s a serious mover in her world. Isn’t it wonderful that God can humble someone like Lydia? She’s what the Bible calls a “God-fearer.” Here’s what that means. She’s rejected paganism and polytheism. She does not believe that there are dozens of gods: god of the wind, the rain, the purple cloth; god of the sea, god of the fashion world... She’s come to believe there is only one God ruling the universe. So a God-fearer is that she is a monotheist. She’s in the synagogue. She’s listening to the teaching of the Jews. She’s trying to live a moral life. I want you to see how God goes after her. She is an intellect. She is a seeker. She understands the law, if she knows the Torah. She knows she needs forgiveness. She knows she needs a blood sacrifice. She needs atonement. She needs to be justified before God. But she’s confused.

Enter Paul. He enters into what is basically a women’s Bible study and pauses the Kay Arthur or Nancy Leigh DeMoss DVD and begins to teach them. Paul basically connects the dots for them. God opens her eyes. Lydia is a thinker. She’s an intellect. She’s a God-fearer. She is listening to the Word of God, and she experiences the wisdom of God when **God opens her eyes.**

After her conversion, she “constrained” the missionaries to use this house as a base of operations, so it must have been much larger than needed. Her home in Philippi became the place where the new church met (Acts 16:40).

Slave Girl Experiences the Power of God

Back in Acts 16, we are introduced to a slave girl. She’s manic. She’s mental. She’s possessed by a demon. She’s making tons of money for her handlers. She’s following Paul and Silas and Luke around, causing trouble. She’s interrupting and screaming speaking of Paul and his Savior Jesus. That sounds good, but it’s not. She’s screaming and causing a scene for them. This is an evil spirit that has her tongue. Let’s read about her.

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly **annoyed**, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour (Acts 16:16-18).

I love what the Scripture says. Paul was “annoyed.” He had a holy annoyance. Don’t misunderstand. Paul is a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He knows what this girl needs. He is annoyed that this girl is under the **power of the wicked one.**

She needs to experience the power of the Gospel not merely through wisdom, which she knew and had been spouting off about. Mere knowledge was not enough to convert this girl. **She needed to experience Christ as the power of God.** So Paul commands the

demon to come out of her. There's convert number two. The slave girl is converted through the **power** of God.

This conversion eventually causes a riot, because the Gospel has major **economic consequences** for the city of Philippi. Even though Paul is a Roman citizen, he is thrown into prison with Silas. It seems Luke and Timothy are in Philippi, but they are not arrested.

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the **jailer** to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks (Acts 16:19-24).

The Ex-Military, Blue Collar GI

So here we have an introduction to our Ex-Roman military **Philippian jailer**. He's likely a GI, a Roman soldier that is now a warden. He's a tough guy. We know that because he's supposed to keep Paul and Silas safe, but he tortures them.

Torture of Stocks

Not only does he beat them, but he puts them in stocks. Now when we modern people think of stocks, we think of the 1700s when a person would have their hands and their head restrained by stocks. The Roman practice of stocks was not nearly as kind. **Stocks** in Roman practice was a form of **torture** in the prisoners would be shackled to the wall in painful positions.

This jailer is not just keeping them safe. He's torturing them. He's going above and beyond in making sure they never want to cause a problem in Philippi again. But something happens.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.**" ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And

he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God (Acts 16:25-34).

God delivers them, and the Philippians jailer and his whole family come to know the Lord.

APPLICATIONS

Let me leave you with some applications.

1 – Attitude is everything

So what is Paul's attitude when he's in jail? We can hear his heart in the book of Philippians. If they want to kill him, he says, "To die is gain." If they want to beat him, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." If they set him free, he says, "For me to live is Christ." If they torture him, he breaks out in prayer and singing, and brings an earthquake to the entire jail complex.

You are a Christian. God is working through you. One of the great marks of God on your life is the joy of knowing Jesus. Look at Paul: joy doesn't come from your circumstances – it comes from your walk with Christ.

2 – Loneliness is a mindset.

As we have created technology to connect more and more people, ironically, loneliness has increased. I want to share with you a set of statistics from the book called, *Bowling Alone*. It's authored by a professor at the Harvard Business School, and he traces a decline in friendship and relationship, and an increase in loneliness and isolation over the course of the last 25 years, roughly.

He says an evening with the neighbors is down 33 percent. And many of us don't even know our neighbors. We don't know who they are. You're just, "That's the weird guy. He mows his lawn in dress socks. Over there is the loud guy: he talks loud, his music is loud. There's the angry lady. She's always yelling at people. We don't even know who they are, you know? As Christians, we need to take the time to get to know our neighbors. Lots of Christians complain about loneliness. But Proverbs tells us: "A man that has friends must show himself friendly" (**Prov 18:24**).

3 – Christian community is rich

God's family is diverse. Look at the Philippian church: it started with a woman, a slave girl and a Gentile jailer and his family. Let us enjoy the diversity of every ethnicity under heaven. Let us remember that "Grace erases race." We celebrate our ethnicity, but we also remember we are all the same blood. There is one human race.

Let me challenge you, if you are struggling with loneliness, start getting to know people. Don't just stay in your comfort zone hanging out with people just like you. If you are young, love on an elderly person. Next time you have lunch out, invite someone completely different than you.

4 – Focus on Christ, not on circumstances

One thing we have in common with all Christians is a radical focus on Christ. Paul doesn't begin this letter bemoaning his prison sentence. He starts out rejoicing with a heart filled with **grace** and **peace**. That's how Paul greets his friends in Philippi. Paul is focused on Christ in grace and peace. Are you walking in the power of grace? God's grace is **forgiving** enough to cleanse you of your sins and **powerful** enough to give you the strength to live the Christian life. Can you testify that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for every test and trial to give you joy?

A lot of people talk about the **grace** of God. But you will know you are **enjoying** the grace of God when you **experience** the **peace** of God. Are you walking in God's peace? Do you have a clean conscience? Is there any sin that is condemning you in your conscience? Remember what Paul says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (4:6-7).

Or as Paul says a few verses earlier, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (4:4).

Joy comes from Jesus. Jesus is what brought this congregation together. Jesus is what fills us with joy. Paul is in prison, and he has such joy knowing what Jesus is doing in this congregation.

Conclusion

Where is your joy? Where is your focus? If we focus on each other, we will be discouraged, but if we focus on Christ, we will rejoice!

This morning we have so much diversity here, just like the Philippians church. We have people who were raised in different parts of the world, people of many diverse contexts, family backgrounds. We are a church that looks like heaven from every tribe, tongue, language and nation. Let us act like we are from heaven, by focusing on Christ.

What is your **family story**? How you came to know Christ may have different details, but one detail is always the say: **we found our joy in the love and forgiveness of Jesus!** Tell that story everywhere!