

Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 3:1-11)

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Date: 02 March 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Good morning, church. Spring has arrived. Short sleeves. See that? I'm calling it. Well, it's good to be here this morning, and we're going to continue in our study in the book of Philippians. We're actually going to launch out in chapter 3 this morning. So if you have a copy of God's Word, go ahead and turn to Philippians chapter 3, looking at the first 11 verses this morning. I just want to encourage all our ladies, 4 o'clock, we've got a spring fling, and it's required. No, we would love for you to come back at 4 if you've got some friends. Bring them along and let them experience just the hospitality of God's people. And I think you guys will have a really enjoyable time this afternoon. So let me pray, and then we'll study the text together. Join me. Lord, we're reminded of Paul's words where he says that at the name of Jesus, that every knee is going to bow on heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Lord, there's a day coming when every knee will bow, whether by choice or whether by demand. And Lord, we want to be your people today that do it by choice. We pray that the posture of our hearts this day would be in submission to you. So we want to humble ourselves. Lord, would you speak to us through your word. Lord, we pray that we would hear something from your heart to us that we could take with us today and this week and ruminate on it and use it to draw close to you each day. And so we commit our time. We pray that all that happens here would bring you glory, Jesus. We pray this in your name. Amen.

Well, back in 2010, there was a three-minute video that went viral. Perhaps you recall, this has kind of become a thing in culture, right? These viral videos of often absolutely nothing, and then people just continued to watch them. And back in 2010, one of the pioneers of these viral videos was this guy that filmed a double rainbow. We call him the double rainbow guy. Filmed this in Yosemite Park. This guy goes by the name of Hungry Bear. And he was so moved by this experience. It's like a three-minute video and all you see is a rainbow, well, a double rainbow, mind you. And he's just, he's overcome with emotion. And he's like, what does this mean? Like there's this, there's some sort of like spiritual experience he's having. We assume he has not hopped up on something else. But he's just, he's so moved. He's like, what does this thing mean? Oh my goodness. Although he says, oh my.

And so I would have played the video, but we're not going to do that this morning. But he's crying. He's just moved by this experience. And what's interesting, this video, to this point now has racked up 51 million views, if you can believe it. And all it is, is a guy filming a rainbow. Now I've taken some photos of rainbows. I don't know that anybody cares to see them. But this guy has 51 followers, 51 million followers that want to view his video.

[3 : 5 2] And it's not because of what he's filming. I was thinking about this, this week, as I was considering this, the text we're in. People watch this video because they want to see this man moved. Like he's experiencing something. He's affected by something. And I think people want to feel alive. They want to be affected by something. And as we come to the text today, we're going to hear from a man, Paul, who was profoundly affected, profoundly moved. Yet the object of his affection is not God's goodness seen in creation. It's rather God's extravagance experienced in the gospel. So as we come to this text, there's nothing taciturn in Paul's spirit here as he writes Philippians chapter 3. There's great pathos in his words. And our passage, it really, it builds to an emotional crescendo by the time we get to the final two verses of our section. So let's consider this morning together this passage,

Philippians 3 verses 1 through 11, beginning here in the first three verses. Paul writes, he says, by saying, finally. Now, Paul doesn't really mean finally. He has more to say. So when the preacher says finally, it's just, it's code for keep listening. And I actually don't intend to stop talking. I have more words. And that's what Paul does to us here. He tricks us a little bit. This is not, we're only in

chapter 3. We have a whole other chapter to go. This is not the end. And I think you could actually use the word so then would be, would be a, maybe a better translation as we come to this word. And so what Paul is doing here when he says finally, he's actually continuing this theme of joy within this letter. Because he says finally, hey, my brothers, rejoice. Be glad. And I think we actually learned something profound, something fundamental about joy in the fact that Paul is commanding us to rejoice. Rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the gospel. Rejoice because your sins are forgiven for real.

And what we learn about joy here, church, is this. That joy is actually a choice. How do we know? Because Paul is telling them. He's actually commanding them to choose it. Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord. And maybe this morning you're kind of like, well, man, I don't, I don't really feel like rejoicing. If you knew the status of my life today, all the things that are going wrong, all the difficulties and the trials, I just, I can't buy that. I don't feel like it.

And I would just suggest to us, you know, Paul probably felt the same way. I mean, recall the circumstances in which he's writing this. He's not off on a sandy beach in the sunshine, relaxing under an umbrella. Like, he's chained to a Roman soldier. And he actually says in that condition, hey, I want you to rejoice. So there's nothing cliché about Paul's exhortation here. This is not pretend joy. It's a choice. It's a choice. And this passage, what it does is it actually promises us something.

That if Paul can command us to rejoice even in the deserts of life, then we too can experience joy even in those seasons as well. There was a missionary, became a good friend of Jonathan Edwards in the first great awakening, 18th century in America, a guy by the name of David Brainerd.

[8 : 31] And David Brainerd lived a very short life. He died at the age of 29. He was a missionary to the Native Americans in the New Jersey area. But David Brainerd struggled deeply with suffering, health issues, and deep, deep depression. Struggled with it. In fact, in his diary, he writes the word suffering and pain over a hundred times. He was a man that suffered deeply internally. And yet at the same time, in his same diary, he writes the word joy 350 times.

And so I think there's a testimony there for us that even in the midst of sometimes unseen suffering, joy can still be present. It can still coalesce. And so Paul, he even says it here, in a desperate hour in his life, he says to the Philippians, hey, rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the gospel, despite what's going on. Well, interestingly enough, Paul's words about joy here, he's exhorting us to rejoice. But they come in a strange way. They come in the form of a warning in this section. It's really a little bit odd. There are actually some Bible scholars that go, I don't think this fits within the flow. It does. But let's see what Paul says here. He says, hey, to write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. It's going to be a joy for you. And what he's saying there is he's warning them. He's warned them before. He didn't write it in the book of Philippians, but I think he's referring back to the ministry that he had in person while he was there planting the church. And he's saying, I need to warn you guys of something. And the warning is this.

You find it in verse 2. He says, look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. And he's actually referring to the same group of individuals here. There's not three different groups. And he's giving them three descriptions, right? They're dogs, they're evildoers, they're mutilators of the flesh. And so there is a recurring problem here in the first century in Philippi. We don't have this same problem today. We have different problems in the church. Often there's the problem of consumerism, right? Folks don't ever want to like put roots down in a church because they got to find the one that has all the best things. And so they keep popping from place to place to place. And we struggle with that in America. Watering down God's word, that is an issue, a recurring problem in our culture, in the church. Or the diminishing of God's holiness, the problem we face. Half-hearted in our affections for the things of God, that's an issue. But in Paul's day, it was different. So we kind of have to go back. It's a little strange because it's not what we typically think of as like the stresses or the challenges to the gospel today. But in Paul's day, there were Jewish Christians. We assume that some of them were believers. Some of them may not have been. But we would just call them Judaizers, those who expected Gentiles to obey the Old Testament covenant before trusting in Jesus. And so they would say, you have to become Jewish before you can become

Christian. And specifically, males need to be circumcised. And there was a lot of pride wrapped up into this thinking. That you were somehow better because you were Jewish. There was a richer,

more robust Christianity because of the fact that you became a Jew first. And our joy, they would say, is then found in this identification. And so Paul here, he's saying, hey, I want you to look out for these individuals. And this was a problem in his day. Let me give us maybe a little Old Testament history on why he addresses this issue. And so, yes, we're going to talk about, I know this is like an intro to circumcision 101 this morning. It's not, it's just, we preach the text. So this is what we're doing together. Thank you, Scott, for giving me this one. But circumcision was a problematic issue in Paul's day. And why is that? Well, from the Old Testament, we know that God comes to a guy by the name of Abraham, Abraham at the time. He's 75 years old. We read about that in Genesis 12. He makes a covenant with him. What's a covenant? A covenant is a promise. It's a binding agreement. Creator God obligates himself to man. And God comes to this man, Abraham, and promises him three things. He says, hey, I'm going to give you, or I'm going to make you a great nation. I'm going to give you a great name. And you're going to become a great blessing to the nations. And then there is a specific promise that is given to him in Genesis 15 that he, in fact, is going to have a son from his own loins. And then the lineage of Jesus would come through this line, okay, the Savior of the world.

[14:07] Well, as the story goes, 10 years go by, and Abraham gets impatient. And instead of sticking to God's plan, he acts in his flesh. I think he acts out of fear. He attempts to manufacture God's blessing for an heir. So he ends up sleeping with his wife's maid, Galveh acquired while in Egypt, Galveh by the name of Hagar. And Abraham is then 86 years old when Ishmael is born.

Finally, then 13 years later, Abraham's 99. God comes to him again. Now we're in Genesis 17. Reminds him of the covenant that he made to him that he would be the father of a great nation. And he actually gives him a son through his wife, Sarah. And at that time, God changes Abraham's name, changes it from Abraham, exalted father, to Abraham, father of a multitude. And God at that time in Genesis 17 then instigates circumcision as the reminder of this covenant. And so in Genesis 17, it tells us that Abraham now is 99 years old. He was circumcised on the same day as Ishmael, who's now 13 years old. I can't even imagine like that father-son outing that day. You're right, dad, you want to go, let's go drive RC cars. And dad's like, no, I got something really special. Plan for us. I was like, maybe that last father-son outing. I don't know. Circumcision humor. I'm so sorry. It's just, it's in the text.

This symbol, okay, this removal of the male foreskin, it was the symbol that every male carried as part of the covenant community. And it was actually a sign to remind them to cut out sin from your life. Remove it away from you. God, in fact, gets all of you, even right down to your sexuality. That part of Abraham's anatomy that caused either great destruction or great blessing, right? A godly lineage came through Isaac. And actually, we have an entire false religion, great devastation, Islam, based on God working through Ishmael. Great devastation. Here's the thing, though. Circumcision was the required symbol of the Old Testament covenant, but it did not produce righteousness. It was simply to teach Israel to walk as clean people. This image of removal of that which is unclean. And so it wasn't that which saved you. It was there to teach. And in fact, it says in Jeremiah 9.27 that it was actually possible to be circumcised and yet uncircumcised. And the prophet, what he's getting at is it's the issue of the heart. What's taking place in your heart? So fast forward now to the New

[17:22] Testament, and Paul is clear, you don't have to continue to participate in this to be right with God. In fact, he says in 1 Corinthians 7.18, he says, was any one of you at the time of his call already circumcised? Well, let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of this call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. So circumcision, nor the whole entire Old Testament covenant system, the sacrificial system, the dietary laws, never meant to be a permanent structure, nor was it there for the salvation to be merited through. It was meant simply as a temporary measure to cover sin for a season. It was there to teach, to reveal sin, and most importantly, it was there to prepare for the ultimate solution, which is the Savior of the world, which is Jesus. The gospel is, in fact, a spiritual circumcision.

It's a cutting away of the sin nature and giving of a new heart. And this is attained through faith alone, which is why Paul was able to say then here to the Philippians in verse 3. He says, we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. Think about Paul's words here for a moment. He's talking to these Judaizers who are just saying, hey, you need to obey the Mosaic law in order to be right with God. He's like, wait a second, we, the church here in Philippi, we're the spiritual circumcision. And I'm sure these are like

inflammatory, incendiary words to these Judaizers. Because the church in Philippi, in large measure, it was filled with Roman soldiers, many retired. This is a Gentile heavy church. Most likely, the majority of them not physically circumcised. And then he says to the Judaizers, hey, we're the true circumcision. It's just shocking to these Judaizers.

And Paul is not saying to these Judaizers, he's not saying to them, hey, let's put no confidence in the flesh because he's jealous of them. Okay, so let's be clear here. He's not jealous of these Jewish legalistic possible Christians. It's not as though Paul is the kid that auditioned for the school play, didn't get a part, and then all of a sudden decided, well, theater is stupid, right?

Or turned out for the ball club, got cut from the team and said, well, I hate basketball or baseball or whatever it is. That's a dumb thing. Paul isn't saying don't put no confidence in the flesh because somehow he couldn't be confident in the flesh. Paul could be the most confident in the flesh.

[20 : 54] In fact, he goes on to then tell us, consider his resume of his former life, verses 4 to 6. He says, though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. So Paul gives us a list of ways in which he outpaced everyone in the flesh. And he starts by giving us three or four examples of things that were true of him by birthright. These are not things that he earned. This is just what he sort of inherited.

He says, first off, I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel. What is he saying there? Saying I'm a full-blooded Jew from birth. Whether it be Genesis 17, living against 12, that sets forth the instructions for Jewish male babies, I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm not a Gentile convert who was circumcised later in life, right? I'm day eight, baby. I'm from birth. Moving on. He says, of the tribe of Benjamin. Hey, I belong to one of the two faithful tribes that didn't rebel against the Davidic dynasty.

It's a great tribe to be a part of. It's a tribe that saw Israel's first king come through, King Saul. It's the tribe that possessed the city of Jerusalem within its boundaries. It's a great tribe to be a part of. [22 : 55] Tribe of Benjamin. He says, then I'm also a Hebrew of Hebrews. I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews. Even though born in Tarsus, in Asia Minor, the city entrenched in Greek culture, Paul was raised in the traditions, the culture, the language of the Hebrew culture, right?

He's not some sellout Hellenized Jew. He's a Hebrew of Hebrews. It's just true of Paul by birthright. And then he goes on to tell these Judaizers, hey, there's things I also achieved.

It's a lot of pride that he once possessed in this. He says, as to the law, a Pharisee. He was a Pharisee, right? The strictest group that interpreted Moses.

There's no one more devoted to the Mosaic law than the Pharisee. The word Pharisee means separated one. Think of them as like the monastic movement within Judaism.

He had achieved the highest level of commitment to the law as a Jew. That's what Pharisees did. You recall Jesus in Matthew 23 where he's saying, woe to you Pharisees, right?

[24 : 09] Woe to you. You're obsessing on all these little things. You tithe from even your herb garden. Like you're counting out the mint leaves.

And right? The dill seeds. Okay. Two for God. Right? 18 for me. Like, just... That's what Paul was like.

You want to talk legalism? That was the best. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. So what's Paul saying? Hey, my commitment to the law, it actually went beyond the classroom.

It went beyond just scholastic debates. His beliefs that Jesus was a false messiah drove him to actually violent protest against Christians.

And then finally, on his resume, he says, hey, to righteousness, as to righteousness, under the law, blameless. And I don't think Paul's saying here he was faultless, but he was committed to the Old Testament system of sacrifices and observances of the law.

[25 : 23] And he was just scrupulous in his obedience in this regard. So what I want us to see here, Paul is telling these Judaizers, hey, I had attained everything.

If we're going to talk about, like, adding something to Jesus, man, I could shine here. I had lived out as a Pharisee. I had lived the Jerusalem dream, if you will.

Paul was elite in that culture as a Pharisee. I mean, it's very different. This is so strange for us to read. In our day, there's nothing noble in our culture about being a religious leader.

It's so different. We have to sort of connect back to Paul's day. I shared, as I drive Uber, and people want to know what I do, I will let them know.

I also am a pastor. And sometimes it goes well, and sometimes it's just... It's just silent.

[26 : 30] There's not even crickets. It's just... Okay. Right. We've got another four minutes of this awkwardness, right? But for Paul, respected as a Pharisee, Josephus estimated that there were less than 6,000 Pharisees at the time.

It was a very select group. You suppose Paul could have been enamored with his birthright and his achievements? I think so.

I think so. Of course he could have. He had the good life. This is the Jerusalem dream. He had power. He had fame. He had honor. And he spent his entire life investing in this lifestyle.

Paul had based both his justification and his joy on this lifestyle for the first portion of his life, church.

And now he's warning the Philippians, don't buy into this. Don't be duped. Paul was fully vested in this. But then something changed.

[27 : 44] Well, what changed for Paul? Let's look. Verse 7 to 9. He says, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. So what changed? What changed for Paul? I'll tell you what changed.

He meant Jesus. That's what changed. And that was everything. His old lifestyle for the first time. So much vested. He's like, this is bankrupt. What am I doing? Acts done in the flesh couldn't merit righteousness.

[28 : 54] And they didn't actually have to. There's great freedom in knowing your sins have been forgiven permanently at the cross. That's why we sing about the cross.

That's why we have a cross hanging on our wall to remind us. That's where life began for us. True spiritual life. Paul could be clean for the first time simply through faith.

And he says that. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. Great. What now? Paul has spent his entire life on a particular trajectory.

What now? All that Paul had invested his time, his energy, his effort, his very life into is now lost.

And I'm sure folks in his day were like, what are you doing? I remember back at the other Washington College, the far inferior college.

[30 : 13] That's sarcasm. And I turned out for football, 91, incredible team.

We had a running back by the name, a guy by the name of Napoleon Kaufman. And Napoleon Kaufman was spectacular. It's like, to see a man run that fast in person is just incredible.

And his moves, and he was like a two-time All-American in college, ended up going, drafted to the Oakland Raiders. I think they were Oakland or L.A. at the time. And Napoleon got involved in ministry while he was at the UW.

He had this group that he would meet with in our dorm, and then he got drafted and was kind of the main running back for the Raiders. But he only played six years. He was at the top of his game.

And all of a sudden he just, he quit. He didn't get injured. I mean, he was at the top, he was at the top of his game. And he was asking, what? Napoleon, what are you doing?

[31 : 14] The world can't understand this. He's like, God's calling me into ministry. He's a pastor now, serves at a church down in California. But it was like shocking for the world because they're like, you've attained everything.

Like, God's calling me away from this. I don't think I'm supposed to run a ball down, you know, a field anymore. I think he wants me to preach his word. And it just was like, what? The world doesn't understand this, right?

You've attained the thing that every little boy who's, you know, athletically minded wants to do. I want to play in the NFL. And it's like, he's like, no, there's something better. And I think it's, I just think of him as I read about Paul.

Paul had everything. And he's like, man, I'm walking away from this. Right? And he says it actually multiple times. He says it actually with great passion.

Jesus is so good that all that I possessed, it's nothing. And he says this actually in both verses 7 and 8. It's repetitious, it's repetitious, but it's also different.

[32 : 16] I want us to hear the difference. He says in verse 7, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Paul's saying that in the past tense. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss.

At my conversion 30 years ago, I believed that following Jesus was worth the loss of all things. So he says that on the day of his conversion. Man, I believe that.

But I think it's even more powerful as you get to verse 8 where he says, hey, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Church, he's now saying this in the present tense. He's essentially saying today I feel the exact same way. Nothing has changed.

All of that is still loss. Even despite the difficulty I've endured because of my faith. He's saying I wouldn't change a thing.

[33 : 22] The imprisonments, 2 Corinthians 11 has a list. Beatings. He was stoned once. Shipwrecked for his faith. Even with the difficulty.

I wouldn't change a thing. Think of the words. David Brainerd struggling. In pain. But man, Jesus is still so good. I would never walk away.

And in fact, Paul in the present heightens his view of his past life. He doesn't just say it's loss. We say, hey, compared to knowing Jesus, that life was rubbish.

Greek word is skubalon. Ref, like, you know what I'm talking about. It's like horse manure. The world thought I possessed gold, but before God, no.

It was dung. Paul severed two ropes when he trusted in Christ's church. He severed two ropes. He severed the rope of his good works that he hung on to for his salvation.

[34 : 37] That's, that's bankrupt. But he also severed the rope of his identity as a Pharisee he hung on to for his joy. He severed both of them.

I'm choosing to treasure Jesus. To rejoice in the Lord above everything. I am moved by Jesus.

That's where my joy is now found. Why? I think he tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 where he says in verse 9, for I am the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am. I think for Paul he's like, it's grace.

I am what I am only because of God's grace. I was there when Stephen was being stoned and I was giving permission, condemnation, or you know, commending that act.

[35 : 40] It's garbage. By the grace of God I am what I am. And church, if you're in Christ that's your story too. That's your story too.

Paul severed both ropes. Both for his salvation and looking back to who he was trying to find joy in that. I don't think we have that same struggle today.

That's why this passage is a little, it's interesting for us to read and to consider. I don't think the warning to the Philippians of treasuring our legalism over treasuring Jesus is really a significant issue in our church.

I don't think we have Judaizers like back in Paul's day. I think in ministry over whatever number of years I've been doing this, I've only had one occasion where I had Judaizers walk into a church gathering and attempt to tell people they needed to start following the Mosaic law.

Only once. I had two gentlemen come in with number 15 at the end it talks about these tassels, cords of remembrance and I had two guys come in with these cords, white and blue cords and they were telling our church, hey, you need to wear these to remember to obey God's commands.

[36 : 55] Only one time. That's not the issue today. In Paul's day it was. What's our struggle? What are the idols for us?

If Paul says I'm renouncing this because this is where I found my salvation but also my joy, where is it that we find our joy? What is it that we rejoice in today?

I mean, wonderful, we've tethered the rope of our lives to Jesus for our salvation, but is this true for our joy as well?

What moves you? What has your affections? That which consumes your imagination.

Tim Keller defines idolatry this way. He says it's when good things in your life turn into ultimate things.

[37 : 58] And what is that perhaps for you? Is it joy derived from your comforts? Right? Is it, man, it's well with my, there's gladness in my soul if I have the perfect house.

Right? And there's a whole industry of shows that keep convincing you that you don't have the perfect house. Right? And that's maybe where joy is derived.

Or maybe it's in a relationship. Or the aspiration for a particular relationship. We live in a culture in love with love.

And I think it's a culture that has turned a good thing, mind you, into an ultimate thing. Or is joy derived by some accomplishment?

I mean, Paul had an exquisite list in his day. But what is it for you? Oh, I find it's well with my soul if I can be an influencer or I can be an achiever in this regard.

[39 : 05] Or I can be known. Or I can be the very best in my industry at that thing. And instead of experiencing success and turning up and looking to the Lord and saying, thank you, Lord.

Thank you for these abilities, for your blessing, your favor in this regard. we would prefer to look at ourselves and think how wonderful we are.

Or perhaps your joy isn't even in a good thing, it's actually rather in a sinful thing. Joy is found in a destructive sin that you've not given to the Lord.

and joy is found in the escape. That's where joy is derived. A broken cistern that you continue to return to. Right?

And what the enemy loves to do is to deceive, right? We tell ourselves, oh, but I can walk away. I can live without that thing knowing full well that we are in bondage.

[40 : 09] Here's the thing, church. Treasuring idols, it's not real joy. It's false joy. It's weak joy.

It's probably a bad illustration, but it's the only one I've got. And I was thinking about like the comparison of like real butter to all the other things.

Man. Over the holidays, we had some sourdough. Melissa gave us some gingerbread sourdough and then Julie made some more gingerbread sourdough and I know you could tell it was a good holiday and it was because then you put, you heat that up and then you put some real butter on it and it just, it's the perfect food group right there.

It's all you need. Now imagine taking like smart, balanced light. You can microwave that thing and it's just, it's, it's locked in and it's not spreading and it's disgusting.

I mean, smart, balanced, light. Doesn't even make sense. If it's a smart balance, why do you need a light version? It's a dumb balance.

[41 : 25] It's, it's bad market. At any rate, I'm not gonna, I mean, I can't believe it's not butter. Light. It's already not butter. How can you have a light version of, at any rate?

I digress. Some of us get accustomed to weak joy and have forgotten how good it is to be moved by grace.

To be moved by it. And I think we want to be. Just like that guy in the video who just sees a rainbow and just, he's overcome and we want that and we should pray for that.

God, we want to be a people moved by your grace and that's how Paul ends this section. Because he's saying, this is what has gripped me and after 30 years of walking with Jesus, it still has.

And here's my daily confession. Here it is. Verses 10 and 11. He says, that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings becoming like Him in His death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[42 : 33] Paul desired God's presence and he desired God's power in his life. I want Your presence, Lord Jesus. I want my joy to derive from that relationship above any lesser joys in my life.

I want intimacy with You. I want to know You. Gnosko, it's an experiential knowledge. I don't want to just have theology about Jesus.

I want to walk with You as Savior, as friend. I don't think there's anything that can help us in this regard, church, than to be a praying people.

That's how you're communing with the Lord. We read His Word and then we pour out our hearts to Him. We become prayerful. And it fosters that intimacy. And Paul says, I want Your power.

I want to experience the power of Your resurrection in my life. Yes, I want to turn from sin. I want to continue to turn from sin. I want to walk in newness of life as it talks about in Romans 6-4.

[43 : 45] That's what I want to be the testimony of my life. And then whatever sufferings accompany those who are bold for You, Lord, in this life, I count that the highest honor. To identify with You regardless.

Regardless! It's like Peter at the end of his life, church history records that he was crucified. Probably during the time of Nero's reign in 64 A.D.

And it's predicted, Jesus predicts about Peter in John 21. He says, Peter, you're going to spread your arms out. You're going to die in this sort of way. And he's predicting that Peter, in fact, would be crucified.

And I think Peter, after confessing his love for Jesus, was like, I'm in. Whatever it is, I am in. 30 years removed from the Damascus Road experience for Paul after God had invaded his life, and Paul is still moved by that experience.

Why? Because he got it. He got the gospel. He says it. Yeah, Jesus Christ came to die for sinners, and then he inserts himself, I'm the worst.

[44 : 55] I'm the chief. Jesus died even for me. Are you kidding me? I know what I've done.

And many people know because I've been so outward about persecuting the church. I know the monster that I was. I've done so much. I've done so much.

I've done so much. And God's given me a do-over. He's given me a clean slate. And I think for Paul, he's like, I'm in. I want to know the Lord in this life. I want the gospel to affect me every day of my life.

I am in. And listen to Paul in verse 11. He says, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Now, what's Paul saying here at the end?

Was he uncertain about his future resurrection? By any means possible, like there's many roads to the resurrection, like Jesus or maybe something else? He's not saying that. What Paul is asserting here is that he's willing to face whatever suffering that still lay ahead.

[46 : 02] By any means possible. I know I'm going to be with you, Lord. I don't know all the things that still lie ahead for me, but I'm committed. I don't know what tomorrow holds. Perhaps great loss, even the sentence of death.

And if that's my lot, I'm going to walk with you, Lord, in joy as I depart the land of the dying for finally the land of the living. Amen? And that was the heart of Paul.

And church, I would say, man, for Paul, the secret of his joy he never got over the gospel. And might that be true of us as well.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for Paul's transparency here. He'd attained much, but it was just rubbish before you, Jesus.

That he was transformed by the gospel, that it was for his salvation. But thank you that he discloses to us that it is for his joy. Rejoice in the Lord.

[47 : 09] Find joy in the gospel. And Lord, I pray that that would be so of us. Lord, that we would be moved by the gospel. And Lord, it would drive us to want to pursue an intimate relationship with you each and every day.

Every day, we would do one thing to draw near to you. Lord, we don't want to be a people that get over the gospel in this life. It's for our, not only our salvation, but it's for our today joy.

Reminded of the words of John Newton. End of his life. Slave trader turned pastor. Memory fading. Two things he remember. I'm a great sinner and Christ is a great savior.

Lord, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. It's in your name we pray, Jesus. Amen. Amen.