

Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 1:27-30)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Well, good morning, church. Good morning, church. Yeah. Good to see you this morning.

We want to welcome you. Those that are watching online, we want to welcome you as well. And I look forward to hearing from the Lord as we study His Word. We're in Philippians. We're doing a series talking a lot about joy. And this morning, we're going to finish up chapter one, looking at just a few verses. Doesn't necessarily then equate to a shorter sermon, but we'll see how things unfold this morning. But we're in Philippians chapter one, verses 27 to 30. So let me pray, and then we will just dive into our text together. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us, he says, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies, they never come to an end. They're new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him. Lord, You are our portion. This morning, we want to be a people that do indeed hope in You. Those that recognize Your mercies throughout today. No doubt we've used up yesterdays, and so Lord, we're needy of Your presence,

Your touch, Your help, Your encouragement today. I pray that You would provide that through Your Word, through Your Spirit, and through the body of Your people around us today. Might we not leave here without finding ways to serve another, to bless another, to see another, and that we would build one another up for the week ahead. We commit our time to You. We pray that You would speak to us, and we would understand Your Word better, and Your heart for this life that You've called us to. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So it's, it's, we've been noticing as a staff, we have this influx of young families, or, or these young marriages where children are being produced. It kind of, kind of goes in that order. It's a good thing. But I was thinking about being a young father. It's been a while. But I remember when Julie and myself, we were, you know, we had littles, and then we would want to go out for a date. We would get a babysitter, and it was great. You know, we'd get to the end of the date, and the babysitter's like, yeah, everybody, everybody got along. It was great. And then I remember something happened where we kept having children, and, and then what you would do is you would have your oldest sibling, like when they got to that age, watch their younger siblings. And I'm just saying younger parents enjoy your date nights right now, because when you have an older sibling now taking care of the kids, it's really a 50-50 shot of whether you're going to make it to the end of the date without having to cut it short, because there are things happening on the home front. Children not getting along, maybe somebody has bitten someone. I mean, hypothetically, would never happen in our home. But I remember those days where you would get a call from the oldest child calling home saying, hey, there's problems. And I remember feeling like I have no recourse. We're like out, and if I don't like, like put on the pressure, we're gonna have to go home. So as a parent at that point, the only thing you're really left with is you threaten, right? That's all you have. That's all, that's the one arrow in your quiver at that moment. And so you do. You're like, put the, you know, the naughty child on the phone. Let me speak with her. And you're like, okay, did you bite your sister or whatever? I'm not saying that. But, and then you just say, you better stop, right? Because if you don't, and this is where you just lay it on thick, we're taking away your birthday. We're taking away Christmas, right? Because that's all you have. Now, why do I share that this morning? I want you to think of that a little bit, not too much, in terms of what Paul is doing to the Philippian church here in this section. Because actually, Paul is away. As you recall, he's away from this beloved church. He's penning the letter from Rome on this first imprisonment. And I want you to imagine these words here at the end of chapter one as sort of his phone call home, okay? He wants a good report on how the church is behaving. And his words that he shares with them actually are better than perhaps my words. He's not threatening them.

He's actually got some spirit-filled words. They're really aspirational in nature. But this section that we're looking at this morning is really a transition in the letter where Paul has been speaking about himself to a degree, right? He says, for me, for me to live as Christ, right? And now the spotlight is turning from himself, and he's directing it towards these Christians here in Philippi. So this is the transition point of the letter where he is going to now focus on the believers. And let's look at it.

We'll read the whole thing to begin. Verse 27 to 30 says, he writes, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake, engage in the same conflict that you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. This is actually the first command that Paul has for the Christians in Philippi. And he says here, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear. So you kind of, you get the parental vibe here, right? I'm not here, I want to hear a good report. I want to know that your life is worthy of the gospel, and perhaps you hear this first exhortation from Paul, and I don't know how you hear it. When you hear like a life worthy of the gospel, maybe for some of you, in your mind you're thinking, oh great, Paul's now going to list all of the behaviors that these Christians are supposed to avoid.

[6 : 46] And I think it's unfortunate if we define faith, it's characterized in this way. Like we define what it means to follow Jesus by all the things that we don't do. Being a Christian means we don't, and you can just fill in the blank. It's not a very compelling way to live, is it, church? Not at all.

It would be like what's Valentine's the next holiday coming up. So husbands, if you're going to take your wife out somewhere, like could you imagine if I found a place and Julie's like, wow, this is, how'd you decide? I'm like, well, I've heard that this place has never, you know, there's, no one's ever been food poisoned here, number one. No reports of E. coli. You don't have to make a reservation.

They don't microwave their food. Like if I was to find the restaurant, she'd be like, that's how you chose this place? She wants to know like you chose it because there's great food or it's great ambiance and, you know, it's the positive aspects of this. And so I would just say if this, this kind of mindset is your initial response to Paul's words here, I think you missed the weight and really the joy of what Paul is writing. And there's a nuance here that you may not actually see because when he says this, he says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Okay? He's not focused here actually on things necessarily to avoid. And when he says, let your manner of life, this word that he uses, this, this verb, politeo, it comes from the Greek word polis, right? City. Okay? Politics. And so what he's actually like saying here that you could actually translate this with him saying, hey, I want you guys to live as citizens.

So it carries this idea of citizenship responsibility. And this phrase actually would have resonated with those in Philippi. This is a military town filled with Roman soldiers. They're proud citizens of Rome, even though living 600 miles east of that city. So Paul is using this concept of citizenship to speak in terms of God's people and our defining narrative.

[9 : 20] Live as citizens, not of this earth, but of your capital city, of heaven. In fact, he says it later in the letter because in Philippians 3.20 he says, hey, but our citizenship is in heaven.

And so the first thing Paul is saying to the Christians here is, man, I want to hear that you're living out your faith and you actually see yourself that's part of a different commonwealth.

Live to advance the fame of a different king. This is so good, church. Don't miss this. Because the calling that Paul has for the believers here, it presupposes that they're actually citizens. He's saying live out your citizenship. He's not saying live in a certain way so that you can become citizens. No, he's saying you already belong.

It's wonderful. In my brief football career at the University of Washington, the real college in Washington.

If that's as divisive as we get, we're doing really well, church. I want you to know that.

[10:46] In my brief career, there was a code of conduct for players. There were certain ways that you were supposed to behave. That was back in the day. That was back in 1991, 92. And I remember the first team meeting we had. Don James comes in, the head coach at the time. And we're all sitting there around. And I remember the first moment when I was like, I realized I was part of the team because I was sitting there. And then I had a guy behind me. I think it was a defensive lineman or something. And he smacks me in the back of the head. And he's like, take off your hat. And I was like, oh. And that was part of the code of conduct. When the coach shows up to the team, you remove your hat. I didn't know that. But it was like the best smack in the back of the head that I ever had. Because what that smack in the head meant was, I'm part of the team. So good. So good. Yeah, we belong. We're citizens.

So there's an expectation that Paul gives us in terms of, this is how you're to live, right? But the beautiful thing is that our activities in life, they're just a response to the gospel.

We can't earn it. It's been given. If we've placed our faith in the death, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we're in. So our life is now this response. It's worship, we call it.

We're forgiven and free, so now let's live to bless. Now, how does this citizenship bear down on daily life outside of our heavenly city? Certainly God has a desire for his people to wage war on sin. Of course, right? 1 Peter 1.16, be holy for I am holy. Yet this isn't actually how Paul defines a life worthy of the gospel for the Philippians. In fact, this was a church where you didn't, it wasn't plagued by a depth of carnal behavior. Paul goes further into Europe, further west, and he has to address things with other churches. He hits Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4. He says, hey, control your own body in holiness and honor because you haven't been. In Corinth, 1 Corinthians 5, there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that's not tolerated even among the pagans. So Paul's like, yeah, you got to knock that stuff off. But in every letter that Paul writes to believers, he's always calling for a lifestyle to engage in, not just the avoidance of another. You're citizens.

There's behaviors that I want you to participate in. It's the positive side, right? You take off in order to put on. And this putting on tells us Christianity isn't centrally about simply avoiding the wrong behavior. It's wonderful. And so let's consider this lifestyle that we're actually to pursue. And this is what Paul says. He says, only let the manner or let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, back in verse 27. So whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear, here it is, that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. So what's this lifestyle that is actually worthy of the gospel that Paul's talking about? It's not just sin avoidance. He's saying to live as a citizen of heaven, it means in the here and now that you are committed to walking in unity with other Christians in order to advance the fame of our king. That's the big idea this morning. That we're called to walk in unity with other believers in order to advance the gospel in our lifetime.

[14:56] And Paul may have said this in part, we don't know. There may have been some disunity in the body. There was, but maybe it was infecting the rest of the body. We know that Paul addresses some of the disunity in the church later in the letter. In Philippians 4, 2, he writes to a couple of the key women in the church that have been great servants of the Lord. And he says to them, hey, I entreat Iodia and I entreat Syndike to agree in the Lord. So Paul does have to address some disunity saying, hey, ladies, you have to love one another. You have to get along. In fact, you're hurting the church.

We want to think in terms of an athletic metaphor. You're hurting the team by your pride and lack of charity towards one another. And we've probably seen this in the past. I have a friend who's a college basketball coach and I was interacting with this friend and they were telling me, yeah, we had to remove one of the players. In fact, it was a star player. We removed this player and the critical spirit left our team.

There was a unity that came back to the team. And we had been a losing team in that evening. We won our match. We won our game. And that's sort of what Paul is addressing here with these ladies.

And I would just say as a body, if we're disunified as a body, as a church, we're going to lose every game. We're not going to be effective for the gospel. God isn't going to bless and he's not going to use.

Our love and our unity is a powerful apologetic. We know this. Jesus said it in John 13, 35, right?

[16 : 47] The world will know. People are going to know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another. The key way for the world to go, maybe there's something different about those people, that group.

They seem to like one another. They seem to love one another. They get along. And it's powerful that God actually is in the business of changing lives.

Something supernatural is occurring. We're less critical today because of the gospel in our lives and the Holy Spirit at work than we were on the day that we believed. And I would say as an aside, if there are divisions in the body, man, just take care of that stuff.

Do you realize that your pastors love when they never know, they never hear? Not because we're just like putting our heads in the ground and not aware of things, but we love when people, when believers work out things between themselves.

It's wonderful. Matthew 18, 15 gives us the principle, your brother sins against you. You go and you tell him his fault between you and him alone. If you listen to you, you've gained your brother.

[18 : 03] That's beautiful. That's how the church should function. There's disunity. Take care of it. You don't need to rally the troops. You don't need to form an alliance to work up courage.

Talk to the Lord about the matter and then go to your brother or go to your sister. That's what we're called to. And what I want us to see here is Paul, as is the Lord, is serious about the church walking in unity.

He actually cares about that. It's a big deal because the gospel advancement is hindered when we don't. It's fascinating to me that Paul is here in prison, at home arrest in Rome, this first imprisonment there.

And he writes some of these prison epistles, Philippians being one. Ephesians is another. He actually says the exact same thing to the Ephesians. He says in Ephesians 4, listen, it's almost verbatim, 1 through 3.

He says, therefore, as a prisoner of the Lord, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

[19 : 20] It's the same thing. He might even turn it up a notch with the Ephesians because he's like, hey, I want you to be eager for unity. Doesn't that kind of bite you a little bit?

It's not just, I'm going to put up with people. Be eager. Seek unity. Pursue after it. And I get it, church. Like, we are a lone wolf culture.

That's America. Put on your boots. Pull them up. You don't need people. You're independent. We celebrate independence here. We don't really celebrate interdependence.

And I get it. There's lots of reasons why you could make an excuse not to pursue after unity, pursue after friendship, pursue after community. Maybe for you, it's like, you know, Jay, I don't actually like people.

Well, make that a matter of prayer because God loves people, right? So that's like, Lord, work in my heart here. Maybe you've been burned by people.

[20 : 21] Maybe you've been hurt. And I would make that a matter of prayer as well. Lord, you know I have, like, a tendency to go into a mode of protection because I have been hurt by trusting. It's not a good way to live.

And it actually makes you a bad citizen of heaven. Because Paul says you've got to walk with other people in unity. Or maybe you avoid it because you just simply don't want accountability.

I would never say that. I know, but we know what's in our heart. I don't want to answer to others. I don't want them to really know. And if they get to know, they might speak into my life. Or I don't want to make the effort because my life is just so busy.

Or I'm proud and I don't think I actually need others. Those are all issues of prayer that we need to confess to the Lord and ask for Him to work in our spirit.

Our prayer is that we would walk in community as a body. We took 10 weeks to talk about our membership covenant. Because we want to be a covenant people.

[21 : 26] That it's actually walking in community with one another. And Paul is telling us here, the first command in the letter, we're not good citizens of heaven if we forsake living in covenant community with other believers.

That's the bottom line. But Jay, I've been avoiding sin. Great. But what are you doing? I love here actually the way that Paul describes unity.

Because he emphasizes the fact it's not just unity for unity. It's actually purposeful. Right? And he actually uses this sort of military imagery. He says, standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Paul's brilliant here, church. He's contextualizing this exhortation to this church. He's using this military analogy. And what he's describing actually is a military formation, the Roman phalanx.

I think I have a photo for you guys. You history bus. This was a military formation. And I think Paul is playing off this in the words that he chooses to use.

[22 : 44] Who's the greatest military general in the history of man? Like, many people would credit Alexander the Great. Right? Fourth century B.C. Right? Within 10-year reign, he conquered much of the Western world, which eventually then became, Greeks had it, and then the Romans just adopted all their culture and said, we're going to take over now and became the Roman Empire.

The Republic and then the Empire. But the Greeks and then the Romans used the phalanx as this military formation in battle to great success. Well, you have here an image of 256 soldiers.

16 rows. 16 in a row. And it's a tight formation. And just think of, this is the image I think that these believers would have had as they hear Paul say, hey, I want you to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side.

Alexander the Great actually improved on the phalanx, the Greek phalanx. He employed what then became known as the Macedonian phalanx, the phalanx 2.0.

He upgraded it thanks to the engineering genius of his father, Philip II, who was brilliant in siege craft. And what Philip did was he says, hey, those pikes that you have, those spears, let's make them longer.

[24 : 07] So initially, they were like 9, 10 feet. And then the Macedonian phalanx, those are like 18 feet long. So all of a sudden, this tight formation, it becomes more lethal, less penetrable.

And it's just this powerful image of these soldiers staying in formation, working together as we think about the church, working together to advance the gospel.

It's a beautiful image. Work as one man. Work as a team. Stand side by side. One spirit. And church, I would say when we hold a grudge against another brother or sister, guess what?

We're out of formation. And when we're out of formation, the gospel is hindered. Satan actually has access to hinder our work.

So don't be ignorant of the enemy's schemes, which is why Paul, he exhorts the Ephesians in Ephesians 4, hey, forgive one another, right?

[25 : 17] At the end of that chapter. Ephesians 4, 32. Forgive one another. Because God's forgiven you, forgive one another. Be eager for unity of the body.

Stay in formation. Next week, Scott's going to kind of unpack this further, how we do this actually very practically.

But I love these words that Paul has. One spirit, one mind, standing side by side. Everybody's in. Everybody's doing the work.

And we're doing it to advance the gospel. Do you guys recall the story? I think it was in 2018. This youth soccer team in Thailand who were, after practice, they went into a cave.

I think Netflix made a movie or a special on this, something like that. And this soccer team, this youth soccer team in Thailand, they went sort of exploring in a cave.

[26 : 16] Monsoon season and it flooded and these different compartments filled up and they were stuck deep, deep inside this cave for two weeks. And it was harrowing.

I mean, they didn't think that these teenage boys were going to make it out alive. And what happened is there was this massive rescue initiative that took place.

The odds were against that they would live. But you have like this incredible image of a village coming together to try to rescue these kids. And it was beautiful. It was not just the folks in the village that came out.

The military came out. You had police come out. You had military. You had special forces from around the world. You had Navy SEALs. You had, there was like a hundred divers that came because these boys were stuck on a, in an air compartment deep in the cave.

And all these compartments were filled with water to finally get to them as they're just trying to just survive. And this rescue effort, they're racing against time as the monsoon season was upon them.

[27 : 26] And they knew that, man, if they waited just another day that these compartments would fill completely up and these boys would be inaccessible. And what I love about the story of this rescue, I read an article this week.

It's like everybody served. Everybody was working together. Everybody was doing whatever they could do to rescue these boys. In fact, people were coming out and they were cleaning like the honey buckets.

The cave, right outside the cave, there was like, it was like an entire city like was formed. There were people that were making food. There were folks washing dirty clothes. Folks cleaning out the latrine. It was, no job was too small.

It was just this beautiful image, I think, really, of the church, how the church should be working together. This entire village and folks from around the world were doing everything they could to rescue these 13 boys.

Everyone working in concert with one another. And there was just no space for people not to get along. And so it's a great image for us as we think about the church.

[28 : 25] Church, our rescue mission transcends this life. That's the reality. In fact, John says in John 5, hey, if you've got the Son, you have life.

If you don't have the Son of God, you don't have life. So people need a Savior in this life or they have an eternity in hell awaiting them. That's what the Scripture is saying.

So we have to work together in this great rescue mission for souls. And it's a beautiful thing when God's people work together.

And we get over when we're slighted. We're like, we quickly forgive. If there's an issue that needs to be, we come and we take care of it. We work together.

We walk in community. And I think as we do this, we are legitimately going after people that are on their way to hell. It says in Jude 21, it's as though we're snatching people out of eternal fire.

[29 : 29] The stakes are that high. And I love that image of a village coming together. And people say, I'm going to do whatever I can to get these boys out.

And as the story goes, there was a diver that lost his life, but all 13 of them were rescued. It's beautiful. Everybody doing their job. So we have to walk in community, church.

And that's Paul's first exhortation for these Philippians. You want to live like a citizen of heaven? You got to walk with God's people in real unity in this life.

Now, practically, how does this interconnectedness occur? And this assumes that we're walking with the Lord. We're centering our lives on his word, on the gospel.

This is a matter of prayer. We're praying about this. Like, I pray about this for myself personally. I can see that I can be chippy. I can, with people. And I know, like, God, I need to grow my heart in this area.

[30 : 29] I had a gal in my car yesterday who picked up from a recovery center onto another clinic who was in my car coughing up a storm. And I didn't want to love this person at all.

I'm just like, you're infecting me. I don't know that I'm going to even show up today. Because it was like, it was a cough-a-palooza in my car. It was horrendous. And she was just all over the place.

I'm just like, Lord. I just like, I'm talking, Lord. Lord, help me love this person. Help me love this person. Because I just want her out of my car. That's it. I'm just, I'm being completely, that's, sometimes you're like that.

And so I have to pray about this. We have to pray about this, church. God, grow my heart for others, for people, and in particular those that love you in this life. That we can be useful.

We can work together. And I would say, as we think about growing in interdependence, it works best outside of this gathering. Right?

[31 : 27] Like, this gathering, you're not going to really connect with other believers very well. Namely, because you're not, you're looking at me, which I apologize for.

Like, 40 minutes of looking at, I don't know how you do it. But, I mean, I do a quick glance in the morning, and I'm good for the whole day. I see myself in the mirror. I'm like, I don't need a CJ for the rest of the day.

You guys have 40 minutes of it. I'm sorry. But community is not happening as you're staring at me this morning. It happens outside of a large gathering.

It's interesting. I mean, the average church in America is 75 people. We're four to five times that on a Sunday morning. It's hard to connect in this setting.

Community is fostered, as we talk about walking in unity, as one theologian puts it. He says, hey, when the church moves from sitting in rows to sitting in circles, in smaller gatherings, smaller communities.

[32 : 34] This is how the first Christians did it. Do you realize that? It says in Acts 2, verse 46, it says, hey, day after day, these are first believers, attending the temple together, large gathering, all going, and breaking bread in their homes.

Smaller gathering. I don't care where it happens. It could happen here. It could happen not here. But you have the example that the church has always had large gatherings and smaller gatherings.

Don't forsake either, church. So gather Sundays to hear the word proclaimed, to worship with a corporate voice.

The community happens better in smaller groups where you're disciplined with others, where you're doing life with others. And it can look a lot of different ways. Maybe it's a women's Bible study that you do in the week.

Maybe it's a women's book club or our dead theologians book club. It's a men's huddle that meets during the week. It's a Sunday discipleship group that meets before it happens here on site, which is beautiful for you young parents because we have child discipleship that happens.

[33 : 42] It's wonderful. For our young adults, you have a Tuesday young adult group, the Yags. It's pretty cool.

Where are you going? You're going to hang out with the Yags, young adult group. Is that right? Kind of cool. Yag. I'm 55. I'm not a Yag anymore. Maybe Cole will invite me one of these nights.

We got a youth gathering Wednesday night. These are the smaller gatherings where you begin to, your lives become interconnected and we begin to do life together. The bottom line, small groups, small communities, they can have many faces, but they're a catalyst towards unity.

And I would say in terms of advancing the gospel, how does this unity advance the gospel? Well, we've already talked about it's a testimony to the world as a diverse people are loving one another like there's something there.

Like that's powerful to see a group that has charity for one another. Yeah. They'll know you're my people by your love for one another. That's certainly part of it. But then Paul gives us actually a couple of ways in the text of how this unity actually is a catalyst for advancing the gospel.

[35 : 00] Look at verse 28. You didn't think we'd ever get there. Look at us. We're doing it. He says, So our unity, church, fosters courage.

That's what Paul's saying. You're not frightened. Our unity fosters courage to advance the gospel. We're not frightened.

This is a great word that he uses in anything. This word to not be frightened, to not shrink back, to not be skittish, to be nervous.

It's a word you would use to describe an animal, a horse. It's not skittish. It's doing what horses were meant to do. But you need other horses to remind them of what it means to be a horse ready for battle.

And we encourage one another in this way. I wish we had horses. We don't as a family. We have a donkey. It's a miniature. And he's fearful. He's skittish. We were out last night doing some work.

[36 : 12] Trunkled some paper and he freaks out and he runs and he hides. Because he doesn't figure it out. Like, it's just paper. Come on, Olaf. Yeah. I know. We don't have a horse. We have a miniature donkey named Olaf.

It's pretty bad. Right? Right? Miniature donkey that loves warm hugs. And he needs some other donkeys or horses to teach him, like, you don't behave that way.

That's what you walk in. So that we walk in courage. I love the image, actually, that Job writes about what a horse should be. It's like a charger ready for battle. He says in Job 39, 24, with fierceness and rage.

This is a horse. He swallows the ground. Like, you can't keep him back. Isn't this a great image of courage? He cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet. He's ready for battle. I think we're ready for battle when we walk with one another and can encourage one another.

We borrow courage from one another all the time. And I think, yes, it's one thing to be inspired by Christians who have gone before us. I love that we read a lot of biographies in our dead theologians book club.

[37 : 20] I think we're inspired to walk closely with the Lord as we see faith lived out in another place, another time. But, man, I think there's even greater gain in terms of courage when we're connected to living people.

We see it in the everyday, in our context. And that never happens if we are lone wolf believers in this life, church. When we decide, man, we're going to be out of formation.

And I spoke about this last week. I draw courage as I hear of other brothers and sisters walking in courage. That helps me. I hope that what I do when I go out driving, having conversations throughout the week with people, it lends itself to give courage to you.

Jay's doing it. He's not even very eloquent. And he talks the gospel. I probably could do it too. Right? I hope that that is what occurs. I pray with people often as I drive.

And I'm like, man, this is an occasion I can pray. And I love to pray for unbelievers because what it does is it just, it sort of like shrinks the veil between here and heaven as we talk with the living God.

[38 : 25] And I think it's an occasion for an unbeliever to go, whoa, there's a God and you can talk to him? So I love that. And I've shared that. And then I love hearing that, you know, one of my children, they're working at one of the restaurants, fast food places in town.

And then they come home like, dad, yeah, I got to pray with a couple people. Where'd you pray with them? Well, they were kind of going through the drive-thru. And then they ordered and then they were having a hard time. So I said, well, with your side of fries, I would like to pray for you.

And so then they prayed. Then she prayed for them. Daughter number five. But what was so cool is when I heard that, it was like, well, I can pray for more people.

If she's doing that at the drive-in, I can certainly, they're in my car. They have nowhere to go. And so you see how that works? That's how courage works. We're sharing. We're hearing stories.

We're like, man, I can do this too. It's also interesting here that Paul, he says, our courage, it's also a clear sign to them of their destruction.

[39 : 27] When we walk in courage, when God's people walk in courage. I think that's what was going on with Paul in prison. They're like, he's not shutting up. In fact, he's writing more letters to Christians. And I think the world's going, whoa, there's something real there.

His faith is not so paper thin that he's in crisis, he's in trial, he's in suffering, and he's still loving his Savior. I think also as the unbeliever, they hear about our lives and they observe, there's conviction that can come.

It's a sign of their destruction. They know that they're not living the way that they ought to. Well, the second thing that our unity provides, not just courage, but we also provide necessary encouragement in the face of suffering for one another.

And therein, we stay in the battle for the gospel. Let's see what Paul says. He ends it here in verse 29 to 30. He says, For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake.

Engage in the same conflict that you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. Just because we suffer doesn't mean that we chuck our faith.

[40 : 39] We throw in the towel and say, well, this can't be real. Okay? And Paul here, he alludes to the reality of suffering that he's experiencing in Rome. He's also referencing the suffering he experienced when he was back in Philippi.

Remember him and Silas were thrown into jail because they healed this gal struggling with being demonized and fortune-telling. And then he suffered, and he's alluding to the fact that there is still pressure there in Philippi for these believers to not stand for the Lord.

And he's saying, Your unity is going to bring the necessary encouragement you need to endure so that you continue to be about the advance of God's kingdom. There's much I could say here, church, about suffering.

We don't have time, so suffice to say that Paul mentions here that suffering is actually apportioned to us as is faith. And I love that Paul writes that because what that tells us is suffering.

It doesn't lie outside the scope of God's sovereignty. That's very helpful. Jesus, he promised, right, in John 16, in the world you're going to have tribulation.

[41 : 51] He promised that we would experience suffering in this life. And I think the joy and suffering for the Christian is that, guess what? It doesn't lie outside of God's sovereignty, which means then that there's purpose in it.

It's purposeful. Often for kingdom-advancing purposes. And the purposes, church, we don't always know. I don't know why you're suffering.

I don't always know why I'm suffering. And I don't even know that it's always that helpful to have the knowledge of why. Just to know that God's going to use that for his purposes is sometimes enough.

I don't think Job would have been actually very helped in knowing that, hey, you're suffering because your life is going to be example for generations of how to endure suffering and the fact that God's sovereign.

Isn't that great, Job? Isn't that help you? I don't know that that would have really helped him considering the massive loss and grief that he was in. But the fact that suffering, it lies like under God's sovereignty is very helpful.

[42 : 53] So because you're suffering, it's not time to chuck your faith. Well, suffering is the reason we should reject Jesus. No. Every worldview has to answer this issue.

Right? Everybody has a problem with suffering and pain. Every belief system has to come to grips with suffering somehow. And frankly, I don't think there are good reasons out there other than what we understand from our Christian worldview.

I don't think the Buddhist has a good answer for suffering where he says it's just an illusion, just rise above it. That doesn't even take suffering seriously. Or the Hindu who says it's karma, you're suffering because you deserve it, because you did something in this life or in a previous life.

That's not a great answer. Or the atheist who just says it's random. It's purposeless. I don't think any of that's helpful. Let me suggest that Christianity has the best explanation.

That suffering is as a result of a planet living in rebellion to its maker. Sin has marred everything. Death has entered.

[44 : 01] Things are not the way they're supposed to be. And that even lies under the sovereignty of God. That somehow, because of the fall, we now understand the goodness of God, the charity, the mercy, the grace, and the quality of life is even better.

The prodigal, he got this. Once the father forgave. Like, wow. It's so good to be a son. Well, Jay, I still can't buy that there is purpose in some of the worst profound evil on the planet.

No way. And I say there's suffering that's very, I don't, I can't give you an answer. Only answer I can give you is the worst suffering that's ever occurred. The worst evil that's ever occurred had purpose.

And that's the murder of God. That's the worst evil that this world will ever know. And yet God accomplished our salvation through it. And I love the fact that, guess what, we worship a God who did not avoid suffering.

But he entered into it himself. And church, as our lives are interconnected, we're actually able to then provide the encouragement to others to stay faithful.

[45 : 20] Continue on. Continue to walk with the Lord. Stand strong even in the face of suffering. I'll end with this.

I got to talk again with my dear friend this week a couple of times. I shared last week kind of adopted parents for me and Julie. Tom and Carla.

Carla passed away last Saturday night. And I've been interacting with Tom this last week who lost his bride, his sweetheart of 50 years. And as I was speaking with him on the phone this week, he said, Jay, I don't care what people say.

It's even worse than anything you can try and imagine. And he said, I couldn't do this without Christ and the promise of heaven.

And I got to encourage my friend. I've not been through what he's going through. But I wanted to remind him, I'm like, Tom, you're right. There is reunion ahead. That Carla is indeed with Jesus.

[46 : 25] It's not soul sleep. She's conscious. You can't see her. But she's doing very well. And I got to remind him of the words that Jesus shares in Luke.

Luke writes in Luke 23 where Jesus says to the thief on the cross, he simply says, hey, today you're going to be with me. Today. And even though Tom had heard that, he knows the scriptures.

He's taught me the scriptures. He was just like, Jay, I didn't think of that verse. It was so helpful in the moment. I'm just telling him stuff he knew but maybe just didn't have. And he got to, yes, today.

That's right. Carla, she's conscious. She's in the presence of God. She's doing so very well. And I got to provide that for him. And when we're connected with others, we get to do that.

To continue in the battle. And I'll end with these words. I love how Billy Graham put it. Some of you maybe are here missing folks that have died in Christ.

[47 : 26] And Billy Graham says, hey, someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't believe a word of it. I shall be more alive then than I am now.

I will have gone into the presence of God. Isn't that good? Let's pray. Father, first thank you that we belong to you because of the work that Christ has done on our behalf.

Thank you that we are citizens of an eternal commonwealth. And Lord, to live out a life that's worthy of that citizenship means that we don't walk alone.

