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PHILIPPIANS 2:1

Series: Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World

The book of Philippians is this very transparent book where Paul opens up his heart and we get to see his own emotions. He teaches us about emotions. So we're going through the book verse by verse in an in-depth study of the book of Philippians. When we come to those passages that have to do with emotions, we're kind of digging into those a little bit more. Last week we didn't talk about emotions because the passage didn't reflect emotions. We're only doing that when we come to a passage that has to do with emotions, like today's.

I'm really grateful for today's passage because I think that sometimes emotional health... We want to be emotionally healthy, but sometimes we have a hard time with that because of the baggage that we have in our lives. Things that have happened to us in our past, the hurt, the pain. Sometimes those things become baggage. What I mean by baggage is we kind of have this backpack on and we throw them in the backpack and it weighs us down, those things from the past. Real pains. I'm talking about traumas and abandonment and wounds and abuse, things that have been very difficult. If we don't handle those in a way that allows God to work on them in our lives, they go into this backpack and we carry them around. And then they cause us to react emotionally with more drama and more intensity than we would otherwise. That's why we call it baggage. We got this baggage going on so that if your wife was supposed to pick you up at the train station and she's five minutes late, you know, you're really mad, but it's really not mad at her. You're mad in part because your parents abandoned you or something. You know, this history that you have that causes you to react in the moment.

So Paul is going to tell us today in Philippians 2:1 how to address that whole issue. I want to read verses 1-5 because I want you to see in the passage what he's saying. So let me just read those verses to you. It says – *So, which is the word 'therefore.' So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind (or attitude) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*

I wanted to read all the passage, but we're only going to look at verse 1 today. But I want you to see these verses in their context and where they're going. In order to do that, then we look at the first word in the passage, the word *so*. Now when you see this word *so*, really it's the word 'therefore' in the Bible. It's a logical connecting word that takes us back somewhere. We have to go back now to the previous words that were said, last week's sermon, so to speak, or last week's

passage is what we need to look at. Because Paul is saying because of what we talked about last week, so here's this week. That's what he's saying.

So let me just take you back. I'm not going to read it all. But I want you to see the words. I underlined a lot of the dramatic words, the words that describe this we're on a mission. We're like soldiers marching through. We're standing firm, standing firm together. We're moving forward, engaged in this conflict is what he's saying. So all of that is our mission. We're all engaged in that. We're on a mission to serve the Lord in our lives, therefore... Okay. So let's get that. We're on a mission to serve God in our lives, therefore... So we come to this *so*. And then the first part of this is all the ifs. It's not the main verb.

Let's jump to verse 2 where the main verb is. He says – *Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind*. In other words, what he's going to talk about in verse 2 is having deep, meaningful relationships. We'll talk about that more next week. He says – *Complete my joy by* and then he gives these four things about deep, meaningful relationships. So if you look at the logic here, in the end of chapter 1 he's saying because you're serving the Lord as a servant for God, therefore, you want to have deep, meaningful relationships. Because that's going to help you do it. Okay?

But before you can have deep, meaningful relationships, you need to look at verse 1. Because verse 1 is going to give us some very important precursors to that, really is emotional health. You can't have deep, meaningful relationships, unless you've dealt with this baggage that you have in your life. Otherwise, it keeps coming up in these relationships and hurting them, damaging them. So in order to have these deep, meaningful relationships, you want to have dealt with the baggage, the emotional stuff you have in your life.

So let's look at the second word. Now if you have your notebooks that I've given to you for this passage (if you don't have them, we have extras here at the back) you want to circle the word *if*. But I want you to know that in the Greek word *if* is repeated. So there's four ifs. And I put them in the passage. You can write them in in your document. If your Bible doesn't have them, just write them in, because in the Greek they're there. In English they're just assumed because in English we assume *if*. We don't say it over and over again. But here the word *if* is placed four times in verse 1.

This is not the word *if* as if 'maybe it's true and maybe it's not.' *If*, this uncertainty. The word *if* here is the word 'maybe it could be true and it is true.' So there's a certainty about it. It might be translated with the word 'since.' *Since there is any encouragement of Christ* and so on. Since. We use it with that sense in English. I might say to my wife, "If you want to grill steaks this evening, then you want to take them out of the freezer today." So the 'if' is 'since' because I know we want to cook these steaks, then we got to take them out of the freezer. Do you understand the since there? Since and it's true. Or you might say to your sons, "If you want to get on the soccer team (and I know you do), you need to call that coach and tell him you want to be on it." Do you understand the idea of since here? It's the certainty that exists there.

So what Paul is going to tell us is there's five words that are certainties in our lives that we have access to. And he's going to tell us those five words in verse 1. That's where we're going to spend

our time today is looking at those five certainties. If you have them, then you can engage in the verb here – *make my joy complete* by having these meaningful, deep relationships. So that's what he's saying here.

Let's go forward and let's look at these five different words. So now I'm zeroing in on these five words in verse 1. I'm going to actually show you the Greek for all five of these just on the next slide in just a moment. But when I see these five words as I'm studying this passage, what I'm seeing is that these are available to us. In other words, God has them and they're going to meet my needs.

I was trying to think of an illustration where it prompts me to go to God and say, “God, I need those things.” And so I use this idea of the gas station. I suggest these are five words describing the emotional gas station of God's grace. And there's five pumps at it, so to speak. I could go to any one of these pumps and I could say, “Fill it up,” and God will do that. So today when you start thinking about some of the baggage (and I know this is going to be painful for some because it's very real and very difficult and has impacted your life, maybe scarred your heart in some ways that make life rather challenging for you) then you're going to want to take these five words and understand that you can come to God and He will wrap His arms around you and He'll bring healing to you in those areas of your life that you need them so that (and I don't want to forget this because verse 2 is so that) we can have deep, meaningful relationships. Okay, this isn't just so we can feel good. This is because God wants to do this deep healing and provide meaning for us through the experience we've had so that we can go out and we can have these meaningful, deep relationships. So there's these five words and I imagine them being like a gas station with pumps.

I'm going to show you these five words in the list. These are the Greek words for each of the five. Now I want to take you through these five words because I'm confident that we need different things at different times and that's why Paul is saying since we have all of these things, you might need one more than other at any given time. Let's take advantage of these five things so that they can bless us in our lives.

The first one is translated *encouragement*. But look at the words here for a moment. Do you see the first two are really the word *comfort* and the last two are the word *compassion*? This is a hard passage to translate if you're trying to figure out what words to use because you can't say compassion twice because it's two different Greek words. You can't say comfort twice because it's two different Greek words, you see. So they picked other words to use here to try to help us understand this facet of God's grace that's waiting for us to come and receive it. We have to go to Him to hand Him our baggage and then we also have to receive this grace in the five different ways.

The first one is the word *parakaleo* made of two Greek words, *para*, which means to come alongside, and *kaleo*, which means to call. In other words to call someone alongside in order to help you. It's like you pick up the phone and you say, “I need a ride and so would you please come over in a taxi and pick me up?” Or you call and say, “I'd like to place an order. Would you have that delivered to my house.” It's this I want something called over to me to help so that I have what I need. This idea of being a helper is a strategic idea when I feel like today is just an

overwhelming day, I just can't deal with today, the emotions of today, it's too much chaos. Then God comes along and He's the helper to help us through that day. We can call on Him and He comes alongside to help us. It's just such this beautiful idea that we always have someone we can call on. It's nice to have helpers in our lives that help us. And sometimes you can call on a friend, but there's always Christ. Now if you go back to the verse, it's not just being a helper, it's this *parakaleo* in Christ. The focus is on Christ being the helper, the *parakaleo*. He's the one who comes in and He's the one who gives us what we need. He's the one who helps us in our lives. It's this relationship with Christ, in which we find the solutions to our deepest traumas and wounds in our life. We have this translated in the ESV *the encouragement in Christ*, but it's really this idea of Him coming to help us.

What's really interesting is that we see these (and some of you Bible students know this) that this word *parakaleo* is also seen in John 14:25-26. Where it says this. Jesus is speaking and He says – *All this I have spoken while I'm still with you. But the Advocate... That's the word parakaleo.* But notice, it says – *the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* The Holy Spirit also then becomes this advocate or this helper that comes along to help us in our deepest needs.

I just imagine there are times when we're just challenged in our lives. I just need help today. One mom told me today, “I am furious. My husband used up all the coffee and he didn't get any more. Now I don't have any coffee this morning and I am furious.” I'm thinking, “Wow, there's just something that might be a little over the top here. Maybe there's something going on here that needs to be addressed in this person's life.” Or maybe they just need a cup of coffee, I'm not sure. But the point is when we need a helper, where do we go? God is saying, “I have the gas station here. It's available to you. So when you're feeling overwhelmed, when you're feeling so disappointed, you don't know what to do when your heart aches, I am here to comfort you to help you.” This word *comfort* then becomes a strategic word that we can understand and appreciate in our lives. That's really what he's saying in this first word.

You can translate it, sometimes it's translated *comfort*, *parakaleo*, sometimes it's translated *helper*. In some versions sometimes it's translated *advocate*, as we saw already. I really like the idea of the word coach, because I think when Christ comes into our lives He kind of coaches us through to help us. But the point is, when we're feeling overwhelmed and that baggage is making our lives miserable, we have somewhere we can go to help us to carry the backpack. He's the helper who carries it. We can give it up to Him and allow Him to take it from us. So that's the first word *parakaleo*.

The second word, again the if or the since, is this word *parameuthion* which has to do with consoling. It's the comfort of consoling with words and actions. I just imagine someone falls down and someone else comes over. “Oh are you okay? Do you need some help? How can I help you?” I often say to parents, “One of the greatest gifts you can give to your children is to comfort them. But don't confuse that with the idea of making them comfortable.” Ah that's a big mistake sometimes.

I heard one man this week, his daughters are grown now and he says, “You know, I think we made a parenting mistake. Our girls can't handle simple things that happen that are negative.

They get all upset about these simple things. I think we made life too easy for them.” I don't think we want to make life easy for our children, but I do think we want to comfort them when life gets hard. Our job is not to make them comfortable. Our job is to train them to face the difficult challenges of life. Which means that yes, I am going to say no to you sometimes. I am going to require you to do that you do chores. I am going to have you follow through. I'm going to have you live on less. I mean we do want to help our children grow and develop strength in their lives. But in the midst of all of that there's this comfort that we provide. So comfort is this valuable tool we give to our children even though life is hard. It's the idea of words and actions.

Oh and we so much need the comfort of God. And I think that's what God does with us too. Right? He doesn't make life easy necessarily for us, but He comforts us in the midst of that. So when I'm feeling overwhelmed, when I'm feeling so disappointed with life or the challenges or the experience that just happened in my life, I can go to the Lord, and I can say, “Would you give me some of those words and actions, Lord, that I need? Would you console my heart?” So sometimes what we do is we pull out those verse cards and we read those because those are the words of God Himself that we've picked out because they help us in our area of weakness in order to experience God's words in that moment that we need right then.

Several years ago, I was helping a man stop smoking. I told him, “Yes, I will help you, but don't stop yet. Don't stop smoking until we're ready. We have to prepare for that first. Let's take thirty days. Keep smoking for thirty days, you have my permission. Let's work for thirty days to get ready for this.” And one of the things that he did was he created a pack of verse cards to replace the pack of cigarettes. So whenever he would then go to the pack of cigarettes, he would grab his verse cards, and those verse cards had words of encouragement on them that he had memorized and he was continuing to memorize that would help him in his ability to overcome his addiction. That's the picture I see here. That God wants to console us with His words and actions. And it's so comforting.

Sometimes at the end of the day, we say, “Lord, I just needed that. Thank you. Thank you for that person who talked to me. Thank you for those words from your word. Thank you for the beautiful sunset that I saw today. Lord, I just needed that.” This is the comfort of God that He wants to give to us when we find ourselves in those really difficult places where the baggage is weighing us down.

You see, Paul, in this passage is assuming these things are true. And they are true. But I don't think we can assume that we've received them. It's like there's a shower of God's grace that I like to talk about. You can say there's the shower, but I'm not getting wet because I'm not under it. We have to go to the gas pump and we have to say, “Fill it up. This is what I need in my life.” And that's the second one – *paramuthion*.

Now the third one, the fellowship of the Spirit is the word *koinonia*. Now usually when we think of *koinonia*, we think about the church. We think about the fellowship that we enjoy at church. It's obvious here. People come early, they like eating food, they like talking to each other, it's hard to call them all to order. That's fellowship. Yes, it is. And people will hang out afterwards and enjoy some fellowship as well. But this is known as fellowship with the Spirit. Hmm. That's interesting. Hanging out with the Spirit of God. Sometimes it is the church that provides that. I

leave church and I go, “I am so grateful. Because today I spent time with the Lord,” because I saw the Lord in the lives of people. So sometimes it is the church that provides this fellowship of the Spirit. But there's something even more than that that's provided here where I can just sometimes practice the discipline of silence. And just say, “God, would you just pour over me into those holes in my heart. You know those holes, Lord, where I have been burned in a place or someone has punctured a part of my heart. Lord, would you just fill that part of it with your grace. I need that.” And we just sit before the Lord and appreciate who He is. There's that fellowship with the Spirit that takes in all of that stuff we have that we can then turn over to the Lord.

You see, we have this backpack, but God has a big suitcase. We'll learn about the suitcase when we get to chapter 4 in Philippians. But God has this big suitcase and He wants to take our backpacks and throw them in the suitcase. Are we willing to let Him have those? But because sometimes what happens is the backpack becomes part of our identity. No, no. Don't take it away.

I'm reminded of that story of Jesus going near the pool and He says to the one man who'd been sick for thirty-eight years, “Do you want to get well?” Why would He say that, do you want to get well? Because I think some people don't want to get well. There's something about being sick that is attractive. That people treat me in a certain way when I have this kind of stuff. If I give that up, then it's going to change my identity. I mean it's really interesting that Jesus would even ask that question. This guy would have to actually get a job probably instead of people carrying him around all the time. He'd probably have to make his own bed instead of people carrying his bed around.

I just think, wow. I want to be there where I can experience all of what God has for me, but sometimes I really need to get rid of the backpack. And that is risky. It's change. It's hard to start thinking differently about life because our trauma or abuse or our pain or our abandonment has become so part of us that we have a hard time releasing it because it's who we are. Wow, that's pretty deep.

I think God says – *Come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* There's something very exciting about coming to Christ. Sometimes when people come to Christ, they describe it like this. They say, “I feel like a weight's been lifted off my shoulders.” This is the backpack we're talking about. The emotional draining experience that it is many times to carry around the stuff and then live with that and then meet other things in life and pull that stuff out. It's just all very complicated and difficult. Jesus says I have something more for you.

Well let's go to number four. This is my favorite Greek word in the whole Bible. You've heard me say that before. It's the word *splanchna*. I like it because I just like to say it. *Splanchna*. It's just a fun word to say. *Splanchna*. Doesn't that sound cool? I like that word. But really the depth, what it means is this from my guts, from my intestines. I just I feel this. Now this is Jesus speaking. Okay. In other words, this is coming from God. He's at the gas pump and He's saying I feel this sense of compassion. That's why it's actually translated in the ESV *affections*. But I like this idea of compassion more because it just draws out the sense of compassion out of God. And He's waiting there. It's not like I have to pry it out of His hands. He's saying, “Here, I want to

help you. My heart goes out to you and all of your pain and suffering and challenges that you're experiencing right now. My heart goes out to you, and I want to just wrap my arms around you. I just want to love you. I have compassion for you.”

Probably the greatest way that we can see this is by actually looking at how it was used with Jesus. Here's two examples. The first one is in Mark 1:40-41. Here it said that Jesus had compassion. But notice the story because it's in the story that I find myself pleading with God for His compassion. And He has that for me. This was about a leper. It says – *A leper came to him, imploring him* (not just asking Him; imploring Him) *and kneeling, said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.”* Now these next words *moved with pity* is this word *splanchna*. *Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said, “I will; be cleaned.”* You hear the motivation that Jesus has at the gas pump there. He says, “This pump. Come to this pump over here. This is the one that can help you I have, I just feel so bad for you. I want to help you to be stronger. I want to help you to deal with the emotional challenges in your heart. I want to help you with all of that. Come here.” It's just compassion, the *splanchna* of God, that's available to us to take the challenges that we experience in our own lives.

The other one is the story in Luke 7. It says – *As Jesus approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out--the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* Wow. Here's a woman who lost her husband. It shouldn't be that way. I mean these two people get married to live the rest of their lives together, but she lost her husband and that in itself is grief. But then she lost her son. That definitely should not be. And so she's grieving in her heart about this. And Jesus sees this picture, He sees this situation. Notice it says – *And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her* (here's our word *splanchna*), *his heart went out to her and he said, “Don't cry.”* And He goes on to raise this boy from the dead. Wow. Here's Jesus saying my heart goes out to you. You don't have to live with your pain alone.

There's a difference between pain and hurt. Pain is not bad. Pain is something we experience in life. And it's really our ticket to ministry because it's the pains that we've gone through that make us more compassionate, that teach us how to rely on the Lord. That's the pain. It's the hurt that's the problem. It's the hurt because the hurt is the response that we have to the pain. And we continue to carry that hurt sometimes in ways that are unproductive for our own hearts. So now when something happens and I'm disappointed that this happened, I get very disappointed because some of the disappointments I've had in the past, some of the hurts I've had.

Splanchna. A very special part of this gas station idea.

And then the last word also translated compassion is *oiktirmos*. This word really ties into grace and mercy. Is that God is compassionate and He wants to give you grace and mercy. Grace and mercy, this idea that “Lord, I just feel inadequate today.” And God says, “Okay, I got this. I'm going to give you my grace. I feel for you. I feel your pain. I want you to experience everything. I'm going to give you not only mercy, I want you to give you grace.” Oh Lord, I've sinned so many times. I just can't keep working on this. I'm going to give up. “No,” God says, “Don't give up. My mercy is there for you. My mercies are new every morning.” It's this compassion of God that He gives to us.

These five different words all represent this experience that we could have with God that says He wants to take away the challenges that we experience. If we don't deal with this stuff in the background, that Paul says since it's there, if we don't have that, if we aren't experiencing that, then it's going to be very difficult to move to verse 2. There's four things in verse 2. Then in verses 3-5 there's three more things. I couldn't put this in one sermon because you'd forget it all. Right? Five things in verse 1, four things in verse 2, three things in verses 3-5. And so I want to take those apart, I want to understand each piece of this because the key, remember, of this passage is have deep, meaningful relationships. And we can't have deep, meaningful relationships if we're carrying around this baggage in our lives.

What happens is sometimes we think, "Oh I can hardly wait to get married. Because when I get married my mate is going to solve all my problems. They're going to be my helper, they're going to give me my compassion that I need, they're going to help me with my pain and my hurt and my disappointment, and all the stuff. My baggage is going to be all gone because I have a mate. That is really dangerous, young people. I just want to tell you it's dangerous. Because if you go into marriage with an attitude that says, "My wife or my husband is going to satisfy my needs," you become demanding and your expectations then wreak havoc on your relationship. So now, if she didn't put the seat right in the car (she used your car, but she didn't put the seat back), you're going, "Well she must not love me because she didn't put the seat back." Or he didn't buy the exact brand that you wanted when he went to the store to buy you what you want. "Well, he must not love me because of that." And so we then put all these expectations and demands onto a human relationship. But there is no one human person that can satisfy all of our needs. And that's why we must have in the background here, we must have those needs met by the gas station of God's grace at these five pumps of compassion and comfort and *koinonia* and all those things that God wants to give to us.

I know that for some this is going to be a very important sermon. You're probably going to go back and listen to it several times because it needs to work itself down into the very being into your heart. You may even need to talk to someone in order to help for God to use His grace through someone else to help you release some of the stuff that's preventing you from deep, meaningful relationships.

You know I don't know when you get gas in your car. I've said this before because it's a fun question I like to ask. When is it that you decide to get gas in your car? You've heard me. I'm not even going to ask you today because you've heard me. But on Friday, I was teaching a parenting seminar in Texas. I was talking about obligation that we have in our heart. So I said, "We all get gas in our car when we need it. How do you know when to get gas? When do you decide? How many of you get gas at half a tank?" And I'm just always surprised how many people raise their hand. I would never get gas at half a tank. Like it's half full. I'm not going to get gas then. But some people that's it. We don't even talk about the people who get gas when it's three-quarters full. They got another whole set of problems. But when it gets down to about a quarter tank, that's when I like to get gas. I'm not saying it's the right thing. That's just when for me inside of me I say, "Oh I'm at a quarter tank, it's time to get gas." But I'm always surprised then because there's a lot of people who agree with me. But the biggest group of people in the world when I ask the question, "How many people wait till the light comes on?" Most everybody waits till the light comes on. Like oh that would drive me nuts.

So here I am driving from Temple, Texas to Dallas, Texas. It's a three-hour one way, three-hour back for my whole trip on Friday and Saturday. Now on Saturday I'm driving back and I don't want to stop twice to get gas in this rental car. I only want to stop once. And it passes a quarter tank. It's really starting to bother me. Okay, but I'm going to push through. I know there's some people who wait till the light flashes. I'm afraid what will happen in my life if the light starts flashing. I don't want to wait. But I'm going to wait this time because I want to get close enough to the city so I only have to buy gas once. Oh it was agonizing for me. When the light started flashing and I waited a little bit longer until I got gas. I'm going, "Whoa, I cannot live that way."

Do you know there's some people who wait till the light starts flashing in their emotional light before they give it to the Lord. The light starts flashing because now they've just lashed out at someone or they've hurt someone or they've done something. When you're getting gasoline in your car, you can wait till the light flashes. But when you need to go to the emotional gas pump of the Lord, you cannot wait that long. We need to be continually filled. Those are the words out of the Bible. Continually filled with the Holy Spirit. That means we're regularly... As soon as we see it going down a little bit, then we're continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Because that's when we're able to have what God wants – this deep, deep need met inside of our lives.

I believe that the Bible is the best psychology textbook that exists. This is the key passage on deep, meaningful relationships in the whole Bible this week and what we're going to talk about next week. This is the key passage, I hope you'll come back next week for part two of this sermon as we talk about what real meaningful, deep relationships are all about. Because they provide so much benefit for us. God wants grace to pour into our lives. They come from those relationships that help us to live our lives, as the end of chapter 1 says to be these people that stand firm for the Lord. It's all tied together here. I can hardly wait to see here what I'm going to say next week and what God's going to say to me in the midst of the study that I do this week.

But I just encourage you, you may have some work to do. And it's okay. There's some place for you to go to get that work done. It's the gas station of God's grace.

Stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we really need you. And sometimes we feel like we're doing okay. But there are other times when things start getting out of control in our lives and this stuff starts to well up. Lord, we need to be able to turn that over to you. We really need healing Lord in our lives so that we are not encumbered by the hurt from the past. Father, I know that there's some people here that are really hurting. And I ask for your grace to just pour on their hearts. We thank you for salvation that you would give it to us and we also thank you for the Holy Spirit, who works in our hearts to energize us and provide us with the growth that we need. So heal us, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.