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PHILIPPIANS 1:12-21

Series: Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World

The book of Philippians is a very emotionally transparent book. It's the most emotional book in the New Testament. That's because Paul is sharing his emotions with them, but he's also processing his emotions with them, and he's also encouraging them to process their emotions in a good way. So as we look into the book of Philippians, we're targeting specifically that aspect of it so that we can manage our emotions in our own lives.

I think if we were to take the book of Philippians or the whole writings of Paul, in fact the whole New Testament, and we were to try to understand emotions, there would be a map that goes like this with these three particular kind of emotions. One is anger. The second is sadness. And the third is anxiety.

If we were to see this on a map we see, as we talked last week in Philippians 1:7-11 about anger and love, the two are on a continuum. You can't have a lot of anger and a lot of love. It just doesn't work. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 – *Love is not easily angered*. So if you're trying to work on your anger problem that you have in your life, then you want to increase your love, the practicing of love that you do, because it squeezes out the anger. It moves it away. If you've got a lot of anger in your life, you're not going to be able to love very well. So that whole continuum is an important one.

The next one is sadness and joy. We're going to look at that today a little bit more at verses 12-18. We're going to actually go up to verse 21. But this passage that talks about this idea of sadness and rejoicing, because joy and sadness are on two opposite sides of a continuum. And so we're going to be looking at that as well.

And then anxiety and peace. We'll come to that in chapter 4 and maybe see it a little bit before then as well.

The point is that there are a lot of emotional challenges that you and I face every day. In order to deal with those emotions, we need to have a plan. I would suggest we need a plan for anger, a plan for sadness, and a plan for anxiety that includes the Lord in our lives. We're going to see today what that looks like in this middle one that has to do with sadness.

So let's go there. I'm going to just talk about sadness for a moment so you understand what it is. This is a group of emotions that include discouragement, disappointment, despair, depression that all kind of make us feel sad. So there's this group of emotions that we group under sadness that we experience every day. I mean I think that we experience sadness regularly.

Disappointment – you know you get out on the road, you see there's traffic, you go, “Oh I’m disappointed.” Or you get home from the store and you realize you've forgotten something you wanted to buy. So you're disappointed. I mean, those are small disappointments. The five-year-old who wants to ask Mom if he can have some more video time and Mom says no. That's disappointing for a five-year-old. Ten-year-old who wants to go to an event and Mom says no, we don't do those kinds of events. So he's disappointed. The 15-year-old, who expects to get a grade on his paper and that grade doesn't come through. He gets a worse grade than he thought. So he's disappointed with the grade. Those are small disappointments. They may not seem small to those people at the time. But on the bigger scale of things are small. Then there's those big things that that we experience. Like the loss of a loved one, or the loss of our health, or the loss of a job. Those are big losses.

Sadness is always a response to a loss. Keep that in mind, a loss of something we value. In fact, sadness can be used as a trigger to see what is important to us in the moment. There are some times when we have to understand, we have to process this sadness in a way that that is just godly indeed. Because I don't know. I mean I don't know if you could imagine what it feels like, but if I go back to some of my disappointments and I imagine them, my heart just pulls down. I just feel like it's hard to recover from the disappointment that we experience at times. It just draws the energy right out of you.

Because there are different kinds of losses that we experience, I don't think there's one just simple answer to that, like put on a happy face. Because some of the things are really valuable to us, and they should be, and we're grieving the loss of those things. In fact, let's look at sadness on a different continuum. Some of Paul's writings here that talk about moving sadness to joy. Because I'm going to talk about three different kinds of things that we do.

One is in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 it talks about this. When we're troubled in our hearts because of some kind of a loss we really need the comfort of God. There's just nothing else you can do except go to God for comfort. Maybe you can go to a person for comfort. I think comfort is one of the big things we give to our children. We just comfort them and love on them. But there's some times when we as God's children just need to get wrapped in His arms because we are just downright hurt because of the loss that we're experiencing. It is just so painful. We just have to come to the Lord and ask Him to wrap us up, comfort us. And He gives us that comfort. 2 Corinthians describes that a little bit more about what that comfort looks like.

The second thing I think we can do in order to move our sadness to joy is to hold life loosely. There's some times when we get our talons just gripping the things in the world. And so when something doesn't happen the way we would like, we get disappointed. There are some people that are disappointed several times a day. Every time they turn around they're experiencing some emotional upset, because they are sad about what's going on. They're disappointed with life and the things that are going on. It's hard. And so knowing how to hold life loosely is very important. That's why Colossians 3:2 says – *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things*. This idea of holding life loosely is strategic for us. So you might consider that if you find yourself continually upset by the sadness of by disappointments in life, maybe, just maybe, you're holding on to things a little too tightly. Or maybe you need the comfort of God.

But we're going to go to the third one because that's our passage today. Sometimes we just need to change our perspective because what we're looking at is not as bad as it seems. There's some times when we get looking at our little problem and we start seeing it in a myopic way, and so we start imagining how big it is. Sometimes we need a bigger perspective. But sometimes we just need to change the viewpoint, because the way we're looking at it is all negative and we really do need to change it and understand it from a different perspective. That's what Paul is going to do with the Philippians today. He wants them to understand that their sadness that they're experiencing because he's in prison is not warranted. That's what he's going to say. He's going to say, "I'm going to change your perspective, guys, so that you can understand you do not have to be sad about my being in prison here."

Let me give you some background. Paul didn't do anything wrong. So he's not in a dungeon in Rome. He is in house arrest. The reason he's in house arrest is because he was going to get killed in Jerusalem by the authorities there. And so he appealed to Caesar. He pulled his citizen card out and he says, "Hey, I am a citizen of Rome. I have the ability to appeal to Caesar." And they said okay. It's like when they come in and you say, "I want to talk to my lawyer," then they stop talking to you because now you pulled out the lawyer card. Well, that's what he's saying. He's saying, "I'm a citizen, I want to go to Rome. And I want to stand there before Caesar. That's where my trial is going to be." Well, it takes two years of paperwork and plans to get Paul from Jerusalem to Rome. Two years, a shipwreck and all kinds of other things that happened on the way to get him there. Finally he gets there and now he's in house arrest there for two more years. That's four years of his life that he's not spending time going around to all these churches and starting churches and witnessing. In fact, Romans 15 tells us that he had plans to go to Spain. It doesn't look like I'm going to get to Spain, he's saying to himself. I'm stuck here for four years in the midst of this kind of captivity that I have.

When the Philippians heard about this, they felt like, wow, we are so sad, because the missionary work of Paul has ended. Oh, it's so disappointing because he was doing so well, starting all these churches, and now he can't do anything with the gospel. He's just trapped there in house arrest in Rome. So they're sad about that.

So as we go into our passage, notice what Paul says, because he wants them to know something. He says – "*I want you to know, brothers...*" And what he's saying is I'm going to change your perspective. There's things that we need to know and when we know them, it changes the way we look at our current bad things that are disappointing in our lives. We can look at them differently because we know something different. You know what the main thing is that he's going to tell them? He's going to tell them God's in charge, God is sovereign, God's in control of the details. When you really believe that, and you apply that to the disappointments of life, they tend to dissipate a little bit. God's in control. So Paul is saying, "I want you to know something, brothers. When I tell you this, it's going to change the way you look at your disappointments. You're not going to have to be on this roller coaster anymore of emotional ups and downs. You're not going to have to be so upset about life that doesn't go your way. You're not going to have to worry about me in prison here because it's not as bad as you think. Let me help you understand this."

He says – *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.* Advance the gospel, you say. Well, how in the world could he advance the gospel when he's in prison? And this is where their eyes light up. I imagine as they're reading this they're going, "Oh, really? It didn't occur to me that he's advancing the gospel. It occurs that we're all retreating here, not advancing. I want to know more," I think is what the people are saying. What does it mean to advance the gospel? So Paul's going to describe how the gospel is being advanced in Rome while he's there.

It says in verse 13 – *so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.* Let's underline that part *imperial guard*. The imperial guard is a Praetorian Guard.

Now let me explain to you how this prison kind of thing was going for Paul. You see, Paul was in house arrest. He wasn't in a dungeon. But he was confined to this nice house. It wasn't a bad house. But he was limited and he had to pay for all of the expenses associated with it while he waited for trial. Thus the Philippians had sent this financial gift for him. And in order to be in house arrest in our country, if you're in house arrest, they give you an ankle bracelet that you wear that's electronically connected to something so that they know when you escaped. Well Paul was also wearing an ankle bracelet, but it wasn't electronically set. It had a chain on it and about ten feet further on the other end of the chain was a Praetorian Guard, an imperial guard. These guards would rotate every six hours. So he would see four of these guards every day. Now you can imagine what that looked like and how the gospel was advancing throughout the whole imperial guard. They would rotate around and these guards would also go to other stations, guarding other important other important people, including Caesar's whole household. How did Paul qualify to have an elite guard attached him? Well, he's a Roman citizen. He's not guilty of anything yet. He's getting ready for trial and so he's qualified to have this Praetorian Guard guarding him. But he has the same guys. These guys would rotate into the palace and so on.

The interesting thing is at the end, if you look at your Bibles to the end of Philippians 4 the very last verses Paul says – *I want to greet you from (this person, this person) from the saints that are a part of Caesar's household.* That even though there are some who became believers of Caesar's household. How did they become believers? Because the guards are rotating around. And these guards when they're attached to Paul, well, you can imagine what that's like. Who do you think was in prison? Paul or the guards? They were listening to Paul talk about all kinds of things.

Timothy was there. He's going to be this young pastor. So Paul has the seminary going there with the young pastor trying to help him understand everything that's involved in the gospel and how to share it properly with people. So you've got these praetorian guards listening to Timothy being educated in these ways.

You've got Epaphroditus, the guy who brought the message and the financial gift from Philippi, over to Rome, and he's interacting with them. We also are going to see that there are other brothers that have come to visit him from Rome and in the church at Rome. And they're also experiencing this. You can imagine Paul telling you stories about the shipwreck or about him being knocked off his horse and Jesus revealing Himself to him. So Paul says in these words – *It has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment*

is for Christ. This imprisonment is not for me to get ahead. It's not for me to start to be on trial. This imprisonment I am in right now is about Jesus Christ.

Now I have to pause there because there's a lot of people who feel themselves so confined by their life, they feel like they're in prison in a job they don't like, or because of the health concerns they have and their limitations, or the family life that they have. They're not happy with. So there's these what might appear to be or feel like a prison sometimes. And Paul, his whole viewpoint was to say, I don't have to be disappointed in those things. Because my imprisonment is for Christ. Christ is going to be the central theme of Paul's life. Because of that, he doesn't have to experience disappointment. And he's trying to tell his Philippian readers the same thing. Of course we're listening in on that, so that we too can look at our lives and say, "I'm in this job for Jesus. I'm in this house for Jesus, I'm in this broken down car for Jesus." Whatever it is that you have in your life that confines you, it is for Christ that you're imprisoned in that. That's what he's saying. So when you change your perspective, it takes on this new dimension. So that now he's going to sad, rejoice. We're coming to that in a moment, but he's making this decision to rejoice.

See, I think one of the things that frees us from sadness and disappointment to enjoyment or joy itself is the recognition that God's in charge and the choice to put ourselves under the lordship of Jesus Christ. That everything I'm doing is about Jesus. It's not about anything else here. It's about Christ. That's what Paul is saying here. And so of course, the whole imperial guard now has heard about this is what he's saying.

Just one point. When your expectations are not met...and that that's the issue here with Paul. He had expectations that he would go to Spain and start churches, and his expectations had to change. It's our expectations that sometimes get us in trouble. We have expectations about our mate or wife or husband, about what they should do. "If you would do this, then I would know you love me" kind of thing, you know. So we have these expectations and when those expectations aren't met, we feel disappointed in our lives. Oh we have to be really careful about our expectations because they get us into trouble.

So Paul is saying look, when this whole imperial guard is learning about this... Because here's one of the realities. Keep this in mind. When your expectations change, often your audience changes as well. Does that make sense? I mean, that's what happened him. His audience has changed. He's now got the whole Praetorian Guard instead of all the cities that he visits. But he still has the same message. Now if you get sick, I'm going to guarantee you, you're going to have a new audience to talk to about Jesus Christ. You're going to have caregivers and you're going to have nurses and you're going to have people on the internet you're checking in with. Your life's going to change. You have a different audience. I guarantee if you lose your job, you're going to have a different audience when you get that new job. Sometimes God gives us a new audience in the sense of when our expectations aren't met and we're disappointed about something, maybe we need just to realize that hey look, God's given me a new audience here. That's what Paul has been with the Praetorian Guard and the people that he's ministering to there.

But I want you to see there's always a second audience. Hang with me here. The audience that he has is the Praetorian Guard, Caesar's household and all those people. But there's a second

audience that's over here watching and listening. Let's read about them. He says in verse 14 – *And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* That's the second audience. Keep this in mind. Someone starts to argue with you or wants to fight with you or something like that. And so you enter into the argument. You got to realize there are other people watching and they're the most important people, probably. Because you're probably not going to win the argument with this person you're arguing with, but the other people that are watching are learning from you. They're watching what's going on. That's what's happening in Paul's life. There's always a second audience of people that are watching that sometimes we forget about. Because we get so engrossed in the argument with this person, we forget that there are others around who are watching. Like children. Children are watching what we're doing. They're the second audience many times and we must be careful about what we're doing because kids are watching.

In this case, it's the brothers. He's saying *most of the brothers* (notice that) *having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* People are watching Paul, they're becoming more bold. Guys, you don't have to be disappointed about this. There's good news here. The gospel is advancing not only among the nonbelievers, but there's edification going in the church. There's evangelism and edification taking place. This is great. Don't be so sad about this.

Are you hearing what he's doing here? He's changing their perspective. We need to take that message ourselves and ask ourselves the question – Lord, what are you doing here? Sometimes we don't know. And so we change our perspective by faith. And we say, “Okay, God. I don't know what you're doing. But I'm going to trust you and not be disappointed about the situation. I'm going forward here.”

Now, we got to take a pause here because of the next verses. So let's go to the next slide here, because we're going to talk about these brothers who are preaching *the word without fear.* Because some of them are being selfish in their preaching. I don't know. Does that sound weird to you? Does it sound weird to you that a preacher could be selfish? You know, we preachers are human. And there can be a tendency among us preachers sometimes to compare ourselves with other preachers. You know how we do that. We want to see how big the following is. Well my church is bigger than your church kind of thing. Or my group that's listening to me is bigger than the group listening to you. We as humans can do that. I of course never do that. But there are people here in this passage who are doing that. Notice what he's saying how selfish they are. The word selfish is used here. That's why I'm saying it.

He says – *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry.* That's the idea of competition. Rivalry is this competition. “I've got more people listening to me preach than you have, Paul.” Or “look at me. I'm out here and I have the freedom to go around and talk to people about Jesus. You're stuck in that house over there.” You hear the kind of the competition that's existing in that situation, which would be disappointing. I can imagine that would be disappointing for Paul, when he's just trying to preach the gospel and other people are trying to put him down because he's stuck in prison, chained to a guard. “Well he probably did something wrong. That's why he's there.” You know those kinds of comments are hurtful to Paul, I'm sure.

Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter (those with the goodwill) do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. There's a right way to think about ministry, that we're part of a defense of the gospel. It's about the love that we share together and we're out there sharing that love with others.

I've just got to say, I really appreciate the brothers in our community that are pastoring other churches that have this kind of an attitude. Dan Greco is probably at the top of my list. He pastors Lifetree Church. And Dan is one of those guys that is so gracious, non-competitive. You know we're in this together. I really like him. 217 Church and Josh and the guys over there, you know, they're non-competitive. There's a sense of we're in this together. We're serving the Lord. GraceWay Bible Church, Don Schwing is just such a guy. They don't have a pastor right now. But Don is the executive pastor there. And he's just a sweet guy, non-competitive and just embraces this relational kind of we're in this together. I love that. That's the guys out of goodwill.

But notice the former. Verse 17 – *The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition.* Can you imagine preaching for your own benefit? You see, I just got to say this. Sometimes preachers preach because they like to hear themselves talk. Preachers preach because they want their ego to go up. Sometimes preachers preach because they want to see people come around and listen to them. That's what he's talking about here. *Selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.* “Oh Paul, you're probably guilty of something. That's why you're there.” And so there's this kind of negativity. I don't know if you feel that, but there can be a real disappointment when that kind of stuff takes place. How's Paul going to respond to that?

Well let's look and see how he responds in the next verses. It says – *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.* Do you see what he's saying? I'm not going to get caught up on these guys' personal issues. The fact is that sometimes a selfish preacher leads someone to the Lord. That's what he's saying. And so I'm not going to get caught up in that stuff. The reality is, God's going to take care of that guy in his motives, he says, but Christ is being preached and that's the perspective I want to have.

Now I don't know about you, but as you look at life, there's some things that disappoint you and things that disappoint me. Maybe if we change our perspective, then we'll be able to rejoice. We're freed from those expectations of the past or the expectations of the things around us, and we're freed up then to rejoice. And so that's why Paul says that. *And in that I rejoice.*

Now the word *rejoice* is this word *joy* that we're looking at sixteen times in the book. It has to do with a sense of wellbeing that flow outflows from us. Joy is this outflow of wellbeing. There's this...I don't know how to explain this in a real illustrative way, but just imagine just this freedom. The freedom you have to enjoy life. That's what he's talking about. I'm choosing to have that. I'm choosing not to be focused on this other stuff because I'm changing my perspective so that I can enjoy the Lord, I can enjoy life, I can experience joy. And he repeats it. Notice he says – *And in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.* I'm choosing joy is what he's saying. Wow.

For I know that your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will turn out for my deliverance. The prayers. He says here's some things that are helping me toward this deliverance that God is going to do in my life. I'm praying for this deliverance and I know you're praying too.

Prayer is this very powerful thing that frees us up to experience joy. It's this powerful thing that equips us just to come into God's power is what it does.

We have a prayer meeting that meets on Monday nights. And they meet other times too, but one of the times they meet is Monday night. So Monday evening, I get a call or a text from Peter. He's got to take his mom. It looks like she's having a stroke. She's going into hospital. Oh boy. Okay, shoot that message right over to Sue. "Sue, this is what's happening. Would you guys be praying about this?" A few minutes later. Who's the other second person? Who else did I send it to? I know I'm putting you on the spot. There's someone else whose mom... Oh it was Cindy. She's out there teaching our children right now. But it was Cindy saying my mom's having trouble. I'm taking her to the hospital. So okay. Shoot that over to Sue. So Sue can be praying. And then the Robbins family. You know in their family the dad was feeling depression. They had him go to the hospital. Shoot that one over to Sue. Okay, this is on Monday night. By Tuesday morning all three of them were home. I'm going wow, praise the Lord. The power of prayer. We've just got to keep that in mind because it allows us to tap into the power of God through prayer. That's just this week's prayers happening on Monday night. If you have a prayer need in the moment, send it to us at family@takejesushome.com It'll get zapped over to our prayer team, because you need prayer in the moment. We will do that right away. The power of prayer in the moment.

He says – *For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance.* So you're thinking probably deliverance. Oh he hopes that he's going to be out of jail and back to evangelism or sharing, maybe going to Spain. No. Watch. He realized he might die because he's going to trial. Deliverance here is not about escaping prison and going on with his life. Deliverance is about not being ashamed of the gospel. His perspective is not on whether he lives or dies. His perspective is on the gospel itself. What an amazing man to have this sense of value that the most important thing in my life is Jesus Christ.

Let me read it to you. It says – *Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* He actually might die. I would say that's kind of disappointing. But it's a little late after the fact, after you die to be disappointed about that. But just this fact that he's moving toward life or death, he's saying it's okay. Because if I live, I can continue to serve the Lord. If I die, I'm going to be with Him. It's okay. Christ is the most important thing in my life. And so then he makes this very powerful statement. He says – *For me to live as Christ, and to die is gain.* Wow.

I just think that some of the disappointments that we have in our life probably need a little perspective. If we recognize that Christ is the most important thing, it lifts us from that despair, discouragement, or whatever it is into the ability to be freed up to rejoice. I think we ought to look at the sadness that we experience sometimes as a trigger that says uh oh, check out your value system. Maybe there's something you're valuing right now that needs to be addressed. And so we then make the adjustment. And when we do, our values turn to Jesus Christ Himself.

You know as I look at this whole subject of sadness, I know one of the whole issues is depression. I'm not talking about the depression that comes when you have the flu. You know

when you get sick and so you feel depressed. I'm not talking about a biological depression. Let's talk about a spiritual depression. Because I'm convinced that every nonbeliever experiences a spiritual depression because they don't know Jesus Christ. Now you may see some people that are nonbelievers and they look like they're having a grand old time. They look very happy. They have all kinds of good things going on in their lives. But I want you to know that if they don't know Jesus Christ, they're not maximizing the joy that they could have. They have a spiritual depression. Because their sin is not addressed, the maximum amount of joy they're not experiencing. It's a spiritual depression. The sad thing is I think there's some Christians who have spiritual depression because their values still are tied to this world somehow. And so they really need to move themselves to a place where they're freed up to rejoice and enjoy the Lord.

I don't want to be spiritually depressed. But it's hard. I don't know if it's hard for you. But it's hard to look in our world today and see all the stuff that's going on. I don't care where you look. You can pick your place you want to look, okay, but there's all kinds of bad stuff going on in our world today. We look at those things and it doesn't kind of meet our expectations. It's so disappointing to see this happen, or this happen, or this thing going on. And when those things take place, we have to ask ourselves some real important questions if those things are controlling our emotions. Where am I putting my values?

Because Paul is saying – *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. Paul is saying, Philippians, you don't have to be sad about me being here in this imprisonment because the advance of the gospel is taking place. Wow. I would suggest that if we have that change of perspective, like Paul is suggesting here to the Philippians, we too can experience this I will rejoice. I will experience the joyful vitality that God wants me to enjoy in my life. That's really what Paul's message is here. This idea of sadness is real and I think some of our sadness is so genuine. I'm in no way suggesting that the sadness we experience is out of line sometimes because we're really sad because of a loss in our lives. In those cases, we really need the comfort God provides. Sometimes we need to just hold life more loosely so that we aren't so tied to earthly things. But there's sometimes we just need to change our perspective. And when we do, we can experience joy or at least we're freed up to choose joy in our lives in a way that will make today a different day. Rejoice in today.

Why don't you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray that you would just use your words here in this passage or Paul's talking to the Philippians to touch our hearts. Help us evaluate our own emotions, our hearts, and the challenges we face. Lord, we want to be freed up to enjoy you and enjoy our world, enjoy life that you've created for us. Give us a passion for serving you is the most important thing in our lives. That no matter what happens, even if the audience changes, our goal really is to exalt you. We all need that and we look forward to it and we see now as we look at Paul how he could experience that joy in his life because he had that. So Lord, we turn our hearts to you, and turn our hearts over to you, and ask that you would just fill us, use us. Work in our lives, Lord. Give us the ability to share that message with other people who need it as well. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.