

Good Morning! Over these last few weeks we have been exploring Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Matt started us off in the first chapter, giving insight into Paul's joy in, and despite of his circumstance. Paul was a prisoner, and despite that, he was able not only to encourage the churches he had planted, but to live his life in joy by example.

Rory led us through chapter 2, exploring how joy gives way for humility. And last week, David shared about forgetting the past, and pressing on toward what is ahead. I encourage you to jump online and listen to those messages if you missed any. Even in the service today, if you get sick of my voice, feel free to listen to one of the other sermons in this series 😊

So we have explored most of Paul's thoughts toward the Philippians, we just have 1 final chapter.

So let's take a look:

Slide 1 *Verse 1 Therefore my brothers and sisters whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.*

It's good we have this at the beginning of this chapter. It's reminding us, as David said last week, break with the past, Forget it, our sins, others sins toward us and press on toward the goal. And it's crucial that he points this out directly before the next statement he makes. Paul decides at this point, after writing lots of positive thanks and encouragement to the church, to mention some members of the church specifically.

It's like having your name called out in assembly, or over the announcement system at work, or the warehouse. It's like leaving your lights on in the car park and your registration being read out at the front.

It's embarrassing! And I'm sure that's what happened when this letter was read to the Philippians gathered for church.

Everyone is feeling great, Paul has said lots of nice things about us! I was really worried after I hear about some of his other letters he has written. You see the reader turn over to the last page. You wipe your brow, when, he is not going to say anything about me.

Slide 2 *Verse 2 "I urge Euodia and I Urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord"*

Their stomachs dropped.... Gosh, I really thought I was going to get out of that one. The necks crane as people turn to stare at you, some with wagging tongues, some with wagging fingers. Some just with knowing stares. You can imagine the scene, it's like one of those dreams where you are going about your day and then suddenly become aware that you didn't put any clothes on.

Paul had set the stage for this moment. He had spent the previous chapter telling the Philippians to forget the past, the sins of others done against you. And to press on toward the goal. And then allayed any confusion that this message might not apply to these 2 ladies situation.

They had had some type of disagreement, Paul doesn't tell us what, but he urges them to be of the same mind "In the Lord". They had both worked hard for the gospel, struggling alongside Paul, and it

is implied that their names are in the book of life. But there was something between them, and Paul calls them out. Why?

I remember once at my old church, there was a situation with some team members being “of different minds” They all had very valid opinions on certain things, and very direct ways about sharing those opinions. It caused a riff whenever those people served together. Awkward silence, and muttering, others in the team walking on eggshells. We have all probably been in that situation, it’s the elephant in the room.

In the end we had a Hui. Not just for them but for a lot of issues. Everyone had their chance to lay out their disagreements with one another, in a safe, private environment. We spent a heap of time as a team seeking the lord together. And you know what, those disagreements gave way for unity, and out of that, we were no longer bound by the angst between certain people, but were free to Rejoice in the lord. The worship amongst our team changed and grew dramatically following that.

Why are we breaking with the past, with what those sins that we have been done, and those done against us? Because those things that we hold onto, they rob us of our Joy in the Lord. Paul calls these two women to be on the same mind in the lord. The easiest way for us to be of the same mind in the lord is to get into his work. He is telling these women to search His word for the solution to their disagreement, and to seek help from Pauls “Loyal companion” mentioned in verse 3 in order to clear this disagreement of past that is distracting them from the goal. He is using this specific situation to exemplify the things he just talked about. “In case you weren’t paying attention to my letter Euodia and Syntyche, please seeks the lord together, get some help and forget the past, because it’s affecting your life with me, and your faith in me. Live instead, in the Joy of the lord.

But this story also serves to segue into some of Paul’s final thoughts, His summary of the letter. We most likely know the following verse,

“Rejoice in the lord always, again I will say, Rejoice, Let your gentleness be known to everyone, the lord is near. Don’t worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to god, and the peace of god, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Slide 3

This is the call he is making to these women, and indeed to us. As David shared last week, He has called us to forget about the past, what it has done, and press on toward the goal, the finish line, the call of Christ’s mission in our lives..... And to Rejoice in the Lord! Note that it’s not simply to rejoice. He’s not calling us to live with a sunny disposition, or a Positive mental attitude, but Joy in the Lord, pure delight and thanksgiving to our God. Spurgeon says this, which I find really encouraging

“What a gracious God we serve, who makes delight to be a duty, and who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy.”

Slide 4

And he goes on to explain why this happiness or Joy in the Lord, is so impressed upon the Philippians by Paul.

People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord.”

Slide 5

Paul is calling us, and these two women in Philippi, to Rejoice in the lord, to lift our minds higher than our little human struggles, to him. To allow his joy to fill our minds, so that there is no room for our human distractions. Joy in the lord will actually help us not to get into these disagreements which mess without ability to worship God.

Now it all sounds well and peaching, saying that God's command is to rejoice but how exactly does that work? Because I know how it goes.

We are walking along one morning, we've spent some time with the lord, thanking hi, asking him to bless the day ahead, to give us peace and strength. We've done the morning routine and we are out the door, off to school or work or whatever. Then it happens, some small insignificant thing, someone cuts us off on the road, that kid in our class calls us a name, we have a disagreement with our cop-worker, etc. etc. etc.

"Rejoice in the lord always, again I say rejoice?"

Or maybe it's big. Maybe you lost your job and the mortgage payment is due, maybe your parents decided to get divorced, maybe you were pregnant and had a miscarriage, a family member has been diagnosed with cancer. Maybe you lost a loved one.

Rejoice in the lord always, again I say rejoice.

I don't pretend to have the answers to that. In reality I've had a pretty amazing, blessed, care-free life so far. I don't have the experience and wisdom to tell you how to "rejoice in the lord" in those circumstances, the only wisdom I have is that which Paul shared to the Philippians in verse 6:

Don't worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to god, and the peace of god, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Slide 6

Put aside what we cannot control. That's what it means to not worry. When we worry, we are saying, I don't trust you god. The future is uncertain and I don't trust that you will do what you have promised to do. But complete trust is not easy obviously, so Paul says, Pray. With humility, and thanksgiving, petition god in your situation. Pour out your heart to him. Get on your knees and cry before the lord. Get into his presences in your situation.

Note here that Paul doesn't say god will give you all your requests, but God does promise us something whenever we come to him in this way. His peace will guard our hearts and minds. Guard against bitterness, against resentment, against hate and lies and injustice.

When we seek the lord with thanksgiving, he will protect us from having hearts and minds unable to rejoice. We can rejoice in the lord because of his gifts to us.

The title of this series has been Unshackled Joy, a Life in Christ". This is the truth of that unshackled joy. Not that we are somehow able in ourselves to put on a brave face and a smile, clap our hands and sing the songs. But that God frees us of the burden of worry, giving us peaceful hearts and minds.

To finish I want to read a prayer. I read this prayer when I last spoke earlier in January, but I feel its valuable as we finish this series to be reminded

IT'S QUIET. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

I choose love . . .

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.

I choose joy . . .

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical . . . the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

I choose peace . . .

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience . . .

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clenching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness . . .

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness . . .

I will go without a dollar before I take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast.

I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness . . .

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their father will not come home.

I choose gentleness . . .

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.

I choose self-control . . .

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek his grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.