

“The Joy of Proclaiming”

Philippians 1:12-30

Last Sunday was a wonderful celebration as churches from across Ridge Meadows gathered at Albion Fairgrounds for “The Church at Country Fest”. It was exciting to hear testimonies of transformation from individuals who are part of [Hope For Freedom Society](#).



What is the best news you have ever received? For me, it centers around the very important people in my life...when my wife said, “I do” or when the doctor said “it’s a boy” or “it’s a girl!” There is joy when we share exciting news. Do we have such joy in sharing about the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ? Quite appropriately, the Gospel is identified as “Good News”!

Today is the third sermon in our current series “**Joy For The Journey**” surveying the epistle of Philippians. So far, we have looked at two realms of joy: the joy of **partnering** (1:1-8) and the joy of **growing** (1:9-11). You may recall that this epistle is essentially a thank you letter to the church at Philippi. But the first two themes reveal some “**prayer conditioning**”! Paul’s epistles include **prayers**:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Thanking , seeking unity, joy, peace, hope | Romans 1:8-12; 15:5-6,13,33 |
| 2. Thanking , celebrating the Spirit’s working | I Corinthians 1:4-7 |
| 3. Thanking , asking for spiritual enlightenment and insight | Ephesians 1:15-23 |
| 4. Seeking the comprehension and activity God’s power | Ephesians 3:14-21 |
| 5. Thanking , asking for growth in love, knowledge, holiness | Philippians 1:3-11 |
| 6. Thanking , seeking filling and empowering to walk well | Colossians 1:3-12 |
| 7. Asking for growth in love, and establishing in holiness | I Thessalonians 3:11-13; 5:23-24 |
| 8. Thanking , requesting strength to fulfill God’s calling | II Thessalonians 1:3,11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5 |
| 9. Worshiping God through prayer | I Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16 |



Today we consider the **joy of proclaiming**. This means sharing Jesus not as duty, but delight! This will become evident as explore Paul’s attitude as a prisoner. Dutiful Gospel proclaimers will struggle under responsibility and rejection. Joyful proclaimers of the Gospel will experience meaning and purpose, along with challenge. Your reaction might be: “Share the Gospel? Been there. Tried that!”



This summer there is yet another **Superman** movie – the fifteenth! But the Gospel message is eternally more important as a timeless tale that must be told, and told, and retold! In fact, followers of Jesus must hear and heed Gospel truth on a daily basis! If we are going to declare the Good News of Jesus joyfully, we need to embrace four perspectives – and **perspective** is one of four values in Philippians.

A. Unexpected opportunity – vv. 12-14

The first perspective is to recognize unexpected opportunities to share the Gospel. Some will be happy times, but other opportunities will be painful. Paul urged the Philippians to see “*what has happened to me*” – his imprisonment – as an opportunity for the “*advance* (προκοπε) of *the Gospel*” (v.12). The term translated “advance” or “progress” indicates blazing a new trail – think of **Simon Fraser** in 1808!

Paul did not deny his difficulties. Nor was he dismayed – “*we also rejoice in our sufferings*” (Rom 5:3). In fact, he believed he was “*in chains for Christ*”. His freedom to travel and preach was limited (Acts 28:30-31). But this was overshadowed by two realities. First, he could witness to the praetorium guard (v.13). Second, his imprisonment inspired others – offering strength and boldness to believers (v.14).

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

II Corinthians 4:10-12

In the 1970’s, **Ray Barnett**, an Irish minister, worked to free Georgi Vins, a Russian pastor imprisoned for his faith. In 1978 Barnett went to Uganda to work on a book about brutal years of dictatorship. Ray later returned to Africa and began Music For Life (**African Children’s Choir**). The suffering and perseverance of other believers gave courage and focus to the work which God had in mind for Barnett.



B. Undistracted motivation - vv. 15-18

The second perspective is that the Gospel is shared with mixed motivations. Paul knew that some preached with “goodwill” and “love” (vv.15b-16); others preached with “envy” and “strife” (v.15). Whereas Paul did not celebrate impure motives, he was not distracted by them. He did not fixate on the fact that some were malicious to him, and sadly preached Christ “*out of selfish ambition*” (v.17). Paul refused to become jealous or bitter – which distracts us from God’s call to proclaim Him! Instead, he chose to rejoice that the proclamation of Jesus was spreading (v.18). Paul’s focus was not on his personal agenda or comfort. He knew that his fulfillment is in Christ alone, not the success of ministry!

The gospel...humbles and affirms us at the same time, since, in Christ, each of us is simultaneously just, and a sinner still. At the same time, we are more flawed and sinful than we ever dared believe, yet we are more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope.... The gospel moves people to holiness and service out of grateful joy for grace, and out of love of the glory of God for who he is in himself. (**The Gospel Coalition: Foundation Documents**, www.thegospelcoalition.org, 2011, 13-14)

C. Unselfish perspective – vv. 19-26

The third perspective is hope. Believers need to reconcile the fact that God graciously work through us, but we are not indispensable. How is this hopeful? Self-centered people are not hope-filled. Consider the Christian’s privilege in being a Gospel proclaimer. When we grasp that we are not indispensable, we can relax and allow God to work through us. For Paul, this was a full, unselfish understanding. Whether he lived or died, God could work through his availability. Yet, concluding that it was better for him to remain alive, he saw himself as useful to God for the Philippians “*progress and joy in the faith*”.

Your ministry cannot give you the peace that passes understanding, but Jesus can. Your ministry cannot offer you unbroken love, but Jesus does. Your leadership position cannot give you courage in the darkness, but the Savior, who walks with you, will. Your ministry leadership does not always make you feel worthy, but the one who shed his blood for you will. Your ministry cannot satisfy your hungry soul, but the bread of life and living water can. (**Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church**, Paul Tripp, Crossway, 2020, 171

Are we holding back from full participation in Gospel proclamation? Can we say with Paul, “*for me, to live is Christ.*” To do so we must have a: “*Jesus-focused, holistically integrated life*” (James Penner).

D. Undeterred lifestyle - vv. 27-30

Last, Paul urged the perspective that one must have a Gospel lifestyle. “*Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel*” (v.27; “*worthy of the calling,*” Eph 4:1). Such a lifestyle should be undeterred by circumstance – “*whatever happens*” (v.27). Paul hoped to see them again but whether he did or not, he longed for their Gospel lifestyle to remain constant. This involves two issues.

First, Christians must stand in **unity**, contending for the faith (v.27). In a sailboat race, a crew must work in unity for their vessel to win. And if we, as God’s people stand firm as one, a great witness of the Gospel can go forward! Second, Christians must not **fear**. Paul urged the Philippians to brace for the suffering that comes with following Jesus. How? By seeing the joy of pain’s purpose, not to fear.



Conclusion

A presupposition to this passage is that Christians are called to the work of Gospel proclamation. Consequently, we must examine if we have a grasp of the Gospel. But better, does the Gospel have a grasp on us!? Our commission to be proclaimers is not informational but transformational!

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation,
a [special] people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the
excellencies [the wonderful deeds and virtues and perfections] of Him
who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

I Peter 2:9 AMPLIFIED

Ask yourself...

- Have you had an unwelcome and unexpected opportunity in your life of late?
- Has the false motivation of another distracted you from Gospel proclamation?
- Do you put your own personal agenda ahead of Gospel proclamation?
- Are you fixated on organization survival and success rather than living out the Gospel?

Remember to check out worship songs of joy – see “[Paul’s Picks](#)”