Disciples Church

Joy in Loneliness- Philippians 1:1-11

Week of May 10, 2017 <> Joshua Kirstine

**TEACHING NOTES**

Last week, we looked at Paul’s intro to his letter to the church in Philippi.

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

What we need to understand about Paul is that as he writes this letter he is in jail. This means he has been separated from his loved ones and is surely experiencing a great sense of loneliness.

But, as we will see today in his opening remarks, he is not experiencing great loneliness.

But, before we go there, let’s talk about loneliness and separation.

This is a very real consequence of the fall.

**1. The Bad News of Sin and Separation:**

**Read Genesis 3:1-6** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

The fall of mankind was from their disobedience to God and giving into temptation to sin.

Sin in their life meant immediate and lasting… **separation and division.**

**Read Genesis 3:7-14** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

* **They covered themselves.. hiding…insecurity… judging..**
* **They hid from God**
* **They blame each other**

As the story goes on, mankind kills each other, sells each other out, cheats on each other, takes from each other and on and on. No wonder why mankind often suffers from real loneliness… In our sin, why mess with it?

In our modern lifestyle, we have electronics to give us a constant onslaught of digital people interaction that is not real people interaction. We can watch people for days via TV and movies. We can observe others online via social media.

But in the end, we are not truly known and loved. We are lonely. We don’t reach out into others’ lives and invest into them because we are selfish and insecure.

But God had a plan to redeem that which was broken and fractured.

**Genesis 3:15**  I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

**2. The Good News of Adoption:**

**John 1:12-13** “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were *born*, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

But He chose to speak of us as *adopted* as well as being children by new *birth*. This is the most essential foundation of the practice of adoption.

**Galatians 4:4-5** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

In this, we see a beautiful picture of God’s intention for his children. For those whom he saves from eternal punishment and slavery in their sin and adopts as his very own bought with a high price, the blood of his only son Jesus Christ. In one another, we see how the love of Christ is at work in God’s people also known as the church.

The living God chose to save us into something very special… into a family! An eternal family.

A family unlike any other family. In our unity as a family, God has given us a very special relationship with ONE ANOTHER that he wants us to value dearly, to protect, to invest into and to cultivate! This blood-bought family is God’s wise solution to the horizontal loneliness problem the fall brought. This is why Paul is not broken over his physical state of separation and what otherwise would be *loneliness*.

Instead what we see are the things (gifts that God gives His people) that are enduring Paul in joy. Look with me.

**3. The Family of God**

**Philippians 1:3** I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

Paul is thankful for his blood-bought family even without their presence. That’s how blessed it is to be in the family of God.

Does your being a part of the family of God cause you to cry out with thanks to God?

It means that much to Paul. It means that much to me. Who you all are to me…

Listen how Paul takes this to another level in verse 8:

**Philippians 1:8**  For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul is speaking of a family of God where affection is greater than other relationships. It is a part of his joy and rejoicing.

It is a part of his reality.. his daily reality that gives him enduring joy.

**Does the family of God.. this church family… do this for you?**

**He says this another way in …**

**Romans 12**:**10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

This is not love one another just with deeds.. it is saying .. **have feelings for each other- desire relationship and fellowship with each other.**

The idea is that our heart knows joy when we are around each other or thinking of each other or praying for each other. Because we are family!

But the word for "love" in Romans 12:10 refers to a special kind of love. It refers to "tender affection, particularly family affection". So, what the verse is calling for is that Christians have "tender affection toward each other in family love."

This is a command for how we are to relate to each other in the body of Christ—**we are to feel an affection, a tender affection for each other.**

Also in… **1 Peter 1:22,** Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.

Here again is something much more than treating each other well. Here is something from the heart. Something earnest. Something with fervor. Something of family affection.

But I think Paul says it best in Philippians 1:8…

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

The word for "affection" is "intestines" or "inner organs." The idea is: I long for you and love you not just with an act of will power but with deep and tender affections. I miss you. I am homesick for you. I feel.

**4. Prayer & Encouragement for One Another**

**Philippians 1:4** always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

I want to break this into two parts of focus… prayer and encouragement.

**Pray for One Another**

**Ephesians 6:18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

He wants them to know of the real brotherly love he has for them and that it’s a love that drives him to CONSTANTLY/REGULARLY pray for them. This is a sweet thing right? When someone is praying for you faithfully- very sweet. Like Paul,

we are not just called to suit up and sit around. Like Paul models and commands, we are called to suit up and PRAY!- “AT ALL TIMES”.

“TO KEEP ALERT BY MAKING SUPPLICATION FOR ALL THE SAINTS”

Supplication means prayers. **Church, are you praying for all the saints. Are you praying for one another?**

Jesus models praying for his brothers, knowing the war they are in!

**Luke 22:31-32 31**“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,  that he might sift you like wheat, **32**but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

**Paul models this all the time for us. It is a part of his JOY to pray for his blood-bought family.** “always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy”

**I love Paul’s prayer in…**

**Ephesians 3:16-19**.. according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17**so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18**may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19**and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**In your prayers for yourselves and for one another are you asking for deepening…**

**eyes to see and ears to hear? An attentiveness to the gospel’s 24-7 work and power. That we too might be transformed and others around us might take on a new identity entirely from the lies and lostness of the temporary.**

**> We need to Pray for one another as an active way of loving and fighting for one another.**

**Romans 15:30** Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

The basic point of the verse is to motivate the Roman Christians to "strive" or to "struggle" or to "fight"—it's a strong word (not just pray, but strive or struggle or fight)—in prayer to God for Paul as he goes to Jerusalem with a contribution for the poor Christians of the city.

**Encourage One Another**

Both in his prayers and in writing this letter, we see Paul encouraging his family.

It is an encouragement just to know I am being prayed for.

***Hebrews 3:13*** *“Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

God commanded that his people encourage each other because he knows we need it.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus warned that “in this world you will have tribulation,” which he then followed with a much-needed encouragement: *“But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

**Romans 15:5** May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

**Hear this today: IF we are going to truly know and practice encouragement, we must first know the “God of encouragement”.**

**God cares for his people with a holy passion**. The church of Jesus Christ is the blood-bought bride of his Son, and he loves us with a minute-by-minute omnipotent care. Only in Christ do you have the care and loving engagement of **the God of encouragement.** Apart from Christ you rightly sit under the perfect, just wrath of God.

Additionally, the “God of encouragement” has given us the weapon that is designed to defeat these enemies: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

Now look at the previous verse in Romans 15:

**Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

I pray that we see the joy it is for Paul to pray for and encourage his church family. I pray that you come to know the joy that it is in your life to practice these things. Even when, like Paul, you are in a hard time and maybe feeling lonely that the ministry of prayer and encouragement is a way to stay joyful and know that you are not alone, but connected to an awesome and eternal family.

**5. Gospel Partnership**

**Philippians 1:5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Paul has been praying for them because of their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

He is acknowledging the special relationship that he has with all of his blood-bought family.

His adopted brothers and sisters share an amazing bond- an eternal bond(!)- in Jesus because of the gospel which brought them new life in Christ and true unity. From their new birth until this point in the exile journey, they are family and partners in the mission God has given them.

Do you think about other Christians this way even if you hardly know them?

That you share a partnership in Christ- a gospel partnership that is a relationship like nothing else?

**TGC connections… club brothers around the world…the missionaries we support… just random people** you meet along the way that truly love Jesus and share your purpose for living. To make much of His name and to make discipleship among the nations.

This is why the word says there is to be no divisions among you..

Because you are partners in the gospel. You are not partners in a self-serving business venture that can go bad. You are not partners in a relationship where you can break up. You are not partners on a team that has a season and then is over. You are partners in the gospel. Meaning from your new birth in Christ and for the rest of eternity we are gospel partners. Paul gets this and is reveling in it. He is so pumped by this connection and bond in the gospel and the special mission that God has set before them. He is joyful to pray for them.

Skip verse 6 as we will come back to it in a moment… and look at verse 7 with me:

**Philippians 1:7** It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Some might say it is strange you are so pumped about someone you hardly know.

They may even say, I think it is weird that your similar religious convictions create such a strong bond, but it is not religion or religious similarities, those are superficial!

What does Paul say it is: that together they are “all partakers with me of grace”.

This is why he holds them so dearly in his heart. This is why he feels this way about them.

This partaking of grace causes them to run this race together despite what they face.

Imprisonment and the defense of the gospel and the confirmation of it.

They are suffering.

But they endure..

This is what Paul means when he says in **Romans 8:31-39**

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For us to embrace being “partakers of grace” we must rightly understand grace.

Grace defined: **Unmerited favor (or an undeserved gift) given by an unobligated giver.**

Grace is a gift from God!

That He is not obligated to give (His obligation is justice, judgment, wrath).

We are not deserving to receive (We deserve his judgment, wrath).

When you get your paycheck at the end of the month, your response is not, “Wow, this is great, thank you so much, you are such a great, great boss!” **Why not?** Because you worked for that check. You earned it.

It was not a gift. It was a payment for your services that month.

**What about when the boss surprises you with an extra check in your envelope; an unexpected, unearned huge bonus? What is your response to this?** **Pure excitement! JOY, elation!**

Especially when he gives you that bonus after your work was poor and utterly underperforming that week.

**You are elated! Overjoyed!** What a generous boss you have! RIGHT?

Now, **what if you find out that he is giving you that gift based on the exceptional performance of another?**

That another employee took a pay cut on your behalf and you were given the bonus due to him.

To be clear, *he is not slighted in this. It was his willing exchange!* To turn it down is not an option.

He has sealed it on your behalf. It is irrevocable!

**Now, what is your response?** Utter, humble gratitude and joy.

The boss and he set out from the beginning to provide this for you because they knew you were utterly incapable of ever performing on the job at the level that would earn such a reward.

Oh, and by the way, it’s not a one-time bonus! It is a forever increase in your pay. Despite your performance.

As imperfect as this analogy is: **Now you are beginning to see what grace is. AMAZING GRACE!**

**It is in the gospel of grace that Paul’s JOY is grounded.**

**It is like a well springing up to eternal life despite his circumstances.**

Ok moving on. Look back at verse 6 with me…

**6. God’s faithfulness to Bring His Family Home**

**Philippians 1:6**  And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul is joyful despite his separation from normal life and loved ones in that he understands the faithfulness of God to finish what he began. Paul is joyful for he understands the saints will endure to the end and persevere to the end. WHY? Because their salvation belongs to the Lord.

Their faith is a gift from God and will endure to the end. How does he know?

Because it belongs to God. Notice what he says, “HE who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”. Therefore it is not up to you. If you are free, you are free indeed. If you are truly saved, you are saved forever. God doesn’t make a mistake in anything.

Do you remember we studied this in John chapter 6?

**John 6:37b -40** and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Here we see the beautiful doctrine known as **perseverance of the saints.**

Listen to the promises of Christ concerning the security of the saved ones as I highlight them here:

**John 6:37b** whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

They will not be cast out. God will not change his mind and reject them later. We did nothing to gain his love or acceptance. We can do nothing to lose it. We are forever his! Forever secure in his power. **When the storms rage in your life do you stand in this assurance?**

**John 6:39**.. I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

We cannot be lost. Every one of his sheep are precious in his sight.

Not only are we precious, but we will stand with him in victory. He will raise us up on the last day.

**John 6:40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Eternal life… Not eternal death and destruction.

He will finish what he started. CHURCH, this is a huge point of great joy!

Hear it again. MEMORIZE THIS ONE!

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

- **Philippians 1:6**

**Are you SURE? Do you rest on who you are in Christ no matter your circumstances?**

He will bring it all to completion. He will finish what he began in you!!!

This is why Paul endures in joy! **In what else do we have this kind of assurance and confidence as the house is raging on fire, our child is dying of cancer, our spouse abandons us for another?** Only in Jesus. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion!

Ok finally,

**7. Paul’s Prayer for His Family**

**Philippians 1:9-11** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

**9a- And it is my prayer that:**

Again, Paul loves his church family and is praying for them.

And what is his prayer for them?

**9b- your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,**

What did Jesus tell us about love?

**John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

**Mark 12:29-31** Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.

**1 John 4:19-21** We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

I could go on and on. We are to walk and talk in love. Love for one another and for our enemies.

This doesn’t mean we don’t stand on truth; for love is not love if not in truth.

Notice how he says it abounds… ***IN knowledge and discernment.***

The love of God is of God… therefore, we must know and discern what God says is loving and true.

Not just go with our gut… our instinct… because our flesh is deceitful through and self-serving through.

SO, Paul is praying that ***our love may abound more and more…***

**WHY?** Because it is the love of God that is at work in us and causing us to love others like He loves us.

**What is the purpose of this?**

**10- so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,**

So that we may approve what is excellent.  The things that honor God.

I think it is the process of discerning true faith in Jesus of a life that honors God.

**WHY?** So, we – the people of God are pure and blameless for the arrival of the Groom… Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying, this is the primary work... the work of love… of gospel testimony, the work of disciple making... raising up those who are excellent and pure and blameless as they grow in sanctification.

**WHY?** Because the Groom is coming for his bride... because this work is the greatest thing in this life that we get to do. It is the JOY of our life to make ready the bride of God for the wedding feast of our Lord.

**11a- filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ,**

Where does the power to do these things come from? NOT FROM YOURSELF!

From God… “THROUGH JESUS CHRIST”. The fruit of righteousness or the holy spirit is the result of Christ at work in us. I want the tree of my life in Christ to bear much fruit… TO be FILLED!

And ultimately, why do we do these things that Paul is praying for the church to do?

**11b- to the glory and praise of God.**