

Journey into Joy: Resilient joy (Phil. 1:12-26)

We started 2024 with this new series on Paul's prison letter to the Philippians, "Journey into Joy":

Pastor Steve reminded us that biblical joy is always attentive to and grateful for God's goodness, but it doesn't depend upon favourable circumstances.

Last week Pastor Jeremy shared with us that we can be full of joy when God's love flows through us so that we become a conduit of his love.

This morning we will look at "Resilient Joy" in Phil. 1:12-26.

When Libby and I were walking our dog, Penny, last Monday morning in our neighbourhood where both our children attended the elementary school, there was a sudden surge of memories of their experiences in that school came to mind, e.g., our son was inspired by his Gr. 3 teacher to pick up guitar lessons, Kay was asked to design and draw on the wall in her classroom, etc. But Kay's graduation stood out most and there's a real sense of gratitude and joy. If you are curious about what happened in that graduation, connect with me after the service.

This reminded me of what I read recently in *The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled People: 15 Minute Brain Science Hacks to a More Connected and Satisfying Life*:¹

Joy is the key to emotional resilience.

Resilient joy is like "the air in the ball that lets it bounce"!

Let's learn from Paul how his resilient joy enables him to thrive, even in prison awaiting his sentence.

Resilient joy flows out of a strong trust in the outworking of God's purpose, in spite of and often through most trying circumstances.

Paul expresses joy about the advancement of the gospel; the nature of his joy is not the self-satisfied delight that everything is going his way but the settled peace that arises from his understanding that God is able to advance His world restoring mission.²

Gospel progress serves as bookends of this passage:

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to **advance (προκοπήν) the gospel ... I will continue to rejoice ...** I will continue with all of you for **your progress (προκοπήν) and joy in the faith ...** (Phil. 1:12, 25 NIV)

¹ Marcus Warner, Chris M. Coursey, *The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled People: 15 Minute Brain Science Hacks to a More Connected and Satisfying Life*.

² Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, p. 72.

Paul's imprisonment doesn't squelch his passion to carrying out his mission even when everything seems to be going south.³

Paul remains confident in and faithful to his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles/non-Jews, good, bad, or ugly - with plenty or in want, in a synagogue or in home gathering, before religious "powers that be" or political figures, in the public square or in prison - dead or alive:

Alive, I'm Christ's messenger; dead, I'm his prize. Life versus even more life! I can't lose. (1:21 *The Message*)

Paul assesses the value of whatever he does or whatever happens to him in terms of whether it aligns with God's redeeming message of His Son.

It's understandable to feel discouraged when our plans didn't work out, when we are disappointed, when malicious people make our lives difficult, when we are betrayed, misunderstood, and misrepresented, etc.

Cf. In early July 1975 someone called my dad at 5:30am and told him that I was in trouble – I had joined a gang/triad and owed a lot of money – and he hung up. My mom woke me up and Dad questioned me; I denied everything because it's not true. But I was grounded and the only place I was allowed to go was church on Sundays. The next thing I knew

³ He declares, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16) – he's appointed to preach the word whether it's season or not because it's a message of

I was on a plane with my brother to come to TO in early August; nobody knew I left home – I was angry and bitter.

I attended a citywide revival meeting and responded to God's call to give my life to serve Him. The preacher used the text in Rev. 20 about names in the book of life; it's the same passage I got scared into believing Jesus 5 yrs. ago when I was 11.

After completed high school I went to Bible College for 4 yrs. followed by another 3 in seminary. I started pastoral ministry in 1984 and the rest is history. God showed up in big ways throughout my journey – it's a redemptive story!

If you are going through tough times right now and your joy is fading, it is the time to learn from Paul.

Don't just stop in asking why but go further to consider,

What is God doing in and through the challenging circumstances?

Where and how does He show up?

How can we "synergize" or align with His rescuing purpose?

God's unshakable rescuing mission for humanity and the whole cosmos through Jesus the Messiah.

The answers to these questions might lead to some clarity and insights to God's purposes for the present moment.

Resilient joy is fuelled in knowing that people are drawn closer Jesus.

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, **it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.** And because of my chains, **most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.**

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. **But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached ... because of this I rejoice.** (Phil. 1:12-18 NIV)

⁴ Cf. Phil. 2:5-11.

⁵ Cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-7.

⁶ "What mattered to Paul was the gospel—the good news that Jesus is Lord and Caesar was not. Paul knew that this meant there is a whole new way to live that reverses the ways of the world ... Therefore ... what would make his joy complete ... was for his friends in Philippi to understand that this good news meant that there

Paul's desire to update the Philippians is not to get sympathy or to blame others, or to express anger & bitterness, or to announce his resignation.

Paul writes to encourage the Philippians to follow Christ's (and his) example⁴ – to produce joy in their hearts because God is intimately involved in the affairs of His children and He is working out in His time and His ways to draw everyone to the Father, albeit without our awareness or understanding.⁵

The whole palace guard and everyone else heard about why Paul is imprisoned and what he's saying/preaching about.

Paul's life piques the interest and curiosity of others who don't know or haven't heard about the messiah.

In and through his faithfulness Paul has become the bold and inspiring example to everyone testifying about Christ, whatever the motives.

Even those who preach the message with impure and questionable motives or selfish and spiteful intent, Paul rejoices because someone gets to hear about Jesus!⁶

was a whole new way of being and belonging. He wanted them to live into this new reality—mediated through Christ, by the Spirit—so that they could work out what God was working in them (Phil. 2:12–13)." (from "The Scandal of Leadership: Unmasking the Powers of Domination in the Church" by JR Woodward, David Fitch, Amos Yong)

He is not letting others to get him down;

he wants Christ to be lifted up

so people care drawn loser to the Saviour of the world!

The word “advance” (προκοπή) is instructive: the root word is referring to *pioneers* and *armies* – chopping down the forests or clearing away whatever impedes progress in order others can reach their destination.

So Paul is the “pioneer or advanced army” God uses to cutting through obstacles by His power.

Listen to his conviction and passion:

Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become **a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people**: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. **I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life.** (1 Cor. 9:19-23, *The Message*)

Of course, any God-honouring and lasting life change is due to the power of the Holy Spirit, but God enlists us to be the

“advanced armies” to clear any obstacles, thus playing an integral part in advancing His mission.

Don’t let this idea of an advanced army scared you; a simple testimony of how God showed up in times of need, a personal story of Jesus’ presence in the midst of trial and testing, a “surprise” of God’s intervention in crisis, a prayer answered in distress, a brave but Jesus-like response to hurtful people, etc.

This is a daily reminder on my calendar:

May I see the face of Christ in all those I meet. May all those I meet see Christ's face in me.⁷

At the end of each day, review how the Lord uses us to draw people closer to Jesus and experience the joy of the Lord.

Resilient joy is sustained by prayer power and the Spirit-enabling for a hope-shaped faithfulness.

Yes, and **I will continue to rejoice**, for I know that **through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance [in the sense of his vindication]**. I eagerly expect and hope that **I will in no way be ashamed**, but will

⁷ Cf. Len Sweet.

have sufficient courage so that now as always **Christ will be exalted** in my body, whether by life or by death. **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.** (Phil. 1:18-21 NIV)

Paul's joy is sustained by his relationship with God's people and its power is manifested in the prayer support of the Philippians.⁸

Here he underscores the soul refreshing joy that their prayer support brings into his present situation

- he's not alone but surrounded and strengthened by God's people in the invisible realm through prayers

- their prayers represent God's presence and encourage him to see his imprisonment and trials in God's perspective, i.e., to align his life in terms of the story of Jesus,

So he can replace all the physical and emotional harm done by his enemies as well as "friendly fires" with joy in the Spirit!

God's provision [**ἐπιχορηγίας – lavish resources**] of the Holy Spirit renews him every day and enables him to remain faithful until the end.⁹

⁸ Cf. Phil. 1:3-5. Paul expresses his gratefulness for their partnership in the beginning of the letter – gratitude breathes air of joy.

⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-18; 6:4-10.

¹⁰ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept

Paul's joy is powered by hope when Christ will say to him, "Well done! Good and faithful servant!" He will not surrender to any opposition or intimidation, even death – "I will in so way be ashamed." This is of particular encouragement in a culture where shame and honour are valued so significantly!¹⁰

Of course, this future honour he'll receive from Christ looks to his past/present following of Christ's suffering, i.e., not being ashamed but considering his privilege and honour in sharing in present suffering, testing and trial (cf. 2:5ff.; 3:10).

We learn from the bible that the purpose of Jesus' suffering is an evil through which God produces the greatest good for humanity and the whole cosmos. Paul's suffering is the necessary path through which he fulfills his calling.¹¹

Joy is all about relationship; resilient joy, as we learn from Paul's "joy stories", is about God's presence, provision, and power in and through the prayer support of God's people and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Joy is never about playing solo. Maybe you need to develop relationships with others in the body, and there's an

the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

¹¹ Cf. Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, p. 59. Howard Marshall describes Paul this way: "the longer he lives the more opportunity there will be for Christ to show his greatness in him." (*The Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 27.)

opportunity for you to explore joining a small group (cf. Group Launch next Sunday: register on our website, <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/smallgroups/>).

Resilient joy “is like the air in the ball that lets it bounce ... Knowing we can get back to a place of joy helps us bounce back from hard experiences ... one of the most important habits we can form is ... sharing brain-friendly ‘joy stories.’”¹²

Today we have four brothers and sisters being baptized: Scot, Isaac, Faith, and Danna. May their stories bring us joy and encourage us to “bounce” for Jesus!

¹² Marcus Warner, Chris M. Coursey , *The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled People: 15 Minute Brain Science Hacks to a More Connected and Satisfying Life*.