

# Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 1:1-2)

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Preacher: Jayson Turner

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Amen. Thank you, Brendan and team. Good morning, 4th. Good morning, 4th. All right. You guys see we got some bright artwork for you just to kind of get us going this year. Five days in and we're doing it, guys. 2025. It's good to be back. I know, I don't think I've seen all the staff for about a week and a half. We've all been different places, so it's good to be back. I know many of you were gone and folks were in town and this is an opportunity for us to begin the year together seeking the Lord, seeking His mind, giving Him our heart and thankful to be here. So if you have a copy of the scriptures, go ahead and turn open to Philippians. We're actually beginning a new series this morning. We're going to do an exposition through the book of Philippians. We've entitled this series, The Book of Joy. Let me pray and then we'll dive in. Father, thank you for time together. Lord, would you use this time to reveal yourself to us? Might we hear from you through the words inspired by your spirit, penned by men. Lord, we commit our time to you. We pray against distraction. Lord, we want to seek your face today and this year. Lord, we want to enjoy your presence. And so Lord, whatever, whatever status our soul is in this morning, would you minister? If it's conviction, we need. If it's comfort, we need. If it's encouragement, we need. You know and we trust that you're working in the unseen. We commit our time to you, Jesus. Pray that you glorify yourself in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we will be looking at a couple of verses this morning as we begin the series, Philippians chapter one, looking at just the first couple verses. So I shouldn't be up here, but for a few moments. That was a lie. I don't know if you've ever seen that television show. I'm not recommending it.

I'm not going to be up here, but I'm not going to be up here, but I'm not going to be up here. I'm not going to be up here, but I'm not going to be up here, but I'm not going to be up here. But I recall watching an episode a few years ago, and this gal was being interviewed, whose children were about to be taken into foster care because of just the living conditions in her home. And the host of the show asked the question of this woman, why do you continue to shop and hoard? And I'll never forget what she said. She says, I shop because at the moment of purchase, I experienced a little bit of joy.

Church, people all around us are looking for joy. People long for this soul gladness, this okayness in our hearts. And the messaging in culture is that there are many ways to find joy.

In fact, Cole shared last week about these broken cisterns. Often we carry around, we try to fill them up with different things. And culture has a lot of things like you can find joy. You'll find joy if you find it in another person, right? If you just have a good group of friends. But ultimately, if that's where we're going for ultimate joy, these cisterns are broken. There's a joy leak.

[ 3 : 5 6 ] Friends fail us. Some folks have this mindset that, man, I will be truly happy once I'm married. And then they get married, and they realize it's a lot of work.

Some people have this idea that joy will be found in pleasure if I just feed my flesh. Maybe it's in a hobby. I just have enough fun, entertainment in my life.

Or maybe some view that joy is found in a promotion. I just get a great job. And what you'll realize is at the end of your career, they'll give you a plaque with everyone's signatures on it as a thank you. I still remember a very good friend of mine who was very successful in business. And at the end of his career, he retired. And I asked him, I said, Tom, do you ever think about work? And he said, Jay, I could count the number of times I think about my career on one hand. And if that's where we're going for our identity, for our joy, it will fail. Or maybe you're looking for joy in possessions, right? But we all know they break. Some of you may wonder, like, Jay, what's your hobby other than driving Uber and pastoring? What do you love to do? And you know, one of the things that I do is I maintain vehicles because I have seven children.

And we're at a low right now. We only have five vehicles. But I want to tell you, they're all working today. In fact, I told Scott about a week and a half ago, I was like, Scott, you can give me any bad news today, but it won't affect me because all our vehicles are working. There's no check engine lights on. You can't squelch my joy today. But our stuff breaks, right? We know this. Broken cisterns.

And the world will daily promote all sorts of them. But because we're people not of this world, but rather people of another kingdom living as aliens here, the messaging of our lives ought not to be crafted by a foreign ruler, but rather by our sovereign, who has left us his directives in a book. It's where we turn to address every subject in life, and in particular, this subject of joy.

[ 6 : 20 ] God's word, the lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. And so Philippians is foundationally a book about finding joy. And I'm excited for the study that we have. I know Scott is excited. This is the mission of every church, that we would be dispensers of joy, that we would advance joy in our city as we promote and proclaim the gospel, that people would experience soul gladness in Christ. And so this book, Philippians, it's a book about joy. In fact, Paul uses this word throughout this letter. Let me just read a few verses, Philippians 1, 3, and 4. He says, I thank my God and all my remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you, for you all making my prayer with joy. In Philippians 1, 25, he says, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith. And then in

Philippians 2, 2, he says, complete my joy by being of the same mind. So joy shows up in this book all over the place. There's about a dozen references to joy or rejoice, different forms of this word.

And what we're going to discover from this letter is that joy is actually found in the most unlikely of places. And I would suggest that probably in the world, most will think that the solution in this book for joy is crazy. And yet those that think that way actually don't possess joy. And by the end of the morning, maybe some of you will think this is a little far-fetched as well. And so my prayer for us is that the Holy Spirit that resides in us will convince us in our hearts that God's promise of joy is actually true and found in the place that God discloses through the pen of Paul. So we're going to dive in and we're just in two verses this morning and let me read them for us.

Paul writes, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the author, we learn here, is Paul, this man who had this radical experience with Jesus. And now for the rest of his life, he's all in for Jesus.

[ 9 : 12 ] And we find out there's an associate with him because he says Paul and Timothy. Timothy is mentioned here and he's not in every greeting that Paul writes where he's present, but he mentions him here and perhaps to give him a little bit of credibility with the Philippians.

Paul wanted to send Timothy to this church in the future. Timothy is young and maybe by mentioning him, it gives him some credibility. In fact, Paul says in Philippians 2.19, I hope to send Timothy to you soon.

Now, Paul wrote this letter to the Philippian church. When did he write this? Well, we know that he probably wrote this most likely while he was in prison.

It's one of Paul's four prison epistles, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, and then the personal letter, Philemon. He's most likely in Rome. How do we know?

Not because the experts tell us, but because the Bible tells us, right? The best commentary on the Bible church is what? It's the Bible. And we find out where he most likely is because he says in Philippians 1.17, the former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

[ 10 : 28 ] So Paul is incarcerated here. Where? Well, Philippians 4.22 says, all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

Where does Caesar live? In Rome. So he is most likely here in a Roman prison. He wrote this probably around 61, 62 A.D.

Probably been about 10 years since he planted this church on his second missionary journey. And he writes here, the recipients are the Philippians, the church in Philippi.

And he mentions the leadership, both the overseers and deacons and the congregation. And as Paul instructs on joy, what you will notice is there's this deep affection that Paul has for this particular church.

And you can think of this letter as like a thank you. Some of you are busy writing these cards after Christmas and receiving gifts and thanking friends and family.

[ 11 : 32 ] And this is a thank you note that Paul has written here. He's been financially supported by the Philippian church. And this letter is being sent back then from prison in the hands of a guy by the name of Epaphroditus.

Epaphroditus shows up a couple times in this letter in chapter 2 and 4. And Epaphroditus was from Philippi. And he was sent with probably the gift to encourage. And he was sick on the way and almost died.

And so Paul is giving word back to the Philippian church, hey, Epaphroditus is okay. He risked his life for the gospel. And he's in good health. And just want to let you know that thank you for supporting me and for being an encouragement to me.

And so this letter, if you think about the contents, it's a thank you. But it's also a letter that talks about the secret of joy. How do we experience joy in this life?

Now, this letter is sent to the church in Philippi. What do we know about this particular city? We know that Philippi, it was named after actually Philip II of Macedon, who is the father of Alexander the Great.

[ 12 : 46 ] Philippi is a site of a significant battle that occurred, moving Rome from a republic to an empire. And then we have in the pages of the New Testament in Acts, we learn even more about this place.

In Acts 16, verse 12, Luke writes, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

We remain in this city some days. Now, I have a map, I believe, and I tried to find the most simple, most legible map so that you could actually read it from your seats.

You see Philippi up right in the center up top. It's about 600 miles from Rome. Philippi is not a large city, maybe around 10,000 residents.

We can maybe think of like Philippi, like Liberty Lake next to Spokane, although it's not a 600 mile distance between the two, but it's a smaller city.

[ 13 : 57 ] It was a city that was a military outpost on the main highway to Rome. And it was a place where Roman soldiers liked to retire.

It was on the main highway, the Ignatian Way. And you can think of Philippi as really the gateway to Europe, just 10 miles inland from the port city there.

Everyone coming by ship over the land bridge from Asia Minor, they would have passed through Philippi. So I hope that you sort of have this picture in your mind of this strategic place, like this is a great place.

This is a thriving urban center and it's a great place for a church to exist. Very strategic. Now, what else do we know about Philippi? Well, Philippi, there was a lot of false gods that were worshipped in this city.

A lot of diversity there, just not a lot of diversity when it came to the population. Not the most ethnically diverse church plant. Very few Jews in this city.

[ 15 : 02 ] How do we know this? Because Paul, when he would go into a city, where would he go? Typically, he would go to the synagogue, right? And then he would go to the market. Here, he doesn't go to the synagogue.

There is no synagogue to go to in Philippi. And what we find out in Acts 16, verse 13, it says, And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer.

And we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. Why does Paul not go to the synagogue? Because there's no synagogue there. There's not enough Jewish men in the city to form a synagogue.

You would need 10 Jewish men for a synagogue to exist. So where does Paul go? He goes to the riverside. And I just think it's significant, and it's so cool that Paul is there in Philippi at this particular time.

This is the providence of God, church. Because Acts 16 follows what? Acts 15. The gospel is for the Gentiles.

[ 16 : 11 ] Where does Paul first go? To a city full of Gentiles. And I just, I love just, just seeing God's providential hand directing Paul to this heavy populated city of Gentiles right after the Jerusalem council.

In fact, I believe as we surrender to God's instruction, church, God will open doors for ministry in our lives. I believe that. And sometimes nudge us through them.

In fact, Paul's plan was to just do what before this? He wanted to retrace his steps from his first journey. God wouldn't let him. God wouldn't give him the safe option.

What do we find out? Acts 16, 6 to 10. It says this. And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they came up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

So passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia was standing there urging him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us.

[ 17 : 22 ] So God opened the door for the first church plant in Europe. It's beautiful, church. Why? Why go to Philippi?

Because Philippi was a city without joy. Why does Fourth Memorial exist in Logan neighborhood and Spokane?

Because Spokane is a city equally without joy. Nothing's changed in 2,000 years, church. We're still here on mission to share joy.

Joy, ultimate soul gladness with people that have never experienced it. And our message is one of what? Great joy. If you recall, we spent all of December talking about joy, right?

Luke 2.10, the angel comes to the shepherds. I bring you good news of great joy. That's why we exist here. We exist for this neighborhood.

[ 18 : 37 ] We exist for this city. Something you should know. We're already excited about next Christmas. I know you're just getting, you're just trying to figure out how am I going to put the tree away?

I get it. But we're already, we're already ready for 2025. In fact, as a staff, we talked about our outreach we did, the Christmas event that we put on and we, and we, we go, you know what?

We can do it even better. This year we, we invited the neighborhood, but in staff, we were like, we need to invite the people that live in our neighborhoods, even if we're not in the Logan neighborhood.

And so we're already strategically thinking about how can we advance joy in Logan neighborhood and in the greater Spokane area. And we're already thinking about that. That's why we exist here.

Well, this is a city without joy. And in fact, we get to meet three people from the city in need of joy. And so let's consider three individuals in this particular city that are lacking joy.

[ 19 : 34 ] So Acts 16, I know I told you we're doing two verses. I, I, I, yeah, I deceived you. We're going to cover a lot of Acts 16 this morning.

Looking at verses 13 to 15 here first. First person that we meet in this city. And on the Sabbath day, we, Paul and Silas, went outside the gate to the riverside where we suppose there's a place of prayer.

We sat down and spoke with the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God.

The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized in her household as well, she urged us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

And she prevailed upon us. This is a doer. This gal is an executor. She prevailed upon us. I love that. Probably took strength finders and figured out, yeah, I'm an executor.

[ 20 : 36 ] That's Lydia. That's the first person we meet in this city of Philippi. Who is Lydia? She's a Gentile. She has a Gentile name. That's how we know. So she's a worshiper of God.

So she's a Gentile who worshiped Yahweh. We also learn about her that she is a productive individual. She is a businesswoman.

Well-to-do entrepreneur. Probably had two houses. Perhaps she traveled between Thyatira, a little bit south, in Asia Minor, and Philippi, there in Europe.

Modern-day Europe. Now, why did... What is it that Lydia possessed in her life? What was the thing that she possessed?

She possessed success. This was a successful businesswoman. She wouldn't only shop at the good, you know, department stores.

[ 21 : 33 ] She supplied the product that was sold there. She was successful. And yet, I would contend she was living without a full expression, experience of joy.

Was success enough to produce sustainable gladness in her soul? No. Something was lacking, which is why she surrendered her life to Jesus.

See, church, success and the benefits that are associated with, they cannot produce a life of robust joy. We see it in Hollywood.

You read the stories. Oh, I'm sad. Pop another pill. I'm stressed. Pop another pill. They can't experience joy.

There's a restlessness. Because they're trying to fill up on joy in these broken cisterns. I love what the 4th century theologian Augustine said.

[ 22 : 38 ] He wrote, God, you have made us for yourself. And our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee. My contention is that the unbeliever is restless in his or her soul.

When you speak with an unbeliever, they're restless. And they're trying to fill up that void with all sorts of things that can never sustain.

So that's this first individual that we meet that was in need of joy. Second individual comes from Acts 16, verses 16 and 19. We meet a teenage slave girl.

Luke writes, He says, So here's a girl that possessed what?

Lydia had success. What does this young gal have? She's got power. It's very ironic. It's a very strange juxtaposition.

[ 24 : 26 ] A slave who possessed power. We don't know if this demonic ability came through her own sin or perhaps sin perpetrated against her.

All we learn here is that she's given permission for this activity to continue. And her owner, it's his meal ticket to the good life.

Does she possess joy? No. No. No. Attaining power cannot produce joy.

Regardless of how it's acquired. You know, it's so interesting when you're a kid and you think about, you know, when I'm growing up, when I'm in charge, right?

Man, life is going to be great. I'm going to eat what I want. And usually as children, it's always like the box of cereal mom never let you, you know, buy at the supermarket. I'm going to have my own schedule.

[ 25 : 26 ] I'm going to watch television all the time. You think, man, it's going to be great. And then what happens? You grow up and you have a certain amount of power and you're like, man, I kind of want to go back.

Right? It wasn't all that it was cracked up to be. It's not producing the joy I thought it would. Man, I want to go back to childhood where the big concern of my day is like, you know, is Batman on TV?

No stress. The church power did not equal joy. And in fact, for this girl, it was her very prison. Well, Paul and Silas intervening here actually leads to their third acquaintance, the jailer.

They meet this individual as a result of helping this slave girl. We read about it here in Acts 16, beginning in verse 25. It says, It says, I just want to pause there for a moment.

This is remarkable. They're in prison and they're singing hymns. And it says here that the prisoners, they're listening. Church, like, the world watches Christians.

[ 26 : 50 ] And they're wondering, is it real? Does God really help you? You're in a desperate trial. Is there solace?

Is there peace that surpasses understanding? Is this stuff true? And I love that we have an example here of Paul and Silas. They're singing hymns to God.

And the world is watching. Let's continue. Verse 26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake. So that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

Then the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open. And he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. Supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice.

Do not harm yourself. For we are all here. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in. And trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

[ 27 : 54 ] That's the greatest. Oh, man. I love those questions. Like, softball questions. Like, I don't have to convince you. I mean, I don't have to, you know, give you that apologetic argument I've been thinking and working on.

He just, he's like, I'm ready. Help. And they said to him, Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. You and your household.

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them that same hour of night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized at once. He and all his family.

Now, what did this man possess? What did this jailer possess, church? He had a good job. This was actually a great job. He had a very good life and most likely had a decent amount of possessions.

Very likely this individual was a retired soldier who had a successful career, now functioning as a jailer.

[ 28 : 58 ] So think of it like he now gets a desk job, right? He went from the Air Force to the Chair Force, right? And it was a pretty good gig.

This is the Macedonian dream if you're a soldier. Did it have ability to produce joy? Well, definitely not on this night initially. On this day, he thought his life was over.

Because if you lose a prisoner, it's life for a life. Prisoner escapes under your watch. And I'm just saying, like, this is incredibly motivating for you to excel in your career.

If you know you're going to lose your life if you don't produce. I'm not suggesting Scott employ this with our staff. But for this jailer, he knew.

Man, I'm going to, I mean, just don't let anybody escape and you've done your job. This individual, he recognizes how frail and futile life was in this moment.

[ 30 : 10 ] And he repents. Joy is not found in the Macedonian dream. And it's interesting, if this is the case, church, joy isn't really found in the American dream.

Why is it that we wrap so much of our mental energy, our conversational energy around such pursuits?

We talk about this stuff. You know, you know I drive Uber. I listen in, I eavesdrop on a lot of conversations when there's multiple people in my back seat.

I try not to. I think it's kind of rude. I turn up the stereo, so I can't, but I still hear. I have really good hearing. And I just hear them talk. And I try to, like, sing the lyrics or whatever.

But I still hear. You can't help but not. And I hear a lot of conversations that's about buying the next thing. Right? The bigger house.

[ 31 : 09 ] The latest sale. The latest purchase. And as I hear these conversations, I'm wondering, like, are we any different? Are believers any different?

Are we ever energized by conversations about the real battle? About ministry dreams? About opportunities to be a blessing or to share the gospel maybe that we missed or that we captured?

Do we ever do that? I understand that as a social media user, I am not using Instagram for its intended purposes.

I use it simply to share stories of gospel conversations. I'm trying to be disruptive. I'm trying to be an encouragement to other believers. Well, these three individuals, it's interesting to me that joy, it's no respecter of person.

Their success, their power, their possessions, joy eluded them all. And so the question is, well, where do we find it, Jay? What's the solution? Well, I'm glad you asked.

[ 32 : 25 ] And I'm going to share with you. Because actually the secret of joy, Paul actually already told us in the very first line of this letter. In fact, joy is hidden in plain sight, church.

Go back to Philippians 1, verse 1. Paul writes, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.

There it is. That's the secret of joy. Servants of Christ Jesus. The word here is *doulos*, bondservant, slave.

And in this context, as Paul is using it, he's describing a slave that's granted freedom. He can go. He doesn't have to serve the master, but he knows how ridiculously good the master is and voluntarily serves him the rest of his life.

And that's what he's calling himself. I'm a bondservant. I'm doing this of my own volition. In fact, we have an image of this from the Mosaic law.

[ 33 : 41 ] Exodus 21 describes what a bondservant is. Verse 5 and 6. But if the slave plainly says, I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free.

Then his master shall bring him to God and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl and he shall be his slave forever.

Isn't that good, church? Joy is found in surrendering your entire life to Jesus.

He's my sovereign. He's my master. It's so good. And Paul knew this. That's why Paul says, I was a chief of all sinners, but God would forgive me.

I'm in for life. Life. Life. Joy is found in relating to Jesus as your sovereign.

[ 34 : 49 ] Entrusting him for your salvation. And then it's a trust that's demonstrated through this true *doulos* activity. Some of you are like, Jay, are you serious?

Joy is really found there in relating deeply and abiding and enjoying the presence of Christ in my life? Yes. And guys, Paul is telling us this? Not surrounded by the accoutrements of life.

Where is Paul telling us this? He's in prison. Joy is found in total surrender and obedience to the dreams and the directives of the master.

Period. In fact, Paul says it later, to live is Christ plus nothing. If we don't serve Jesus, we serve an inferior master.

We either serve then our flesh or we serve our friends. We serve our small dreams, ambitions. That is the great secret reversal related to experiencing joy.

[ 36 : 09 ] It's found in surrendering your life to Christ and then giving it away for the joy of others. Live for the joy of others that they would know Jesus and we will then experience joy in return.

And it's a *doulos* joy. We have folks that have set a good pace in our church. We know of this young woman, Danny, who's off seeking to plant a church, another country, Tyler and Karis in another country.

They're setting a great pace for us. And I think what they're saying is we believe that joy is found in just surrendering to God and what He has for us in this life. We're going to be used of Him.

I love that we're a church that has a number of aviation students. We're like, man, we're trying to figure out how we can use this thing that we actually enjoy and use it to give our lives away to see the gospel advance in other places.

That's beautiful. It's a *doulos* joy. Or a Christian mom, like discipling young arrows to send them off for gospel purposes in this life.



[ 37 : 21 ] It's a doulos joy. There's joy in the battle. There's joy in serving the Lord, experiencing His presence and then being used of Him, walking in those good works that He prepared for us.

We were meant to be in a great battle, church. And sometimes we substitute it with board games and video games and sports and all sorts of things.

But I think it stirs in us. Whoa, we were meant to be in a greater battle. It's this glimmer, this echo of that. God designed us for that.

And when we're in it, when we're totally surrendered and being used of the Lord, there's great joy. It's so strange to me that I found joy driving Uber, the least technical job you can possibly have on planet Earth.

I just drive, which everybody kind of does if you're an adult. And yet there's joy in that, in relating with people and having these gospel conversations.

[ 38 : 28 ] It's amazing to me that I find joy in this thing. If you don't want to truly surrender your life to Jesus, perhaps you're in Christ, but you're saying, I'm hanging on to this.

If you don't really want to be in that posture of full surrender and begin to live this selfless, self-others-oriented life, life, you will begin to be agitated with our church this year.

I think you will be bothered. God's not looking for our attendance. He wants our hearts. He wants to use His people.

And there's joy in that. He wants us to participate as bond servants, expressing our love for the Master by giving our lives away.

For whatever purposes He's called us to. Each day. Each day. And I'll end with this. And this is a confession.

[ 39 : 38 ] I have hewn out broken cisterns in my life at different times in my life. And perhaps you have as well. And you start to realize, wait a second, what's going on?

Where is that soul gladness? And I would just commend us that the greatest joy are the days when we are walking totally surrendered to our sovereign, to our ridiculously good master.

Paul's like, I could do anything, but I want to serve you, Jesus, for the rest of my days. And he did. And he understood joy despite the things that he encountered.

And there's a long list of difficulties and trials that he experienced. And yet, he understood. The secret? Be totally surrendered to your sovereign.

And I would commend us here as we begin 2025. Where are we this morning? Are we in a posture of total surrender to the Lord? Because when we get there, two things occur.

[ 40 : 41 ] We become useful, and we experience joy. And so, do you believe it? That's our individual battles this morning.

Because if we believe, then we can do. Let me pray. Let me pray. Think of the words of the psalmist this morning.

my tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right. Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.

I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight. Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me.

And Lord, I would pray that they would help us daily. And as they do, Father, would you fill us with soul gladness that defies the difficulty, the trial, the temptation of the hour or the day.

[ 41 : 57 ] And let it not be lost on us that Paul tells us the secret of joy, yes, even while in prison. Holy Spirit, we believe, would you help our unbelief in this fundamental matter of joy.

And we will give you thanks. Lord, we want to lay out this year. Father, we want this year to be an offering to you. We want to be available for you to use and to work through.

Father, we want to be people that encourage one another. we know we cannot do this alone. Help us to remind one another where joy is found as we struggle in temptation, difficulty, trial.

Give us eyes to see one another that we can encourage, that we can walk together so that we can pursue this life of total surrender to you and in it, Lord, would you fill us with a soul gladness that just defies whatever trial context we find ourselves in in the day.

We love you, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.