

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

September 21, 2024

Choosing Joy

The Choices Before Us

Philippians 1:27-2:4

KEY VERSES

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel ²⁸and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, ³⁰since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.

Through this series we've been seeing how Paul is living out his faith and choosing a joyful attitude in spite of his circumstances in prison. At times when our lives feel stuck, it can be hard to see the choices that are available to us. When we feel stuck, a good place to start is to explore the choices that got us to that point. And sometimes it might help reveal that we aren't as stuck as we think we are. Paul was miraculously able to see choices available to him while in prison and to find a way to continue to live a life of meaning. **In what areas of your life have you felt stuck? Where do you feel stuck now and how can this approach help you?**

This passage itself is not difficult to comprehend, but following through with this concept is not simple. **Discuss the themes that run through this letter and how they speak to you:**

- 1) Joy and gratitude are the two main themes of Philippians, the tone of which is very different from Paul's other letters. **How must his joy and gratitude surprised his captors?**
- 2) Joy and gratitude are choices, rather than the result of external circumstances. When we don't feel joy, we usually blame outside things. **How do we actually give away power when we wait for our circumstances to line up properly?**
- 3) Joy and gratitude spring from connection to God and to community. Most of us tend to turn inward when things are hard. **When we raise our heads up to pay attention to God and others, how can we see the bigger picture of God's direction for our lives?**

The type of joy that Paul exemplifies is the presence of purpose. When our lives have meaning and we are part of a story bigger than ourselves, joy can't help but be present. If

Jesus was not even spared from this dynamic, then why should we? In Jesus' suffering, His purpose was lived out. **What do you sense God stirring up for the purpose in your life right now?**