

Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 3:12-4:1)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Morning, guys. We've got to see who's here and who's not here.

Got to see the sunrise this morning on the drive-in. Haven't done that in a while. So glad that you could make it here this morning. Welcome. I know we've got folks watching us online. We want to welcome you to. And if you have a copy of the scriptures, go ahead and turn open to Philippians. Chapter 3, we're doing an exposition through the book of Philippians. And this morning we will finish up chapter 3. Scott and Wendy are not with us. They're visiting some family down in Idaho, I think the Boise area, this weekend. And so as you think about them, you can pray for them, safe travels, and just time of refreshment. We love our senior pastor and it's a privilege to be able to pray for him. So let me pray for us now before we dive into the text together. Join me.

The psalmist writes, praise the Lord. Praise the servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord. Blessed is the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

Father, we come before you this morning and we want to do just that. We want to be those people in this life that praise your name. Jesus, you are worthy of our praises. You're worthy of our very lives. And so it is our prayer this morning that you would speak to us. And Lord, we want to humble our hearts, be in a posture of listening, receiving that which you have for us here in the words that you penned. Holy Spirit, you inspired these words. We believe this book is from you, God. And it's sufficient for training each of us in righteousness. And so we commit this time.

[2 : 36] We pray that as we spend time in the text, Lord, that it would be pleasing worship to you. And so we commit this time to you. We love you. It's in your name we pray, Jesus. And all God's people said, Amen. So if you've noticed, we are in a change of seasons. Moving from winter to spring, although in Spokane we may go back to winter. I'm not sure how it quite works yet. But one of the things I have discovered in the six years that our family has lived here is that people in Spokane have an aversion to winter. If you're local, what I have found, and this is true of all the conversations I've had driving folks in my Uber, is that people in Spokane actually hate snow. And that's how I know who's local. Because they're like, oh, we're tired of it. We're done with it. We don't like it.

People don't like it. They don't like to be cold. They don't like to walk in it. They don't want to navigate in it. And it's strange for me because I love it. I love the snow. And maybe I'm the only one in here. I don't know. Maybe that makes me not a local. But I love it. It reminds me of my childhood, growing up in the suburbs of Chicago. And I think what makes me love it even more are two things. Two things make me love the snow. And the first one is all-wheel drive.

And then what makes it even more glorious is like winter studs on all four tires. And I don't just survive the winter. I thrive in the winter. I can drive on the South Hill. I can navigate Hazard Road, which is the road we live on, which is a hazard. And it's glorious. It's fun. I love it.

But two things allow me to thrive in the winter storms. Now I'm going to use that as a metaphor to get us thinking this morning. I think walking with Jesus is a lot like surviving a winter storm.

Walking with Jesus in this life, church, it's not the path of least resistance. Jesus said that it would be difficult. Recall His words in John 16, 33, right? In this world, you're going to have tribulation. Take heart. I've overcome the world, right? Tribulation is awaiting all who live by a very different ethic in this life than the rest of the world. I think of the words that Jesus shared.

[5 : 29] The third sermon on the mountain in Matthew 7, 14, where He says, The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.

The gate is narrow and the way is hard. It's not easy to walk with Jesus in this life. I had a conversation with a young gentleman in Seattle and I still, I think about this conversation often as I

interact with folks all the time. And this young man who was a believer actually in Seattle, he confessed to me, said, Pastor Jay, we had had a long conversation, so he's now, I guess now I'm Pastor Jay to him. He's like, I don't know how you walk with Jesus in this city at my age. It was just very difficult with all the temptation and challenge around. Well, maybe you are here this morning thinking, man, I'm not doing so well. I am not walking with the Lord very well these days. Well, this morning is for you because Paul is actually going to give us two very practical words in order for us to not just weather the storm of life of being a believer in this life, but how to thrive as God's peculiar people in this lifelong storm. And I think as Paul shares these two practical things with us, he's actually fighting for our joy. So I want us to take it in that spirit. And so let's just begin here in verse 12. Paul writes this, he says, not that I have already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I press on and make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. So foundational now to the section that we're looking at this morning, we need to understand and really absorb these words that Paul states emphatically at the end of this first verse here, verse 12, because he says this, he says, Jesus has made me his own. Okay. So I want us to understand from the very beginning, Paul understands my salvation is secure. That salvation is based upon the finished work of Jesus, not on my efforts.

[8 : 00] Paul simply responded in faith to Jesus some 30 years prior on the Damascus road. And he says very clearly to the Ephesians in Ephesians 2.8, hey, for by grace, you have been saved through faith, through faith. So as we look at this section this morning, this section is not about working towards one salvation. Even though Paul is talking about putting forth effort. Listen to him. He says, not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.

What's Paul talking about here? What is he not yet obtained if he's not referring to his salvation? Well, we have to go back, right? What's the best commentary on the Bible? The Bible. And so let's go back a couple of verses and see what Paul is talking about here. And he says it actually in verse 10, Philippians 3, verse 10. He says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. So what Paul is saying there is, I want to know Jesus experientially more than anything for my joy. It's no longer tethered to my identity as a Pharisee. I want it to be found in my relationship with Jesus. So Paul here is talking about this ever deepening knowledge and intimacy that he has with his Savior. And so this section that we're looking at this morning, it's not about justification. Paul has been declared righteous by faith. This section is about sanctification. Okay? It's aspirational. It has everything to do with moving towards spiritual maturity. And Paul says it, I press on to make it my own.

There's effort here. I'm chasing after this thing with great energy. It's an athletic term. And so Paul is telling us something about sanctification here that's vitally important.

He's actually confronting sort of a bad view of sanctification that kind of floats around in Christian circles, this idea of just let go and let God. Well, that's not biblical. What's biblical is that you work out your salvation, right? That you press on. And Paul says, I press on to make it my own.

He's talking about spiritual maturity here. Now, why do you suppose it's important that Paul tells the Philippians that he too is in process? And I think it's because he's trying to keep them from kind of putting him on a pedestal and really thinking that the Christian life is only for the super spiritual. And I think for us as well, we can easily take our Bibles, read these stories, read about these heroes of faith and go, man, I could never do that. I could never imitate the individuals that Scott and Jay and Cole and the others are preaching and teaching about every time we gather.

[11 : 18] And I love that Paul here is actually trying to say, hey, I too am in process. I've not arrived. My salvation is secure, but I'm still being conformed into the image of Christ. And I would say, man, Paul is someone, church, that we can follow. We can imitate, we can learn from. And maybe you're like, well, Jay, Paul's the great apostle to the Gentiles, right? That's why God called him.

I'm just a regular Christian. We know, like Paul had a unique calling. Acts 9, 15, it's recorded, but the Lord said to him, said to Paul, go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. Guess what? As those in Christ, we too have a similar calling. We have been saved unto particular good works. That's what Ephesians 2, 10 says, right?

We're his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in. Paul had particular works he was called to. You have particular works that

God has called you to. I don't know what they all are. I know that God's called each of us to be ambassadors for him to represent him. And that starts in Spokane, in our Jerusalem. We've been saved to be used of the Lord. Not just so that we can be like in a trophy case somewhere. I have a good friend that has an axe building hobby, obsession. He takes old axes, he gets these on eBay and these old axe heads or bits, they call them, and he grinds them down and he polishes them up and he puts them in like solution to rust them. And then he works on the handles and gets them all balanced and they're beautiful. He hasn't given me one yet, but they're beautiful. Maybe he's listening and I'll receive one. But he doesn't put these together so that he can just hang them on the wall in his shop.

He builds these things and he sells some of them and he gives some of them away as gifts. Not to me yet, but he gives to other friends that he likes. And then he also uses them, right? So he's creating these like, they're really works of art, but they're to be used. And we are God's work of art and God wants to use us, right? So that we could be his ambassadors, whether it's at work, whether it's at school, whether it's on our team. God wants us to be used. He wants other people to know that there's a God in heaven that loves them. I love that I have a son-in-law in the military and he runs a Bible study with a handful of soldiers. Many of them don't know the Lord, don't walk with the Lord. He's the one that picks them up when they need a ride from where they shouldn't be to get them back to the barracks in bed.

But he meets with them and he's being God's ambassador in his context. And we all get to do that with the people that we live. We do life around. We've been saved unto good works. Now, here's the big question.

[14 : 35] How do we chase after? How do we grow spiritually? How do we make it through this winter storm of life, faithful walking with the Lord? And Paul gives us, just like man, all-wheel drive and studded tires, he's given us two things. Super practical this morning, church. And the first one comes from the next section.

Look at verse 13 and 14. Paul writes, You want to thrive in the storm of life? Remain faithful to the Lord? Then you have to, I have to tether ourselves daily to the narrative of the gospel. We have to tether our hearts and our minds to the narrative of the gospel. And you're like, Jay, man, that sounds kind of Christian-y.

Like what do you mean? Like tether yourself to the gospel? What does that actually mean? Well, it means this. The gospel, if you're in Christ, is your story. It's your new story. It's my new story. Not the old story that we began life with. How does the enemy want to destroy your joy? Destroy the ministry that you might have to others today?

Simple. He wants to take you back to your past. He wants to remind you of your past sins. Have that message, that movie on this never-ending loop in your mind.

[16 : 33] And if you wallow in the old story, in the theater of your mind, you will not thrive. But the storm of this life will suffocate the spiritual life out of you.

Which is why Paul says here, there's one thing I do. There's one thing. Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. Paul's saying, hey, I am not going to spend my life living in vain or kretz. Nothing I can do about that. Think about what Paul was like before he met the Lord. Paul took human life. He murdered people. He destroyed the lives of individuals and families. He scattered the church in Jerusalem. Then he was given permission to hunt Christians down in neighboring cities. How do you suppose Paul felt after trusting in Jesus about his past sins? No doubt he must have felt guilty. Guilt ridden. And if Paul would have kept that narrative on replay in his mind, it would have been debilitating.

There would be no great apostle to the Gentiles. He failed as big as a man can fail in this life. And God still used church. Amen?

Amen? Paul had to tether his mind to the gospel. This is my story. That I am forgiven in Christ. That all things are gone. New things have come. How about Peter? What if Peter decided, I'm not going to forget what lies behind, right? Leader of the twelve. Denied his identity as a Jesus follower, not once, not twice, three times in one evening. No doubt Peter would have loved to have taken that night back, right? And the shame for this individual, that lion of the gospel.

[18 : 54] But there are no redos, church. We're fascinated by science fiction and this notion that somehow we can crawl into a time machine and go back and redo things, relive things. That's not life.

It's appointed for man to die once. You get one life. You can't go back and redo. There are no redos. There's only the gospel. And yet that is enough to clean the slate.

And we don't have to stay in the New Testament. You can go to the old. How about King David? A man after God's own heart. And yet we know in his life this escalating failures that he participated in. His sexual lust really destroying his reign as a righteous king. Adultery. Then he covered it up with murder. And he had no ability to turn back the clock, church.

And he didn't even confess his sins of his own volition. He got called out by one of God's prophets who exposed his hypocrisy. And yet we see his heart return to the Lord to cry out to the Lord. We have Psalm 51, which is his confession. And you see his heart crying out for the Lord to forgive him. Even David experienced God's forgiving grace in the Old Testament as an Old Testament saint prior to the cross. Prior to the cross in Psalm 32 5, David writes, I acknowledge my sin to you and I did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. God was faithful to forgive even King David.

Church, Satan wants us stuck in the past. Because if we're stuck there, we cease to live in the present. Paul would not live just rehearsing, cogitating on the rearview mirror.

[21 : 00] There's just too much to be done, church, in this very short life. It's like, I'm not going to keep doing that. Great athletes know this. They understand this concept.

You're a defensive back and you get burned touchdown deep. You start just chewing on that the rest of the game. You're done. Right? Basketball, you get scored on. You miss a shot.

You're like, oh. And you start, no. You just got to erase it and be back in the present. And that's what Paul is encouraging us. But what he's saying is the real present is actually a new story.

It's a gospel story. All that stuff, though your sins be as scarlet, they're white snow. And that's joy. You mean Jesus really did that for me? It's a real thing? Yes.

So live. Be used of the Lord today. Listen to Paul. I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus.

[22 : 09] Prize? There's a prize? Who wants a prize? I love getting a prize. Like, I'm in. Like, what's the prize? And Paul kind of describes here, what's the prize? Walking with the Lord in this life, the prize is this.

It's a life of increasing ministry. That's the prize. That's the upward call of God. It's participation with God in this life. And church, there's nothing more joy-inducing than being used of the Lord for real. Having a conversation with a brother or sister, sharing God's Word, sharing God's truth, them hearing and going, you know what? There's some sin I need to repent of in this life. And you see God at work, and you're like, God used you in their life? That's the best.

Or having a chance to share good news, and someone says, I want that. Can we pray right now? I want Jesus as my Savior. It doesn't get better than that. Because eternity just changed for that individual. That's forever.

You have snatched them, in a sense, out of the fires of hell. That's a real thing. And that's the joy that the eternal, sovereign God of the universe would use His ordinary people to carry out His purposes.

[23 : 22] And He gets the glory, and we get the joy. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. And Paul is saying, hey, Philippians, I want you to live that kind of life.

And if you're mature, you're going to think that way. In fact, he says that, let's continue verse 15 and 16. He says, hey, let those of us who are mature think this way. And if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you only.

Let us hold true to what we have attained. So what Paul is saying there, if you're mature, spiritually mature, you're going to think this way. You're going to know that your relationship with Jesus should have an impact on how you live your life today.

That having faith in Christ should not be divorced from our daily life. We have a new story. Be tethered to the gospel. Live that story today. Like we were not called into God's family just so that we could just sort of coast into heaven.

Right? Coasting. And so, nothing has changed. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, 5, right?

[24 : 37] There's some that have a faith that has the appearance of godliness without power. Don't be like that. Don't be like that. Realize that your trust in Christ, it was meant to transform.

It was meant to change you. There's a process. You need help there? Tether yourself to the gospel. Remember that your sins are forgiven.

Your sins are forgiven? For real? Yeah. So live. Be used of the Lord. In the lives of the people around you. You can serve them.

You can encourage them. You can pray with them. You can share God's truth with them. Well, let's continue. How do we thrive in this life for the gospel beyond just tethering ourselves to the gospel? Well, here's the second practical for us. Verse 17. Paul writes, Brothers, join in imitating me. And keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example that you have in us.

[25 : 48] Do you see it? You see the practical number two? Tether yourself to the gospel. But the second thing, tether yourself to gospel people.

See that? What Paul's saying is very practical. Connect yourself with other people who are following hard after Jesus.

You want to weather the storm of walking with Jesus in this life? You got to do it with others. You got to live life together with other believers. Tether yourself to gospel people.

Paul understands something foundational about human nature. And it's this. People follow people. We follow people.

No, no, Jay. I'm a leader. I don't follow nobody. Everybody follows me. No, you follow people too. Paul understands this. He says in 1 Corinthians 15, 33.

[26 : 53] Don't be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. People influence people. Proverbs 13, 20. Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise.

But the companion of fools will suffer harm. Or my translation is will make you dumb. The same thing. I don't have a Jay version.

That was made up. Folks, if you want to be good at anything in life, it's a principle. Find an expert. And then spend time with them.

And learn from them. Imitate them. We know this. Right? You guys know Pastor Cole is a philosopher.

He wasn't always a philosopher. At one point in time, he was just a college kid. Who went to an apologetic conference. And met a real philosopher.

[27 : 56] Dr. Doug Guyvett. Who actually was a college intern here many years ago. Cole was at that conference. He's like, wow. I like this guy. I want to learn from this guy. I think I want to be a philosopher.

So what did Cole do? It happened to be a conference that I was helping put on with another friend, Carl Payne, who was also a pastor here many years ago. And Cole was like, Doug, I would like to take you out for lunch.

And what did Doug say? No. But you can have lunch with me. But then Cole went to Biola. Studied under Doug. Now Cole is a philosopher.

And he teaches at a college level. That's what you want to. Anything in life. You find an expert. You want to be a great chef? Well, then go find a great chef to spend time with to learn from. You want to be a good athlete?

You find other athletes. You get a good coach. You want to be good at business? You find somebody that's great. They're accomplished in the marketplace. And you spend time with them. People follow people.

[28 : 54] Right? Man, if we just followed the world, we would all shop at Costco and look the same. And it would be horrible. Man, let your wife dress you.

Because she knows things. She's an expert in that. She knows complementary colors and seasonal things. All that stuff. And you'll look much better. People. Influence.

People. People follow. People. Probably my favorite example of this was from my early years as a youth pastor. And I don't know what, why this became a thing.

But there was a fashion trend for students. It was like the pants on the ground thing. Where you just put your pants up barely. Like, and you just showed everybody. Whatever your boxers were that day.

It was like, that's what you did. And I kid you not. I remember it was like coming to youth group. And I had a number of students show up. And they were like, their pants, their britches were hanging down.

[29 : 53] And they couldn't quite pull it off. Like, there was a lot of like bunching and poofing of. But I'm like, what's this? They're like, it's cool. It's cool, Pastor Jay.

I'm like, what is this? They're like, oh man. This is like, everybody's doing it. I'm like, well, I'm definitely not. But it was such a great example of like, oh, you saw somebody. And you were going to imitate. So you started doing it. People follow people. Who are you following today? Are you following people that love the Lord? That serve the Lord? That live to make Jesus known? Folks that live for the joy of others? Or are you tethered to those who are nominal in their affections towards Jesus? It will influence your life profoundly. Who are the people following Jesus that we ought to follow? And Paul actually mentions to the Philippians three different categories.

[31 : 00] You want some people to follow? Paul gives us a list. He says, first, he says, brothers, verse 17, join in imitating me. So he's saying, hey, if you want to follow somebody, follow me. First Corinthians 11, one, follow me as I follow Jesus. If Paul's not following Jesus, don't follow him. But as he follows Jesus, imitate him. Paul did some things well. He was very selfless. He was very courageous. He was very faithful. He walked in a sacrificial posture for the gospel. He lived with a very simple equation for life, right? Philippians 121. For me to live is Jesus. For me to live is ministry. Imitate me. You can follow me. You can learn from me. And I love that Paul is someone we can follow. He wasn't perfect though. And it's so interesting because Paul in many places alludes to his own struggles. In 2 Corinthians 12, 7, we get an indication that Paul, for Paul, he wasn't perfect.

[32 : 03] Probably struggled with a little bit of pride. In fact, he says that. He says in 2 Corinthians 12, 7, so to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me, he says it again, from becoming conceited.

It must have been a problem for Paul. And God knew this and helped him with it, gave him something to keep him humble. But I love that he's still flawed. And yet there's this Godward trajectory worth imitating in him. So Paul's one individual, says to the Philippians. There's others. He says then, keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. Who's the us? Paul now is broadening the circle. It's not just me you can follow. You can also follow Timothy. You can also follow Epaphroditus. These are individuals that we were already introduced to earlier in this letter. These are guys that risked their lives for the gospel, their servants, their soldiers for Jesus. These guys are worth following. They were courageous.

[33 : 12] They risked their lives for the gospel. Follow them. Don't follow people that are just risking their life for more clicks online. I'm going to do bigger and dumber things so that people will continue to like and click on my stuff so I can become a better influence.

No. Follow people that risk their lives for the gospel. That are walking courageous for the gospel. And then the third category of people worth following, Paul says, and those who walk according to the example you have in us. So the us is Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus. But he says, you can follow those who walk according to their example. So here it is. People influencing people influencing people. Who are the those? Well, it's everyone else who models the faith of the faithful in this book. In fact, it's the entire history of the church. So practically, fourth, tether yourself, yes, to the gospel. Not living in the past. I'm a new creation. Old things are gone. New things have come.

[34 : 20] But I'm also going to walk with people that love the gospel. That know the gospel in this life. That I might thrive regardless of the tribulation that awaits me today.

And sometimes we feel dry spiritually. Amen? No? Amen? Yeah, sometimes it's like a desert. And I think in those times it's the faith of another. Somebody who's pursuing hard after the Lord where you're just like, oh, it's what I needed. I'm refreshed. One of the things I love to do when we're worshiping corporately is sometimes, you know, you're worshiping, but then hearing others around you singing out, praising the Lord. And I draw encouragement from that. And I think you do as well. And there's some folks that are maybe more demonstrative than you or I. And you're just like, wow, they believe in this God that we're singing to.

Oh, yes. He's real. He's hearing. And every time we gather is like to be built up spiritually so you can enter into the week ahead. Yes.

[35 : 29] Follow others that are following after Jesus. Tether yourself to gospel people. Other ways that you can creatively do this. You can read a Christian biography.

That's tethering yourself to a gospel person. We have a great selection of biographies in our book nook. I think that's what it's called. Over by the coffee corner.

The Hiding Place, Cory Tam Boom. That's a great one. Bruchko. That's a great story. There's some great books that can encourage you. Chuck Colson's Born Again.

Let their lives influence yours. Draw encouragement from those stories. We have a team of pastors and elders. Man, we want to be as accessible and available to you.

You need encouragement? Reach out. As time allows, we want to gather. If you guys come to the office during the week, you'll find that there are tons of meetings going on.

[36 : 31] Sometimes it's for encouragement. Sometimes there's issues and there's counseling happening. But man, if you're like, man, I need to meet with a pastor. We would love to do that. Okay? Not all of you this week.

Let's like space it out. But we want to be a people that encourage one another. And the pastors and the elders, these pastors, these lay pastors that work in the marketplace, some of them may be of more encouragement to you because like Scott, Cole, myself, we don't have real, well, we do have a real job.

But some of you think we don't. But sometimes it's like hearing from somebody in the marketplace who loves the Lord. Like, man, I can do this too.

Right? We've got godly women at 4th. We've got a lot of different studies going on throughout the week. Wednesday mornings. Gals, if you're like walking solo, get connected, please.

Studies that you can gather and be a part of in the morning. There's one in the evening. If you're a youth, man, Wednesday night. You're a young adult.

[37 : 41] Tuesday night. We've got our Yags. Tuesday night. Young adult group. Yags. You're young at heart. Those are our Yags. I mean, I guess.

I don't know. Is that like maybe once a month? Like there are gatherings for you to get close and have opportunity to begin to develop friendship with people.

Others that are pursuing hard after the Lord. The point is this. There are people and stories of people who follow Jesus that could be of great encouragement to you.

So tether yourself to gospel people. Not everyone in this life is going to be a good friend for you to have. In fact, Paul says that next.

Look at verse 18 and 19. He says, For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction.

[38 : 44] Their God is their belly. They glory in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. So Paul here lists four types of people that we should not tether our lives to.

Now I want us to hear something, church. Paul is not saying, I want you to go monastic and avoid the world. That's not what he's saying here. He's just saying, those who you deem as your closest friends, who you do life with on a regular basis, man, you need encouragement.

And yes, reach out to the unbeliever. Spend time with the unbeliever. Care for the world because we are ambassadors, obviously. But if you have knit your heart with these sorts of individuals, he can list four types.

It's not going to go well for you. And Paul shares this with grief. These are people that once professed faith. They didn't lose their salvation.

They never were in Christ. John says it this way in 1 John 2, 19. He says, There are some that went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

[40 : 01] So just because I say I love the Lord, doesn't mean I love the Lord. Look now at the testimony of one's life. The fruit born in their life.

For people to avoid, first group he says, hey, there's some that their end is destruction. He's saying these are not Christians. You knit yourself closely with an unbeliever.

They have a different standard in life. They have a different compass that they're operating by that drives their decisions. Their decisions are not driven by how can God receive glory, and how can I see the gospel go forth, or see God's joy advance to others.

Like, that's not even in their frame of thinking. I get uneasy when Christians, not that they go to counseling. I think there's place for counseling, all sorts of different counseling. But when you go to a counselor that is not a believer, they're an unbeliever, or they're just token towards God's Word, I get uneasy.

[41 : 12] Because the counsel you're going to receive, it's not going to be in accord with God's Word. It's not going to align with what the Lord has said, this is how life is to be lived.

And what happens then is it influences our thinking, where we begin to have thoughts not aligned with God's heart.

So that's the first group to not tether yourself intimately with. The second group is folks that said their God is their belly. This goes beyond food.

But it's people that love just simply to live for the flesh. Paul's saying if those are your closest friends, it's going to influence you negatively. Whether their passion is food, or sex, or power, or pride, pleasure.

That's their functional God. Don't live in that way. Don't follow that example. Don't follow that example. Third group, he says, there's folks where their glory is their shame.

[42 : 29] So this is a group that goes even beyond just living for the flesh. Now they're like, man, I'm going to brag about it. Not just folks that indulge. It's like, hey, look what I'm doing.

Whether that's in person or online, man, that'll be destructive for your soul. Just recently, I was trying to find the social media site of a former student.

A student that I had in youth, as a youth, for a number of years. And walked with the Lord, and then kind of began to struggle after they kind of grew up.

And I didn't know where this individual was. And I was like, oh. Wow. I wanted to find, and I was just like heartbroken when I found their site. Because they were like a self-described, promoting, essentially exhibitionist.

And it was like, oh, click. And it was just like, they hadn't just walking away from the gospel and the Lord. They were now just promoting the most godless lifestyle you could possibly imagine.

[43 : 48] And it was like, oh. I don't know what happened. There's something that occurred for this individual to have gone to that place. But it's like, man, that will be destructive if those are the people that you have tethered your life to.

The final group is folks where their minds are set on earthly things. So these are not the best individuals to tether your life to.

People that are just, you know, we don't live in a thankful nation. We live in a pretty materialistic nation. And these are people that just love to live for the stuff of this life.

They're really committed just to temporary things. And so maybe they're not as destructive as the last group, but you're still going to be pretty useless in terms of having gospel influence.

We live in a world that just loves stuff. We're just obsessed with stuff. I don't know if you've ever, I don't even know if Oprah still does her Christmas, like, special thing. And it's bizarre because she just continues to give away, like, candy, candy.

[44 : 50] Like, it's just more stuff, more stuff. And it's shocking because the people in the crowd, it's like a religious experience. I've gotten a free pair of slippers. And they're just like, it's just whatever it is.

A new TV. Oh. It's just a very, it's a very shallow life. Don't make those whose mind is set on earthly things your best friends.

Because what it will do is stall any zeal that you have for the Lord. And, I mean, let's face it, all this stuff, enjoy the stuff that you have.

But don't take the good things and make them ultimate things. Because the reality is, you don't get to take it with you. You don't get to take it. So don't live for it now. It's a very wasted life.

Hold the things that God has allowed you to enjoy, but hold them loosely. Paul continues to go on. Look at verse 20 and 21. He says, But our citizenship is in heaven.

[46 : 00] And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

And I think this here Paul is like summarizing, he's like reminding them, this is why we don't tether our lives to temporary things.

This is why we need to stay connected to the Gospel. This is my story. I'm new in Christ and to His people. To speak into my life. To encourage me.

To remind me of that which is true. We do it. We live this way because ultimately Paul says, our citizenship is in heaven. This is your identity.

It's who you are. And that's how God intended for us to live. To do it with the Gospel and do it together. It's who you are. We're citizens of a different kingdom.

[46 : 59] We have a different code. It's a good code. And what I love here is that, as Paul says this, it's a reminder that God's not some killjoy in heaven.

The code that God has for us is a joy promising code. Like, we're not anti-food.

We're not. I was out Ubering yesterday and I was nearby that new Dave's Hot Chicken. It was wonderful. We're not anti-food.

We're anti-gluttony. We're not anti-sex. We're anti-lust. Anti-premarital fooling around. Anti-adultery. In order to protect and fully enjoy this good gift. In the context of covenant to people in marriage. God's pro that.

[48 : 00] He's like, yes, that's the gift. It's good. We're not anti-shopping. We're anti-covetousness. So find Christians.

Tether yourself to gospel people. Find Christians that enjoy food. But man, they use it to practice hospitality. Pat Barron had a whole class on that for us. You're going to learn how to cook really, really well.

But now you can figure out how to bless people with it. Find some believers that have a high.

They're committed to walking in sexual purity. Follow them. Find brothers or sisters that are leveraging their resources for gospel proclamation.

And learn from them. This is a good life. And I would say, church, there are some that are doing it actually very well here at Forth. There are some people that you can tether your life to that you can follow.

That will be of great encouragement to you in all of these different areas. And Paul finishes up.

We're actually going to sneak into chapter 4.

[49 : 09] Look at that. I'm always, I have a little cognitive dissonance anytime I preach and then we go into another chapter. But we're going to do it. And tiptoe into chapter 4. Here we are. Verse 1. We're going to finish here.

He says, Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and I long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm.

Thus in the Lord, my beloved. If life walking with Jesus were easy, Paul wouldn't need to say stand firm.

But he's saying it because storms come. The Christian life is not the easy life. It's not the path of least resistance.

Temptation comes. I think of the psalmist. Psalm 73. Psalm says, verse 2. But as for me, my feet almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped.

[50 : 05] For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. I started to think this life is too hard. I should live it that way. Church storms come.

Temptations. They come. They follow folks. Sexual temptation.

We got billboards up right now that you can't look at. The whole set of them. We take a different route actually. Home. To avoid one of them.

Temptations all around. It will mean surrendering some material covetousness.

And it's always this onslaught of living for comfort that wages war against that missionary spark that the Holy Spirit wants to ignite in all of us.

[51 : 12] So Paul ends this section by saying, church, stand firm. People of Jesus, stand firm. I don't know if you've ever watched those fishing shows.

They're up in Alaska. Catching crab. Catching salmon. And sailors that work on these crab vessels, when they're working on deck, they're actually, and especially when they're alone, they're supposed to clip into a lifeline.

I was watching an episode years ago about this. And as they reported, some of the sailors, they refused to use the lifelines.

Because they say, you know what? If I clip into this lifeline, it restricts my freedom of sailing. And that's really foolish, church.

It's foolish. And I think for us, Paul has given us two lifelines in this passage. He's saying, clip into the gospel every day. Your sins are forgiven. Enjoy that.

[52 : 20] Relish in that. Don't go back. And if you are prone to go back, just go back further. Go back to the cross. Have vision to go back there.

That's why we celebrate communion monthly. To take us back there. So clip into the gospel and tether yourself to those who are actually following hard after Jesus.

Amen? It's actually for our joy. Father, thank you for this reminder this morning. Lord, we want to be those people that are used greatly in this life.

And Lord, I don't believe it's those that are on social media, that are the influencers, that have the great following. Lord, you use ordinary people.

And I believe that gospel work happens in many ways. It's unsung. It's unseen. It's you doing work in the unseen as we seek to live out faith before others.

[53 : 26] We seek to be selfless in some way. We strive to point others towards you. And maybe we have a conversation to remind somebody of one of your promises.

Lord, I pray that we would be people that would be used by you. This is ordinary Fourth Memorial. Your people here in Spokane. And Lord, I know that we need to each live into the reality of the gospel.

Lord, I pray that you would... There are some that just have a tape running in their head and they just can't... Lord, would you destroy just those accusations?

Would you allow these folks, your people, just to walk in the joy that there's no condemnation for those in Christ? And they would live into that.

And it would be joy to their soul. And they would be more fruitful in ministering to others as a result.

And Lord, I do pray that you would cultivate some great relationships and friendships, even this year, 2025.

[54 : 30] That we would be people that would be committed to walking together. Walking with others. I pray that for our youth. Thank you for our youth leaders. That can be those individuals that our youth can follow.

These other influencers, adults other than their parents. And Lord, I thank you for Cole and his team. And Lord, for our young adults. I pray that we would have folks that are following hard after you.

That could be of great encouragement for our other young adults. It's very hard, Lord. Especially in this age of social media and everything being virtual. And I pray that we would prioritize that.

So convict us, Lord. And I pray that we would make steps to alter our course. And give us courage, Lord, to get to know others and allow others to get to know us.

For our joy, for the joy of those around us, and for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.