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PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6

Series: Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World

There's only one story about Jesus when he was a child. He was twelve years old at the time and he got separated from the group. The parents were anxious, the Bible said, and so they go and they find him. And here's what Jesus said. He said to them, *"Why are you looking for me? Don't you know that I need to be about my Father's business?"* Well that's interesting. Because Jesus had two different roles that He played in, I think like us too. He was a son, but He's also about His Father's business, the family business. He's about the family business and He's a son at the same time. You know, I would suggest that we also have those different kinds of roles in our life. When you introduce yourself to someone, what do you say? I'm an accountant, or I'm a lawyer, or I'm an engineer. I think those are things that we do. We tell people what our occupation is. But we have a vocation that's bigger than that that helps people understand who we are. And if we have opportunity, we would share with them, "Oh my real passion in life is to serve Jesus." Sometimes we have an opportunity to do that, sometimes not. But the point is, Jesus is saying here, I'm about my Father's business. I have another vocation here that's not just about being a son.

My dad used to enjoy being in conversations with people and try to bring evangelism right into that initial part of the conversation. He would be on an airplane flying or he'd be at a doctor's office waiting and he would say to someone, "What do you do?" They would say, "I'm an accountant or a lawyer, engineer," and he would say, "Oh, me too." That's what he always would say. "Me too." And then he'd think about a way to tie it into the gospel somehow.

Somebody says, "I'm an accountant."

"Oh," he says, "Me too."

"Oh you are?"

"Yes," he says, "I try to help people see that they can't get out of debt by themselves. They can't balance the books. They need Jesus in their lives."

Or they'd say, "I'm a lawyer."

He'd say, "Oh I'm a lawyer too."

"Oh you are?"

"Yes, I'm on the defense side. I'm always defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, help people understand what that's all about."

Or they'd say, "I'm an engineer."

He'd say, "Oh me too."

"Oh, you are? What kind of an engineer are you?"

“Well engineers fix things. And I know that there's some things in life that can't be fixed except with Jesus Christ. So let me share with you about that.”

He was continually tying this idea of occupation and vocation together. I would suggest that there's a way in which we need to view ourselves primarily in our identity as being part of the Father's business, the family business that God has established.

Jesus, later in His life, gave us His secret to success while He was on earth when they asked Him, “Why are you healing this man on the Sabbath?” and they're accusing Him in John 5. Jesus says, “The Father is working and I only work where I see the Father working.” Oh man, that is the secret to the success. Not just my success, your success. You want to work where the Father is working. That means that Calvary Chapel, I want to see where God is working. Because where God is working, that's where I want to be. You're just kind of tapping into what God's already doing somewhere. That's where the excitement is, where God is working already. If you're a dad, then you want to be working in the part of your child's life where the Lord is already working. If you're a husband or a wife, you want to participate in your mate's life in a way that God is working because then you'll have success.

So Jesus uses this idea of business and this idea of work to describe our vocation as well. He says about us – “I want you to believe in the word I sent so that you can do greater works than these.” Works in business. Now those two words we don't usually associate with the Christian life. Because business and work, they tend to be commercialized. Talk about money, you know, trying to sell something to someone. And so there's parts of those words we don't really like, but Jesus used them. I think that the idea here of this understanding our position in God as this being part of the family business is strategic.

I think we take that whole idea and we bring it now into Philippians 1:3-6. So if you have your little workbook that you can take notes in, then you can focus in on those verses. If you don't have one of those workbooks, there are some at the information table there for you to carry back and forth, leave at home and take notes in. This is a great little tool for you.

But I want to take you right into verse 5. So we're not going to start at the beginning of verses 3, 4, 5, and 6. We're going to start in verse 5. I want to show you the centerpiece first and then I'm going to show you the pieces around it.

Now do you see in verse 5 there it says – *The partnership in the gospel*. In fact, let me underline that there. *The partnership in the gospel*. That is the same as the family business. That's the same thing that Jesus is talking about when He says we're part of the work that He's doing. Because in every business, so to speak, or corporation, they have a goal. Sometimes the goal is a product. Sometimes the goal is a service. We don't have either of those in Christianity. We're just distributors. That's all we are. We're distributors of something that's already been created by the manufacturer, Jesus Christ, God Himself, and it is being passed on. It is the gospel. The gospel is what we're distributing to other people. And when we do, we don't have to service it. What we do is we give it to them, because they can go straight to the manufacturer themselves. They can go straight to God. It is the gospel. And it's an important word here, because it says we're partnership in the gospel. That's what it's talking about.

Now the gospel means good news. And it's the good news that changes a person's life. If you think back into the beginning of the story of Philippi, you'll identify with what he's saying there *from the first day until now*. Remember the first day he met Lydia. Her life was transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. A little while later he met the Philippian jailer who had his life all invested in his work and when he failed at work, he decided he was just going to give it all up. But God stepped into that situation through Paul, and the man became a Christian. It just changed his whole life. That's what the gospel does. The gospel transforms us in our lives. It's good news because it makes us different than we were before. I think we need to be in touch with the gospel and what it is continually in our lives. That is what we're distributing to others and there's this partnership that allows us to do it.

The word partnership is the word *koinonia*. Now *koinonia* is a beautiful word. I wish I could preach a series just on the word *koinonia* because it has so many different meanings in the Bible. Primarily it means fellowship. And when you think about fellowship and the church, often we think about the bagels and the yogurt and granola and coffee and tea, all the things that Annette and Rich provided today for us. We think about that as fellowship. That's our fellowship time. I think that's probably good. But it's not the food, it's the connections that we make. What we really need during that time is the intimate conversation. So the word 'intimate' is associated with the term *koinonia*. Think in terms of getting connected, meaningful conversations. Man, sometimes I have a hard time maybe engaging in meaningful conversations on Sunday morning because I'm moving around a lot. But I pray that I can learn something about someone or I get someone to share something special with me, or maybe I'll share something about my life with them. That's what *koinonia* is. That's the fellowship being talked about.

But that's not the only way it's used in the Bible. It's also used in this form as partnership. That is people working together toward a common goal. Because when they do, when people work together, as we are working in this community toward a common goal, we experience a closeness. There's an intimacy that we share that we enjoy together as we partner together and we work together. That's the partnership referred to their effect. In fact, the same word *koinonia* is used in 2 Corinthians 9 to refer to a financial gift. He says thank you for your *koinonia* that you sent me. It's money that was being sent to Paul. So even the giving that we do financially is part of a partnership that we engage in that connects us together.

The word *koinonia* is also used about communion. You know when we celebrate communion, we do it about every six weeks here, where we'll take the body and blood of Christ and participate in that through communion. The word communion is the word *koinonia* in the Bible, referring to the Lord's table we call it sometimes. Do you see that? How much is involved in that one word *koinonia*? It's about this intimacy that we experience. And so we are part of the family business. The family business is this partnership in the gospel, and as we all serve together, grow together, worship together, spend time together, there's something that takes place inside of us.

That's why it was so hard for about a month last year we couldn't meet as COVID was trying to figure itself out, knowing what to do, and we were trying to get here at the Barn. It took us about a month and when we came finally together after that month and we sang together there was crying that went on that we missed each other for that period of time. There's this connection that

we like, the fellowship. That's why we like to be here at the Barn. Not just listen to sermons on TV or listen to good praise music on the radio. We're coming together because we're connected. That's the *koinonia*, the fellowship of the gospel or the partnership in the gospel.

Now I think that's the centerpiece of this passage. That's why I wanted to start there. But now I'm going to take you to three attitudes that make the family business more effective in your life and my life. In fact, I think what Paul was saying here is that there are three attitudes that we need in our lives that are going to help us in the partnership of the gospel. No matter what you're doing in your relationship to God and His church, these three attitudes are going to be very important and I want you to see what they are. So let me bring those up, I'll just show you in the passage. I put numbers above each of them. Because the things I'm sharing with you come right out of the Bible here. I want you to see that.

Notice number one is thankfulness. Number two is joy or joyfulness. And number three is confidence. Those are the three different attitudes that will help us to be more successful as a partnership, more successful with our inner hearts, our emotions, all the things that we're dealing with. And each one of those words are in their own little context. So let's dive in and look at the three attitudes that are present in this passage.

Notice he starts by saying – *I thank my God every time I remember*. Remember. Remember has to do with memories. Before I tell you about Paul's memories, just think about your own. Because I think that sometimes our memories from the past create problems for us in the present. That there are some things about the past that have marked us and they can cause us to feel angry or sad or anxious in our life now.

If we look at Paul and you think about his time back in Philippi, there were great things that happened. In fact, he's going to say – *I thank my God every time I remember you*. In my memories of Philippi, I have great things that I think about and I'm grateful for them. I'm thankful for those things. But Paul has selective memory. Because we know that when Paul was in Philippi he cast a demon out of this girl and the businessmen were very upset with that, and they dragged him before the magistrates, and then now he's misunderstood and being mistreated. The magistrates have him beaten with rods, then they throw him into the inner part of this prison in the darkness, and he has wounds on his body because the jailer is going to kind of clean up his wounds later. It's a traumatic experience. The word 'trauma' is a good word to describe what Paul experienced back there in Philippi. But he has selective memory. Do you see that? I think it's very important for us because many of us need healing for our memory. We need healing of our memories. Because some of those memories are creating problems for us in the present, we need a selective memory.

So notice what Paul says. *I thank my God* (notice the word) *every time I remember you*. *In every prayer for all of you*. There's a lot of big words there – *every, every, and all* – to describe this thankfulness that he has. See I'm convinced that God uses the exercise of thankfulness to help heal us from our memory problems that get us into trouble. Paul had a choice. He could think about the mistreatment, the abuse, that took place in his former life in Philippi, or you can think about the things that were happening in the partnership of the gospel. That's what it was. He was

serving the Lord. He was there with Timothy and Silas, and he's with all of these people and God's doing something big there. That's what he remembers.

As I was just pondering that this week, I'm thinking there are a lot of people that have memories from the past that they're trying to overcome. I think this is a solution, this idea of gratitude. But there's also this problem that we experience with the memories we're creating in the moment. Some of you are living life right now in a way that the memories are starting to accumulate. We need to do it in a way that creates a selective memory. In other words, what are we going to come out of today with that we're going to carry ourselves forward? Because I know some of you experience terrible trauma in your lives. Trauma that involves physical pain, trauma that involves relational pain, financial trouble, job situations are terrible things. But I would suggest that what Paul would do and what we need to do is go back and think through what am I grateful for in that situation? When I come out of that and I think back on that memory, what is it that I'm thankful for? That's what he's doing. Even now in the present, as we're going through our lives and we're creating memories, we need to come out of every day with a sense of thankfulness.

I think I told you the story before about the client I had in a parenting environment. She's a physician. So I'm helping her work with her children, her and her husband. At one point, I came to this importance of gratefulness therapy that we do with children, especially children who whine and complain a lot. So if you've got a child who whines and complains a lot, they really need to be thankful and grateful for what they have. And the physician says, "Oh I was thinking you were going to talk about the principle of three".

I said, "I don't know what you mean, the principle of three."

She says, "Well in the medical profession, we know that gratitude is a powerful tool for healing in people's lives. In fact, if a person will think of three things they're grateful for every day, then that can have more power in their lives than some of the mood-altering medications that we give to them."

I go, "Whoa. That's significant." In fact, in the medical community the gratitude is one of the greatest exercises that one can do for mental health. Well, I would say that's very interesting. But I already knew that. It comes from the Bible.

So God is teaching us here through Paul's example. He says I thank God every time, in all things, every person. Wow, that's pretty big. And it's worth considering, because that's an attitude I think that God would have us to have in our lives so that our work in the family business can be more successful.

Let's go to a second attitude and that attitude is this attitude of joy. You can see it there. But it's joy. Joy is this expression or this internal sense of wellbeing that wells up out of us. Now what's under that feeding that is very important. Some people can be joyful as anything, as sunshine when the circumstances are going well. But God has a whole different plan for dealing with joy in life. It's not just about when happiness is going on, when good things are happening. There's a sense of joy that a person can experience no matter what's going on. And so Paul is essentially saying choose joy. And notice how the joy is exercised here. It's exercised through prayer. Notice it also says there – *I always pray with joy*. So here he is again with one of these big words that says *I always*. *I always pray with joy*. And what is he praying with joy? Because the very

next word is *because*. Why is he doing it? *Because of the partnership in the gospel*. You see that, right?

See, I'm convinced that these three attitudes that we're talking about are really loops that come off of the partnership of the gospel in the passage. If I were drawing it out I'd want to put the partnership of the gospel in the center and then I'd want these loops going out here to thankfulness, to joy, and the confidence because they're exercised in our hearts through the partnership in the gospel. That's what happens. So joy is one of those things that we start to develop in our lives that brings something out of us that creates this ability to be joyful, even in the midst of trials and struggles and challenges that we face. Well that's the second attitude mentioned in this passage.

The third one is this idea of confidence. You see that in a number three? Confidence. Now confidence always has the idea of trust involved. If you're self-confident, that means you trust in yourself pretty well in order to get something done. There's nothing wrong with self-confidence. There's a point at which self-confidence gets to be so strong, we don't have enough God-confidence in our lives. We must realize that the real essence of trust is being able to allow God to do His work and we're trusting in Him to do something.

Again, let's look at the context of the word *confident* here. It says – *I'm confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*. I'm going to read that again. It's such a sweet verse. You might even memorize this one because it produces inside of us a sense of wellbeing and hope and encouragement. It says – *I'm confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ*.

Notice it's God who started the work and God who is going to bring it to completion. That produces a hope for me that I'm in process. I'm not done. If I look at my own life, I see that I have a number of projects that are undone. I don't know about you, but those projects are not finished yet. I have good intentions to get back to them at times. I would love to be able to complete some of those projects that are left undone. Well all of us are undone. But God hasn't left us. He's completing us. He's working in our lives to bring us to where we need to be, this point of completion, which will happen when we see Christ. That means we're always growing. That means we're always developing. That means in your situation right now you have opportunities to work with God or allow God to work in you to do this very powerful thing. This work that He uses, the word *work in you, which you will carry on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*.

Now I want you to see in these three different attitudes we've talked about, be thankful, we've talked about be joyful, and be confident. Three attitudes, which you could find on the wall of any secular business today. Really important. You see those attitude posters. Be confident. Be joyful. Be thankful. Very important things. But if you look at the scriptures here, in each one of them I want you to see right in the passage the God factor that exists in each one.

Let's go back. Notice it says – *I thank my God*. I'm not just a thankful person, but *I thank God always* is what he's saying. Notice what he says with joy. He says – *I always pray with joy*. So

there's a sense of God being involved in his joy experience. And this confidence is that right away *God, who began a good work in you*. So there's this God factor involved in each one that we have. He's thankful, he's joyful, he's confident, and it's not just in those things themselves. I think some people say, "Just have faith. Just have faith." As if if you have faith in faith itself it's going to do something for you. I don't think so. I think your faith has to have an object. In this case, all three of these have an object of God Himself. When we experience that, that's when we experience the growth that God wants in our lives. That's when the attitudes become genuine, instead of just going out putting a smile on your face to be joyful. No. There's a depth that's involved in that because of the God factor that exists in the passage.

It's just a beautiful passage of scripture. I mean, we could just stay on here for another few hours. There's so much written richness in this passage. Paul repeats these first three in 1 Thessalonians 5 where he says – *Give thanks in all circumstances, pray continually, and be joyful always*. That's what he says in Thessalonians 5:17 and around there. Those are the words that Paul is using because he knows how valuable these things are in any one of our lives.

Now I want to take this back because, like I said, there are loops. I think what takes place in our lives that change that increased our vocation to be so powerful in our lives. I think that if you are discouraged by family, discouraged by work, discouraged by finances, then really what you want to have is this place in your life called the partnership of the gospel. Because that becomes the exercise place for the heart. It's the partnership of the gospel that allows you to find the places that you're going to be thankful for. It allows you to experience joy in a way you've never experienced joy before. It allows you to be confident God's work. So when we have this partnership of the gospel, it does something amazing to us.

I think that's part of the work of the church. When the church is doing its job... There's a lot of things I don't like about the contemporary church today. But what I find is that when we're actually being the church and doing what we're supposed to be doing as a church, great things happen and we're able to exercise these things. That's powerful. That's the kind of church I want to be a part of. A genuine, real church that's growing and serving and being the people of God, because that's where these things get exercised. That's where we're able to experience the exercise of God's grace. Sometimes someone will say, "Well do you have to go to church in order to be saved? Does a Christian really have to go to church?" I guess no. I guess you get saved by asking Jesus to come into your life. But then there's so much you're missing. You know if you had been away from the church for a while and you come back, you go, "Wow, you know, I really need this. There's something that happens within this partnership of the gospel that allows me to exercise these other attitudes and things that God wants deeper inside of me." That's what we want. I think that's what we want as a church. I think that's what God wants for us as individuals, because we're not finished yet. We're all in process and God wants to bring us to completion. But He does this by having us interact together and relate together in an effective way. The partnership of the gospel, right in the middle of this passage.

One more verse. Paul describes this in Ephesians 2:10 and he says these words: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*. Oh that's another great verse. It just describes God's desire to have us be partners in the gospel. But this verse is speaking about what He wants to do in each one of our

own hearts. We are His workmanship. He's creating us and building us to be the kind of people that He wants us to be.

I trust that God will use His Holy Spirit to put His finger on an area of your life that says, “You know, I really need to grow in this.” And then maybe there's a way that you could exercise that within the partnership of the gospel, within the fellowship of Calvary Chapel Living Hope. Maybe it's joining a small group. Maybe it's getting involved in one of the outreach opportunities we have. Maybe it's coming and working with children or setting up on Sunday, or just being here in the morning on Sunday morning to fellowship and encourage others. I don't know. I don't know what God wants to do. But I know He's doing something in each one of our lives. That's one of the beauties of God's church – that He uses it in a way that strengthens us, helps us to grow, and then empowers us to reach a community that really needs the gospel.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together. We're going to sing a song and as we do, if you'd like prayer for yourself or you'd like prayer for someone else, then come on up. We have prayer counselors up here ready to pray with you. As we come before the Lord and just ask Him to do a deeper work in our lives. Use this song as an opportunity just to listen to the Lord maybe. You don't have to sing it. If you just want to sit there and just let God speak, this is your business time with the Lord. That's why we sing the song after the sermon, so that you can take the things you've heard here and say “Yes, Lord. That's the one thing that I want to remember, I want to change, or I want to do in my life.”