

JOY: More than frills. Far greater than the Feels

Philippians 1:1-2

MPS The gospel of Jesus Christ produces joy that strengthens and sustains the Christian life to remain faithful.

OBJ Christians can understand joy that strengthens and sustains life by three truths.

INTRO US Overdose Deaths hit record 93,000 in pandemic last year”, (KY3 News)¹ KY3 News ran a national news story in July of this year, picked up from the Associated Press, that highlighted the record number of US deaths due to overdose, 93,000 in pandemic last year versus a previous high of 72,000, a 29% increase in one year. One part of the article stated the trajectory when it stated, “For Collin McGlashen, last year was ‘an incredibly dark time’ that began in January with the cancer death of the family’s beloved patriarch. Their father’s death sent his musician brother Jordan into a tailspin, McGlashen said. ‘Someone can be doing really well for so long and then, in a flash, deteriorate,’ he said. Then came the pandemic. Jordan lost his job. ‘It was kind of a final descent.’” The story captures the downward spiral for countless people over the last year.

I have shared that the last year has been one of the most difficult and challenging of my life. And while, by God’s grace, I have not encountered any measure of ‘final descent’, I have considered, “How much, O Lord, is too much?” In pastoral ministry, I have walked with people through deep suffering, pain, crisis, and loss who have asked similar questions. But if you asked how we have survived each day we would tell you one thing, the joy of the Lord has been our strength. **No matter how dark or heavy the day, the Lord’s joy remained as the strength of our faith.**

The last year has also held some real moments of high celebration too! Being a part of a church that ministers to one another, and especially to watch the passion with which our leaders are serving for people to reconnect is one of the greatest joys for me. **The smallest decisions and simplest expressions of serving have both produced the strongest and deepest joy in me, a joy that has been a sustaining strength in my soul.**

TRANS I begin this way to help you understand where we are going and my decision for our next series.

SERIES INTRO Today I begin a series entitled, “**JOY: More than frills. Far greater than the feels.**”, a study through Philippians, a letter written to a people living in hard times and a harsh culture. And what we will discover is that through the gospel joy proves far greater than anything crashing against the people. **“Philippians is the epistle of joy and encouragement in the midst of adverse circumstances.”²; “Paul’s personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.”³**

“Rejoice in the Lord”.^{3:1} Paul exhorts the Philippians. Sixteen times across four chapters he echoes the same exhortation. Christian joy is found as we focus and immerse our life, all our hope and confidence, in the character and nature of God. When we look to anything other than Christ as our strength in hard and heavy times, we forsake His divine power that holds us close to Him for His work to be carried out in us. And when we look to anything other than Christ as our glory and praise in good and great times, we forsake His transforming power in us by crediting glory to something or someone else. No matter how heavy and dark the burden, or high and thrilling the happiness, joy is the power that remains through it all. **When we trust to obey Jesus in every season and situation, we find that His joy is always greater and stronger.**

TRANS I want you to know the JOY of Jesus Christ IN you that is stronger and lasts longer than anything against you.

The gospel of Jesus Christ produces joy that strengthens and sustains the Christian life to remain faithful.

READ Phil 1:1-2

¹ KY3 News story, July 14, 2021. https://www.ky3.com/2021/07/14/us-overdose-deaths-hit-record-93000-pandemic-last-year/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=snd&utm_content=kytv Last Accessed 21-0831.

² Bruce Wilkerson and Kenneth Boa. Talk Thru The Bible: A Quick Guide to Help You Get More Out of the Bible. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), p408.

³ Ken Baugh. Introduction to BE Joyful: Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1974), p9.



Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil 1:1-2

Paul writes to the saints in Philippi. Acts 16:6 introduces how Paul arrived at Philippi. By prayer and discernment, Holy Spirit directed them to Macedonia through a dream.⁹⁻¹⁰ Philippi, an interesting and unique city, was conquered in the empire's spread and made into a Roman colony and military outpost. Military cities are far more diverse because people come from many different places and cultures. Philippi represented the first church when the gospel moved into what we know as Europe. There was no synagogue for Paul to preach in, so he went down to the river where he knew people were congregating. One woman whom God had already been working in, Lydia, received his message, was baptized with her whole household, and immediately started hosting them in her home. With no public meeting space, their strategy started in homes. And as LifePoint knows from Community Groups, when church moves into your house it gets deeply personal!

One day as Paul and Silas were walking to meet other believers for prayer, they were confronted by a slave girl with an evil spirit. She was such a freak show that people profited from her. Paul, highly irritated by the evil spirit, cast it out. With her "freak" now gone she was no longer profitable, and her owners had Paul and Silas beaten and thrown in prison. Acts 16:25-34 records what happened next. **READ Acts 16:25-34**

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴Then 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. **Acts 16:25-34***

TRANS This record of the Philippian jailer provides a snapshot of gospel movement into Philippi, and its impact in a person's life. We see how immediately the joy of the Lord becomes strength for the soul to trust and obey His commands.

OBJ **Three truths reveals how joy strengthens and sustains the Christian life.**

Truth 1. JOY is the power of God's presence in life.

What happens to the Philippian jailer is not a rare event, but the reality of God coming into a person's life at salvation. When a person believes in Jesus by the gospel, repenting of their sin and placing their faith in him, the Holy Spirit fills that person's life with the consummating presence of God. No one believes the gospel and is filled with Holy Spirit, but remains absent of joy! **Joy is the reality of God in life, the experiential state of why God created people, to glorify Him in relationship with Him.**

Joy is not a state of mind, it is not a feeling or emotion only, nor is it merely a sensation or experience. It is not less than any of these, but something far greater than any one of these. It is not something we get from God that we are then commanded to maintain for God. **God is our JOY; maintained by looking TO Him and trusting Him to fill us with Himself.** But the true glory of joy is that it's remaining presence in us is never a matter of maintenance. B.B. King sang, "the thrill is gone", but God's joy is never gone when His presence remains. **Joy in the life of a Christ-follower is the presence of God that is constantly new and renewing, and eternally lasting.**

APPL I titled this series [Show series title slide] **"JOY: More than Frills. Far greater than the Feels."** to intentionally confront the pseudo-substitutes that the world offers, reducing it to only an emotion or feeling, or some cheap thrill. I repeat, joy from God is not absent of these things but is so much more and so much greater! And I chose the image for this series because we are going to learn the power of God's joy in our life; that no matter what hits us, it remains when we look to Jesus. Joy is the ever-constant reality of God's presence within us, His light shining in us so He can shine through us, His strength to endure, that holds and sustains us when all the world around is dark and threatening, His strength to obey when the world



goes the other way. We often think of smiles and happiness when we speak of joy, but that is only a surface portion of joy. Joy is strength for every circumstance; gladness in the goodness of all of life with God, wisdom amidst confusion, gratitude amidst grief and soothing balm for overwhelming sorrow, pain and hardship. [Joy is our strength from God's presence within to shine the light of Christ through our lives into a dark world to declare His glorious praise.](#)

Truth 2. Joy empowers through any and every circumstance.

We will learn this truth as we walk through Philippians, but we have already seen it. Joy is not only the initial experience of believing in Jesus, but the lasting reality of walking in daily relationship with Him as well. The encounter with the jailer began, very likely, with him being one of the guards that beat Paul and Silas. Then, Paul and Silas later started praying and singing hymns in jail. Their prayers and praise in verse 25 are an expression of the same joy that the jailer would experience at his conversion in verse 34. Joy motivated their prayers and praise as a strategy for staying close to Jesus in the worst of circumstances. [The power of God at salvation that brings overflowing joy through His presence becomes the sustaining strength to seek Him and enjoy His presence amidst any circumstance.](#)

“Joy is a great motivator.”⁴ Yes, the joy of the Lord is His power for your strength in life that motivates you to seek His increasing presence at all times. At times joy looks like standing on a mountain peak with arms raised in victorious celebration. And at other times it simply means returning to the bed you didn’t want to get out of at the end of the day you didn’t want to face, but survived. That which warms our heart impresses upon us and stays with us! It draws us back and gives sustaining strength to carry on. It consumes our lives because of the comfort, strength and gladness we find in it. And this is how joy motivates. This is so telling!

When our heart is most and most regularly warmed or comforted by that which is not of Christ, we are sourcing life from something other than Christ.

APPL I have 2 address mental health in this series because it’s a primary joy attacker today. We’ve too OFTEN turned ‘mental health’ into the ‘crisis of focus’ that we treat, instead of looking for the real crisis of which it is a symptom. This is a practice rooted in a world-driven philosophy that deceives. Yes, depression and anxiety are very real, but we’ve made them desirable such that this generation feels they are missing out if they do not have them. Wrongly we *think* that because the Bible doesn’t use today’s terminology, it doesn’t have anything to say about them. From a Christian and Biblical perspective, ANYTHING that steals joy is neither of nor from God. Therefore, we seek to identify the root cause to address it, or we learn how to address in God-honoring manner. The very context for Philippians begins with a girl enslaved by a mental health crisis. The world had monetized her suffrage to profit from the freakiness. They were so dis-interested in her cure that they rioted when she was cured! When we fail to press to the root cause, we try to live in a broken world that uses these things to manipulate, control, and deceive, instead of facing them and continuing to obey that which we know God has led us, trusting that His grace will give the joy to strengthen us as we serve to accomplish His will and purpose by His ways.

JOY strengthens by shining the light of God’s truth in mind and heart to confront the lies and deceit that attack us to steal our ‘motivation to even try’. Sometimes, JOY strengthens 2 OVERCOME & ANNIHILATE the attacks. And sometimes, JOY strengthens one to PERSEVERE & ENDURE every attack, knowing they may never go away. [When our heart is filled by gospel power, whether warmed or comforted, stricken or emboldened, we source life from Christ’s power and shape it by His command for His glory.](#)

The Bible proclaims that our joy in the Lord is sufficient for any situation.

Joy to overcome our grief.

And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. Nehemiah 8:10c

Joy to fill us with more and greater gladness and pleasure than the world.

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. Psalm 4:7

Joy to move us to worship at the work of God.

⁴ Christopher Ash. [Zeal without Burnout](#). (The Good Book Company, 2016) p104.



For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. Psalm 92:4
 Joy to renew and sustain us, because Christ is always with us, working by His power in us.

“*Be joyful always*”^{1Thes5:16} is our command as Christ-followers not to “put on our happy face and fake it”, but to keep our eyes on Jesus for the power to know and do God’s will, because we are being continually filled by His presence and renewed by His power! Often our joy will include a smile, but not always. In hard and heavy times, joy is our strength to persevere and endure. In good times, depth of pleasure that reminds us Who is with us and that it is His glory in us. In times of attack and great need, our weapon to call for help and find refuge in Him. *Joy strengthens us because it is the reality of God’s presence filling us for His work and purpose.*

Truth 3. JOY only comes from God’s grace and peace.

Paul’s introductory expression to the Philippians reveals the Christian’s source of joy, grace and peace. Joy comes only from God, by His grace and peace through Jesus Christ. Every and any other emotion or feeling, experience, or strength is weak and waning, frail and fleeting. *But joy that shines through every storm and glory only comes from God’s grace and peace in Jesus Christ.*

The gospel of Jesus Christ produces joy that strengthens and sustains the Christian life to remain faithful.

CLOSE Laboring for Joy

In this season I am laboring for the joy of the Lord among the people of LifePoint. No one is excluded, but the only ones included are those who want the joy of the Lord. And so I ask us this morning to remember when the joy of our salvation came to us. *Do you remember when the grace and peace from God came to you? Every person who believes the gospel to repent of their sin and receive new life in Jesus is filled with the joy of the Lord.* If you have never received grace and peace from God, why not put your faith in Jesus today and receive His joy!

