



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
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PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2

Series: Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World

Have you ever experienced that time when you felt like you knew what you wanted to do? It seemed like the right thing to do. But then what happened? It got shut down. We sometimes say God closed the door or something like that. And I'm talking about big decisions. Maybe you were thinking about starting a relationship with someone and God closed the door. Maybe you were thinking about buying a house and God closed the door somehow. Maybe you were thinking about moving to a different job and the door closed. There's a little frustration with all of that, I think, and I think that's what Paul was feeling in Acts 16. So if you have your Bible, turn to Acts 16 because in Acts 16 we have the story of Paul arriving in Philippi. But I want to take you before that. I want to take you to what's happening in Paul's life before that takes place.

Now Paul is a seasoned missionary. He's on his second missionary journey. He has a plan. When he goes into a town, he often will teach in the synagogue or he'll teach out somewhere. Then what he'll do is he'll see people come to Christ. And when people come to the Lord, a church forms. And then he moves on to the next place after being there for a little while. Sometimes he's run out of town. Sometimes he leaves voluntarily. But that's Paul's MO. And that's what he's done his whole missionary journey in the first missionary journey. Now he's in his second missionary journey and he continues to go to a city to start a church by sharing the gospel with individual people.

So I can imagine that he's pretty frustrated when we get to Acts 16. Because he's in Galatia, he wants to go down to Asia, but God shuts the door. Watch. This is what it says. *And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.* Did you catch that? It says – *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.* I just wondered, how did that happen in his life? Did he hear an audible voice where the Holy Spirit was speaking to him? I wonder what that sounded like. Or was it a dream that he had where God shut it down and shut the door? I don't know. But Paul says, “Okay, I can't do that. I guess that isn't what God wants us to do. Let's go to plan B.” But God shuts the door on plan B. Look at this. It says there – *And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.* I'm going, wait a minute, how did they do that? What did God do that shut the door?

We know that God speaks through His word. That is His primary way that He speaks to us. Any other kind of experience we have with God must be evaluated on the basis of God's word. But then God does use other ways to speak to us, doesn't He? I mean, there's some times when I have a bright idea. I just think it's the best idea straight from the Lord. I tell it to my wife and she says,

“I don't think so.” Because I think sometimes God uses people, doesn't He? You start telling your idea to someone else and they go, “I don't think so. I don't think this is what we should do.”

Now he's on this trip with Silas and Timothy. Paul, Silas, and Timothy are on this trip now. Maybe the three of them start talking and Paul says, “I have this great idea. Let's go down to Asia. I have this great idea. Let's go down to Bithynia.” And maybe they're saying, “I don't think so.” Maybe there's something happens within the group. Or maybe it's circumstances. Isn't it true that sometimes you plan to do something, you want to go somewhere, you want to move in a direction and what takes place? The circumstances don't work out and God shuts the door. You have to ask sometimes, why does He shut the door? Why is God shutting the door on evangelism? I mean, that's got to be the most important thing that we do. Right? But God's telling Paul, “No, Paul. I don't want you to do that.”

Now I believe God has something completely different for Paul than he ever thought of before. We're going to get to that in just a minute. But now God has said no twice. So what do you do when God says no twice? You go to the beach. That's what he does. It says – *So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.* That was down by the waterfront. *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia...* Now Macedonia is where he's going. That's where Philippi is. That's our city where our letter is going to be written to that we're going to be studying. This man from Macedonia in this vision, *was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”* And when Paul had seen the vision, *immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.* And yes, I think God did call them to preach the gospel to the people in Macedonia.

But God's doing something more in Paul's life. Because now I just want you to see this in the passage God is going to change Paul's whole ministry. Instead of going in and just talking to individuals and forming a church, now Paul is going to learn what family ministry is all about. He's going to go in and he's going to minister to families. For the first time in Paul's ministry that he's doing, the word ‘household’ is used.

So here he is in Troas, he's got this vision, I'm just going to give a preview of what's happening. There's a mom over there in Philippi. She's a businesswoman. She needs Jesus. She's a religious woman, but she doesn't have Jesus. She's going to get saved and her whole household is going to get saved as well. Paul's going to learn to do family ministry. There's a dad over there in Philippi. He's really invested in his job. His job is really important to him. He's a jailer. And when things don't go too well with his prisoners are getting ready to escape, he can't handle it, he's in despair, and he decides that he's going to take his own life. Very sad that he's so invested in his job, he sees no other options here and so he's going to take his life. Paul is going to minister to him and that whole household it says is going to get saved. Two families are going to be the first part of what's going to take place in the Philippian church that Paul is going to write to in the future.

Well, let me take you now into the story because Paul lands over there at Philippi. He goes down to the waterfront, down by the river, and when he's down there he sees some women and he starts teaching them about the gospel. One of the women is Lydia. I want to show you what it says in Acts 16 as we continue on. It says this about Lydia: *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.*

She was a religious person. But she didn't have Jesus. I just got to point that out. Because today if you're here and you're a religious person, but you don't have Jesus, you're missing something very important.

The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and 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 so now Paul's staying in their home, he's sharing with the young people there, the children there, the husband. I don't know who's part of the household. But Paul is learning what family ministry is all about.

Well the story continues because Paul now is out in the community and he's telling people about Jesus. There's this young girl in the story. This is very important because Paul's ministry is now is going to shift to young people. He's going to work with young people. If you're a person between the ages of 10-14, that's the age of this young girl. She's not an old girl. She's not a child. She's a young girl. She's probably between the age of 10-14 years of age. She is captivated by something in her life that's ungodly. It's taking her away from the relationship with God. She doesn't know God. In fact, she's so captivated that it's really crunching her life. Paul is going to minister to this girl.

Here's how it happens. Paul's walking around in town and this girl who's possessed by a demon... Now let me explain to you what happens here. When the real demons that exist around us are creating problems, sometimes those demons, because they know things that are going on, are able to communicate that. So that's what's happening in this girl's life. And so these demons are communicating to her and she's saying, "Listen to the gospel there. Listen to those guys who will tell you how to get saved." Paul didn't want to be advertised by someone who is demon possessed. And so he turned around and he spent some time with that girl and cast the demon out of her.

Now if you're a believer and you have Jesus Christ living in your life, you are not possessed by a demon. Okay. You can't have a demon inside of you if you're a believer of Jesus Christ. When Paul prayed over this girl, that demon was gone. Now we aren't told what happened to her. We aren't told that whether she became part of the church, whether her parents became part of the church. We don't know what happened. But we do see Paul ministering to this young lady.

You see what can happen in that situation is that the demons could say, "Hey, there's mischief going on over here," because they would know that. So people would pay these owners of this girl money in order to find the information out. So you can imagine how frustrated they would be when this girl was whole again. She was healed. She was not possessed by a demon anymore. She was freed. Well, those guys were angry. So they took Paul and Silas and they dragged them to the magistrates and the magistrates beat Paul and Silas and threw them into prison.

That's where our next family comes into play. Because the dad has a job. He's the Philippian jailer. We don't even know his name. But he's the jailer and he's got a good job. But jailers were paid well in those days, but if they lost their prisoners, they would not only lose their job, often they would lose their lives. So it was very serious business.

So the Bible tells us that the Philippian jailer took these guys and put them into the inner prison. Not just the outer prison but the inner prison, where they could definitely not escape. They had chains on their arms that were holding them to the wall. Did I tell you that the magistrates beat them and flogged them? So they're very uncomfortable sitting in the dark in this cell with some kind of barred gates that prevent them from escaping. They're trapped in there. And it's the middle of the night and it's dark. What do they do? They start praying and they start singing praises to the Lord. The other prisoners are listening to all of this and the jailer is listening to this as well. Paul's praying and thanking God for things and he's obviously rejoicing and singing. The jailer is saying to himself these guys are weird. These guys are different because they are responding differently to life circumstances than most people would respond. Most people who've been just beaten up and thrown in the dark prison would not be singing songs. There's something different about them. There's something different about their prayers. These are not those just those religiosity prayers. These are prayers that describe a real relationship, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, with God.

So the Philippian jailer is kind of intrigued by all of this, until a crisis comes into his life. It's often the crisis that takes place in our lives that shakes our world so that we start saying, "You know what, I got to make some changes in my life." That's what happened in this particular situation. Because the crisis was an earthquake. It shook his world, literally. In fact, the chains came off of the prisoners, the gates to their little cells were thrown open so they can all escape. Now this jailer, realizing that he was going to lose his job, maybe his life, decided that he would take his own life. He had nothing else to rely on. His work was what he had and he was going to lose that. So he decided he would take his life. Paul says, "Wait, wait, wait. We're all here. You don't have to do that." And shocked by the word, the Philippian jailer came in with lights and looks around and sees that they're all there. He is so surprised. Let me read it to you.

It says in Acts 16:29 – 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?"

Now, if you're here today and you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you want to listen to the answer that Paul is going to give right out of the Bible that tells you how you can get saved. Because if you're in a place where you're relying too heavily on your work, or you're like Lydia, a worshipper of God but you don't know Jesus, then you need to listen to how you can be saved. Because salvation is different than just attending church. You don't get to heaven by attending church. You get to heaven by being saved. So this personal relationship with God is so important. And the jailer knows there's something here I need, so he says, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." So here Paul's ministering to a family again. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Do you see the word *household* used again? Paul is doing family ministry. He's ministering now to two families. He's doing youth ministry. I find this so fascinating because God has done that in my life. You know, I was a pastor for thirty years before I decided that the Lord was calling me to do family ministry. Calvary Chapel Living Hope is a church that's very committed to family ministry and youth ministry. That's what we do. I just am so intrigued by what's taking place in this shift of Paul's work.

When he's going to write the book of Philippians (that we're going to read in just a moment) he talks about another household. He says, "I am so excited. I'm sharing Christ with the household of Caesar." They're even hearing the gospel. This family ministry is developing in Paul's heart and his life. I think it is where ministry should be. I think that's the essence of church is that we're not just individuals that is our target audience; we're trying to reach families. We're investing in the next generation of people who are going to serve Christ.

Well the story continues as Paul is in Philippi. Because in the morning the magistrates come and they say, "Okay, you can let them go." And Paul says, "No, no, no, no, no. We are Roman citizens. Paul and Silas. We are Roman citizens and it is against the law for you to flog us like you did out in public out there." So when the messengers went back to the magistrates, *the magistrates were alarmed*, as the Bible says, and they came personally *to appease Paul and Silas*. That's the word – *appease* them. You can imagine. "Hey, guys. Really sorry about what we did yesterday." And it says they escorted them out of the city. What a way to leave the city.

But Paul goes on now and he leaves Philippi, having only been there for a few weeks. Now he does visit there on his third missionary journey. Philippi is a Roman colony. It's colonized by Rome. It's on the north side of the Aegean Sea right next to Greece on the one side and it's right at the top. It's on the main road, shall I say. If you're going to get to Thessalonica and those other cities, you're going to have to pass through this very important city of Philippi. It's a city that has some prestige to it. It's a city right on the coast. So maybe some of the people from Rome would consider it an honor to be assigned to this space over in Philippi where they could be at this beach community or this beautiful place on the Aegean Sea. That is Philippi.

Eleven years later...because Paul is a busy guy. I mean he doesn't sit around doing a lot of writing. He's a pretty busy guy and so he finds himself going to another third missionary journey after this second missionary journey. Eventually finds himself in Rome. When he's in Rome as a slave in house arrest, not in the same kind of prison that we just talked about, but now he's in house arrest where he's very limited, but he has a guard assigned to him, maybe even chained to him every day. But he's in house. So he's able to kind of function. He needs some care and things that are going on. While he's there, he takes some time to write what we call the prison epistles. There are four of them. Philemon is one. Another one is Ephesians. A third one is Colossians. And then he writes Philippians, the book we're going to study.

Now when you think about Philippians, I want you to think thank you note. It's 104 verses. You can read it in twenty minutes. I encourage you to read it a couple times a week to gather the richness of this book. But he's writing a thank you note to the people.

Now let me give you a little backstory of what takes place. Because the people in Philippi, it's been eleven years now since this church was started in Philippi and the Philippians heard that Paul was in prison and so they are sad. Because the gospel has stopped in their mind. They're thinking, "Well the gospel can't continue if Paul is now in prison," So they're sad about that. Think sadness. They're also frustrated, maybe even a little bit angry. Because they had sent Epaphroditus (that's his name, Epaphroditus) with a gift, a financial gift to Paul. And then he gets sick. He's supposed to be going there to take care of Paul. But Paul has to take care of him. He almost dies. So they're feeling a little frustrated, probably upset that they sent Epaphroditus there. So there's this whole anger issue that they're having to address as well. And we know that they're feeling very anxious. They're feeling anxious about Paul because Paul might be killed in Rome. Maybe they're going to kill him. He's in prison, maybe they're going to kill Paul. So they're feeling anxious. They're feeling sad, they're feeling angry, and they're feeling anxious. Paul is going to address those feelings.

Now this is why it's so important because as we start studying the book of Philippians, we're going to look at those three big emotions. I believe every person must have a plan for dealing with anger, dealing with sadness and disappointment, and dealing with anxiety in their lives. We must have a plan. Paul is going to lay out that plan and he's going to alleviate their concerns.

So here's what's going to take place. He's writing a thank you note. The first purpose of this thank you note is to thank them for their gift that they had sent. Secondly, he's going to alleviate their concerns about Epaphroditus. That he's actually a soldier in the faith and that he is to be commended for his work. He's going to share a bunch of other things all around about life itself.

In fact, the key word (write this down in your book) in the book of Philippians is the word *joy*. In Greek it's spelled k-a-r-a. You use those letters. It's a Greek word, so it's Greek letters, but we'll use those letters to spell it out. K-a-r-a or sometimes ka-r-a-s. But it means joy. It means this wellspring, this wellbeing that comes out of us. Different than happiness. Now happiness is the English word and it comes from the word 'happenings.' The idea of happenings is that it's based on circumstances. If circumstances are good, then I can be happy. Joy is something completely different. It's this wellspring that comes up that energizes us with something much deeper, because it's not based on circumstances. It's based on something deeper, which we're going to see in just a moment.

The word *joy* and *rejoice* are used sixteen times in the 104 verses of Philippians. Write that down. Sixteen times being used in this passage of scripture. Because Paul knows that joy is so important. In fact, write this down too. Philippians 4:4 is the key verse which says – *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice*. What he's saying is choose joy. That's what he's saying. I've entitled this sermon series *Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World*. Because the very important things we're going to learn about our lives to choose joy is very important now for us in the same way that it was important for the Philippians as they're dealing with their emotional challenges that they're experiencing. Paul wants to care for them in the midst of that. So when we understand the importance of this book, and understand what Paul is doing here in this book, it makes a lot of sense and it's so relevant to our lives.

So let's open the book of Philippians 1:1. Philippians 1:1 says this: *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus*. Now remember, Paul and Silas and Timothy were all back there in Philippi when they started the church. Now Timothy is with Paul and it's important that Timothy is part of the person who's writing this or that Paul's acknowledging because Timothy is going to carry the letter back to the Philippians to share more about what's going on than just the 104 verses. So Timothy is going back with the letter to communicate the truth that's there. So Paul is saying that's who's writing this, and he calls themselves *servants of Christ Jesus*.

Notice who the book is written to. It's written *to all the saints*. Now a saint is someone who's accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, in our culture sometimes the word *saint* is used to refer to some people who've done good things and so they're canonized to be saints. That's a little misleading now for us as we look at the Bible, because God calls every one of us who have accepted Jesus Christ into our lives, we're saints. And you're going, "Believe me, I'm no saint." Oh yes you are. Because God doesn't look at your righteousness or your misdeeds. When you accept Jesus Christ into your life He looks at Christ's righteousness in you so He sees sainthood in you. That is a saint, he says. So you're a saint, not because of your own performance. You're a saint because of what God has done in your life, redeemed you and given you Jesus Christ. So God looks at the righteousness of Christ in your life and you can rejoice in that. It's a beautiful thing that God has done. So he's writing to *the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi*. So we want you to see this is a book written to Christians. It's written to believers. It's not written to nonbelievers. It's written to people like you and me who are part of a church.

And then he says also, *with the overseers and deacons*. This is the only book that Paul writes where he includes the leadership of the church in the salutation. He talks about leadership of the church in other books, but this is the only time when he's writing to them and he says I'm writing this to the leadership of the church too.

When Paul looks at the church and I think the way we look at the church, we see it in two completely different ways. One way that we look at the church, we see it as an organism. It is alive. And that's why it's so exciting for me to be part of a church. When I come to church, I never know what God's going to do. I never know who He's going to bring. When someone new comes to our church, I know that's going to be exciting because God brings with that person a gift that they have that's energizing the church. It's powerful. When we think about this organism, we think about the fact that it's dynamic. And then it breathes and then every church body that exists has a different personality. So we enjoy that together. It's a beautiful thing. That's looking at the church as an organism.

We can also look at the church as an organization. It has structure to it. In fact, when you think of leadership in a church, you want to think about it in three different ways. One way you think about it is Christ is the head of the church. Just like He's the head, the rest of us or the body. Christ is the head of the church. That's leadership. But leadership is like a three-legged stool. Christ is the head of the church, but the Bible also talks about pastoral leadership who has the responsibility of guarding and teaching and leading the flock. And so there's pastoral leadership. That's another way to think about structure in the life of the church. And then thirdly, every person who comes into a church has a spiritual gift. So by the very fact that God has equipped you with a gift means that you look around and you see things differently than the next person,

which means when you start initiating, you're taking leadership in the life of the church. That's what makes the church so beautiful, because people see things from different perspectives and they take initiative. Leadership takes place in the church at all three of those levels.

Paul is acknowledging here both the organism of the church and the structure of the church. I think in part he wants to make sure that everybody's thanked. Probably the leadership of the church gathered everybody together to give the money to Paul to care for him and the other supplies that they would need. They're the ones who decided to send Epaphroditus out. So he's acknowledging both of those things and so he's greeting them in this letter.

And now he's going to give us the two words that are going to launch us into the study, as we see it. These are part of a greeting. We often see greetings as Paul is starting out. But these greetings are very important. Do you see what the first word is? What is it? *Grace*. That's right. It says – *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Grace (write that down) is the word *karis*. And you should be saying to me, “Didn't I just write that down? Isn't that what joy is?” No. Joy is *kara* or *karas* sometimes. Grace is *karis*. In fact, etymology is a study of where words come from. The word *joy* actually comes out of the word *grace*. So the first word you have to understand is the word *grace*. Because out of the word *grace* comes joy. This wellspring that we have of joy comes out of an understanding of grace.

Now again, in the Bible the word *grace* has three different ways (at least) that we understand it. The first one is saving grace. It's a gift. When you get saved, it's a gift. You don't earn it. Ephesians 2:8-9 says this: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. Not of works, so that no one can boast*. In other words you can't earn your salvation; it comes by grace. The gift of God. That's what it is. It's grace. It's salvation grace and because you have salvation grace, it's so broad in your life, it just fills you up and joy can come out of that. Maybe that's what he's talking about.

There's another word that the way the word *karis* is used or *grace*, and that is to refer to spiritual gifts. *Charismata* is the word used in 1 Corinthians 12. It's a word that refers to these individual gifts that people have. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 everybody receives these grace gifts. You receive a little bit of grace and that grace empowers you to do ministry. That's another way that he refers to this word *grace*.

But I want to look at the third way that it's used and that is the 2 Corinthians 12:9 explanation of grace. It's different than the other two. This is where Paul says to God, “God, would you please take this thorn in the flesh from me? Lord, I'm going to pray that again. Lord, would you take this thorn in the flesh from me? Lord, I'm going to pray that a third time. Lord, would you take this thorn in the flesh from me?” And God says, “Nope. But *my grace is sufficient for you*.” Now, we don't know what the thorn in the flesh is. And I think that's very good. Because then it opens the door for all of us to look at our own thorns in the flesh. Maybe it's a spouse, maybe it's an annoying brother, maybe it is a coworker at work that's just a real pain, maybe it's a physical problem or financial problem. It's a thorn in the flesh. You're going, “God, would you just take this away?” And God says, “Well, actually no. I'm not going to take it away. But I'm going to give you grace.” The definition of grace in that passage is this. It's the energy to deal with my

current problems. Now God doesn't give me grace to deal with your problems. He doesn't give you grace to deal with my problems. God gives me grace to deal with my problems. He says – *My grace is sufficient for you*. What that means is that it's okay. I'm going to give you what you need in order to manage the challenges that you face in life. And therefore, you can have joy.

So this wellspring of joy really comes out of the fact that we have this understanding of God's grace that's so powerful. I hope you realize that. In fact, I think if you want to have joy you study grace. I think that's what you do. If you want to have joy in your life, you have to understand the depth of grace and all the things God has done for you and what He wants to do. That life is really beautiful that God has given to us. When we experience the gratefulness and we experience the understanding of grace, then joy is the result.

But he says – *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Now that peace is the word *eiréné*. Spell it any way you want. It's a Greek word, so you can use in English letters to transliterate it there. *Eiréné*. It's the word peace. It's such an important word in God's kingdom. In fact, I think that we have a mission every day when you get up you say to the Lord, “Lord, I know that my mission today is to have peace. And when I get off center and I start to worry and feel anxious, or I start to feel sad and discouraged about life, or I start to feel angry about other things that are going on, Lord, would you bring me back to the center so that I can experience the peace that I need in my life?” Paul's going to describe this peace in chapter 4, when we get there as *the peace that passes all understanding that will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus*. Wow.

When Jesus was praying this prayer to the Father, He's saying, “Father, I share these words with them so that their joy may be full.” God wants us to experience a fullness of joy in our life. I don't know if we can have fullness of joy unless we got the peace taken care of. Because we're upset about the anger things, and we're upset about the sadness, things were said about the anxiety things, it's really hard to have peace in your life and thus experience the joy. We're going to deal with a lot of emotions in the midst of this passage. I believe God wants to do some deeper things in us so that we can experience the fullness of joy.

When the psalmist David writes in Psalm 16:11, he says – *In your presence is fullness of joy*. Not just a little bit of joy, but fullness of joy. I want that. And I think when we understand more about God's grace, we understand more about what He has for us, the peace floods our life. The grace provides us wellspring of joy that we can experience in our lives and good things happen. But as Paul is going to say in Philippians 4:4, you got to choose it. He says – *Rejoice in the Lord always*. He doesn't say it's just going to be a result. He's going to say choose joy in your life.

So I'm going to encourage us to choose joy. Let's do that as we go through this study over the next ten weeks or so. Let's watch God work in our lives and let's experience that joy and give praise to Him and share that with others. We have a message that people in our world desperately need today. Because there's a lot of people today experiencing a whole bunch of anxiety in their lives. There's a lot of people today experiencing a whole bunch of anger in their lives. There's a whole bunch of people experiencing a lot of disappointment and sadness in their lives. We have something to offer. Paul is trying to offer that and explain to them in this thank you note we call

the book of Philippians so that they can experience joy. Sixteen times it's mentioned. The first time we're going to see it is next week when we get together. I can hardly wait.