Disciples Church

Joy in Uncertainty <> Philippians 2:19-30

Week of June 28, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Philippians 2:19-30**

**19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.**

 **25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.**

**Intro**

Tonight’s passage is one that at first may seem like a very matter-of-fact passage without a lot of the deep and bountiful flare found in many other parts of this letter. While some passages are beautifully poetic or blatantly practical to our own personal circumstances, we need to remember that ALL Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, reproving, and training in righteousness. My hope and prayer is that we would leave tonight with a deeper appreciation not only for this passage, but for the entire word of God. I’m looking forward to digging into it with you.

Let’s pray.

One thing to notice about this passage is that although it is in the middle of the letter and certainly should not be considered a random rabbit trail by Paul, it is not necessarily connected to the previous and the following passages. What I mean by that is the basic information being communicated can stand by itself in that it is specific news he is communicating that does not depend on what is said previously or later in order to be understood.

So, while the specific details of this passage are meant specifically for the Philippian church at that time and not us (don’t expect to see Timothy show up any time soon), there is much for us to benefit from these words, and God certainly intends for them to.

I’ve titled tonight’s lesson “Joy in Uncertainty,” and that is certainly something that all of us can relate to.

As we’ve been reminded weekly, Paul is writing to the Philippian church from prison. The suffering that he is enduring is real. He is not saying that his circumstances are causing him to rejoice, but that he is able to rejoice in spite of his circumstances.

He continues to display that in numerous ways throughout his letter.

He begins with some specific detail of his imprisonment in chapter 1, but it segues into a joyful promotion of the gospel and a worship-like focus on the worthiness of Christ. It is very God-centered and has what I would call a spiritual tone to it.

In verse 19 of chapter 2, Paul gets very practical, if you will. As we work our way through this passage, my hope is that we would be able to see that behind the specific/practical details of these words is a very helpful application of what Paul is trying to communicate throughout the letter.

**Philippians 2: 19** I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

The heart behind these words is Paul’s love for the Philippian church. He begins this passage by saying, “I hope in the Lord Jesus.” Let’s stop there for a minute. This is really important for us not to pass over. We have become so inundated with bumper sticker slogans and Christian catch phrases in our culture that we can miss the depth of what the words are saying sometimes.

When Paul says he hopes, he is referring to his desire to send Timothy to them soon. It is something he wants to do. He says, “so that I too may be cheered by news of you.” He has a desire to be cheered by news of them, to hear how God is at work in them, and he hopes to send Timothy for that purpose. But it’s not simply a hope in the sense that he would like it to happen…it’s a hope in the Lord. This is so much more than just a wish. There is confidence in this hope. It is trusting in the Lord, just as it says in:

**Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

and do not lean on your own understanding.

He is grounding his love for the Philippians in God’s love for them. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart, and a second is like it: to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to love others because of our love for God, but in second priority to our love for God. Only when we love God more than others can we truly love them as God loves them. When our love for others is disconnected from our love for God, it is not true love. It will become an idolatrous affection that is meant to serve our own desires. When we love from an overflow of our love for God, we will trust that His love for us and for those that we love is far superior than our own. That is what frees us to love others fearlessly. No fear of loss, no fear of heart break, no fear of rejection, no fear of death. Instead, being grounded in the knowledge of the gospel, in Christ’s willingness to suffer all of these things in our place, we are empowered to put the love of God on display by our willingness to endure the loss of these things for His glory.

As I thought about this, I couldn’t help but think of a situation going on right here in our church family that we have all been blessed by. I believe all of you know about the Kirstine’s foster care and their desire to adopt Piper, who has been in their home now for over two years. Since they started doing foster care, they have had several dozen children come through their home, and they have given their hearts to every one of them. It has never been easy to say goodbye, as these kids go back into homes and families that are often times nowhere near to what you would call a healthy, loving environment. True love requires a willingness to let your heart be broken. An unwillingness to be hurt by the process of loving a child and having to say goodbye really doesn’t come from a heart of selflessness but from a heart of selfishness. That being said, you can imagine how much more difficult it becomes as the family bond is strengthened with extended time together. The process of making Piper a legal member of their family has been an incredibly frustrating one; it has been wrought with uncertainty. Every time it seems that the last technicality is being resolved, a new one seems to pop up. By every other measurement that matters, Piper is a member of the Kirstine family. We have all witnessed and been drawn in to the love they have for her. It would be easy to believe there is no way God would keep her from becoming a legally permanent member of their family. But there is no certainty that they will get to adopt her. We all might feel certain that would be best, but we are not God. Josh and Jenn have not made any demands on God, and they continue to trust Him with open hands. Their love for Piper is not being guarded or limited in case they don’t get to adopt her, and their love for God is not being conditioned upon things turning out the way they want them to. They are taking each day as it comes, trusting in the Lord. Their certainty is in the character and nature of God, and in the good news of the gospel.

Please continue to pray that God would open the doors for the adoption process to be completed, and especially pray for the Kirstine family, that God would bless them and fill them with hope and peace as they selflessly give themselves away for the sake of God’s glory--no matter the cost. I know they would not want me to miss an opportunity to encourage you all to consider foster care as a way of loving the least of these in our community. It is not a decision to be taken lightly, but if you are interested, I encourage you to get more information from Jennifer.

Ok, looking back at our text now, in verse 23 Paul reiterates his trust in the Lord:

**Philippians 2:23-24** I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

Paul didn’t know for certain what was going to come of his imprisonment. He knew that he might be executed. We saw in chapter one that he was joyful in knowing Christ would be honored in his body, whether in life or in death. His hope was in the Lord. He knew that God would do His will, and that was Paul’s desire. He trusted God to do what was best, even if it was different than what he wanted. He had the same mind as Christ in praying, “Not my will, but yours be done.”

Do you see what’s driving Paul’s joy? He is utterly committed to the work of the gospel…the spread of the gospel…the POWER of the gospel to bring abundant life to the dead through Christ. His joy is so tied up in the glory of God displayed in the life-transforming power of the gospel working itself out in the lives of the elect, he is literally embracing any and all suffering that God may use to bring it about. Is that what you are hoping in? Are your eyes focused on the glorious display of God at work in the salvation of those around us? Are you more concerned about the welfare of others than you are with your own?

This is the beautiful paradox of God’s economy. Jesus said, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39). Paul truly got this. He was seeking his own joy in his sacrifice for others. His ultimate desire, his ultimate pursuit, was being accomplished in his temporary suffering and sacrifice. We will get to see this expressed in greater detail in chapter three. I can’t wait…one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture.

So, to finish this point: This hope in the Lord is not a hope that is dependent on the certainty of sending Timothy to the Philippian church. It is a hope that is grounded and completed in the eternal promises of God found in the gospel.

Ok, let’s keep moving.

Paul has previously expressed his deep affection for the Philippian church. His desire to send Timothy to them is directly connected to his love for them. He misses them and wants to hear news from them. As it says in:

**Proverbs 25:25** Like cold water to a thirsty soul,

so is good news from a far country.

It can be hard for us to even imagine what it would be like to have to wait for news. We live in a day where news and communication is instantaneous. There are hardly places left in the world where the internet is not available for communication. We have telephone, email, snail mail, texting, even video chat. We take for granted how easy it is to communicate with people who are thousands of miles away. If anything, we are excited about getting away to a place where our cell phones don’t work--where we can actually be disconnected from the constant stream of news and communication.

Getting news back in Paul’s day was a major endeavor. If you wanted to get news from someone, it was up to you to go and get it. There was no pony express. News was sent by hand, usually by a single person who had to travel across hard and often dangerous roads and seas. Travel was not easy. You couldn’t just call Uber or hop on a plane. Traveling back then was no vacation. There was nothing luxurious about riding in a boat for weeks at a time, or walking with a caravan across the country. Travel was hard work, but it was necessary; in fact, it was commanded in the Great Commission.

 The spread of the gospel required the messengers of the gospel to travel. Many of the experiences that Paul suffered were related to the dangers of traveling. He says in 2 Corinthians 11:25-27, “Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Having someone who would risk the dangers and discomfort of traveling long distances in order to send a message was no small thing.

**Proverbs 25:13** Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest

is a faithful messenger to those who send him;

he refreshes the soul of his masters.

What Paul says next is not only a further commendation of his love for Timothy and the Philippians, but it is also a stinging rebuke of the spiritual immaturity of everyone else who was with him. He says in verse 20-21, **“For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”**

Timothy is the only person with Paul in Rome who will be genuinely concerned for their welfare, who has the interests of Christ above his own interests. This is really a shocking statement. There were certainly other believers who were ministering to Paul in Rome. He is not saying that Timothy is the only Christian he has with him, but as he considers who in the local church he can put his trust in to minister to them in true selflessness, Timothy is the only one with that level of spiritual maturity. As I thought about the weight of that statement, I wondered to myself if Paul would have seen that quality in me. It is not my default nature to put the interests of Christ above my own. It is a daily struggle for all of us to die to ourselves and live only for Christ. Only when we are putting off the flesh and walking in the Spirit of Christ are we able to put His interests above our own.

Paul doesn’t mean to demean or disrespect the church in Rome or the others who were with him. In love, he is holding up Timothy as a model of true godliness and maturity in the faith that they should strive for. It’s not just that Timothy is nice to others, or that he knows sound doctrine, or that he is a hard worker and is willing to do whatever Paul asks him. The standout quality of Timothy is that he is motivated to love others selflessly out of a faithful devotion to the will of God on the foundation of sound doctrine--he’ll love them rightly, genuinely, and in truth. Paul is confident that Timothy’s love for them is as genuine as his own.

This selfless kind of love was not rooted in the emotional high of temporary happiness. In other words, the priority of this love was not to avoid ever offending. The priority is God being glorified through their joy in Christ. It was a love that was willing to risk the personal closeness of the relationship in order to promote the people’s growth in Christ.

Do you see how integrally connected this is to what Paul has been saying? Look back at verse 4 and 5 of chapter 2:

4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Paul encourages the church in how they are to live with each other, and then he gives them the basis for it, which is Christ and His ultimate example of humility. Then he goes on to show what it looks like in the here and now with the commendation of Timothy. By emphasizing the fact that Timothy was the only person he had with this quality, Paul was not saying that the rarity of it being found in followers of Christ was to be accepted as normal. Rather, he was saying that the rarity of it was to their shame. By stating it the way he did, it gave opportunity for everyone reading the letter to examine their own level of maturity. While immaturity is a normal part of being a baby Christian, we should never be ok with being immature. Maturity does not come overnight, and we should not feel discouraged and defeated every time we are made aware of our shortcomings, but we should always feel a sense of discontentment that leads us to true repentance and effort towards maturity. This is the goal of every Christian.

**Ephesians 4:11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

What a beautiful picture of maturity! Praise God that is His will for us! Like we saw last week in verse 13, it is He who is at work in us to will and to work.

Look at verse 22 now:

**22 But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.**

Here he reminds them of Timothy’s proven worth, and the fact that they know this already by the way they had seen him serve with Paul in the gospel, as a son with a father. This is very intimate language. Think about Paul’s current situation…the sense of loneliness. Timothy had to be such a great encouragement to him. How hard the thought of sending him away must have been. It just shows again how selfless he was being in his love for the Philippians. Paul is locked up in Rome possibly waiting to be sentenced to death, and he is talking about sending the most encouraging person in the world to him, to encourage others who are in nowhere near as discouraging a situation as Paul is himself.

He goes on in verse **23: “I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.”**

So, Paul wants to send Timothy, but not until he knows how it is going to go with his own situation. He is not saying that the priority is his own need. This is probably a simple matter of logistics. Remember there was no easy way to communicate back then. Timothy was being sent in hope of him returning to Paul with a report of how the Philippians are doing. Paul is waiting for a trial that will determine his fate. It was necessary for Timothy to have some level of certainty about Paul’s whereabouts before he left. When Paul says he trusts in the Lord that he will come also, he is again acknowledging a level of uncertainty. He wants to send Timothy as soon as possible, whether he is able to go or not. At the same time, he is trusting in the Lord that he himself will come also. We already hit on this point, but let me just add one more.

One of the most common ways that the gospel is skewed is by the idea that our faith is a contributing factor to God’s working in the world. Sometimes the misunderstanding can be in semantics or a person’s particular usage of words, but often times it is a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to put our faith in Christ--in the gospel.

Paul was not trusting in the Lord that he would come to the Philippians, as if his believing it passionately enough would make it true. And I think it’s obvious from the context of the letter that he was not certain that he would be coming to them. He was trusting in the certainty of what he knew about God based on God’s word. He didn’t believe for one second that his trusting in the Lord would guarantee its happening. He trusted in the Lord to do His perfect will. I hope you are getting the importance of this.

This is the apostle Paul having to trust in the Lord without knowing God’s secret will. There were times where Paul (as an Apostle of Christ) speaks of having been given direct revelation by God and much, if not all, of that revelation has been recorded in written form for us as Scripture. That revelation, though, was designed with the purpose of edifying the church, not as a reward to Paul for his faithfulness. It’s not as if Paul had, or ever could have reached a point of maturity to where he was given a special ability to see into the future, where he had outgrown the uncertainty that comes with being finite creatures. His comfort came from the same certainty of the gospel to which we also cling.

This means that we should never feel like our uncertainty in knowing God’s secret will for our lives (those specific details of what He has planned) is because of a lack of faith or immaturity in our growth. His revealed will for us is that we be sanctified.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3a** For this is the will of God, your sanctification

Fully trusting God is part of what it means to be sanctified. It is a normal part of the Christian life to be dependent on God in this way. He is not going to do what may seem better to us by giving us specific certainty of what He plans to do in every situation we face. True joy comes from knowing that I don’t need to know because in life and death, I am safe in the hand of God.

Alright, we’re gonna have to fly through this last section. Look with me at verses 25 and 26:

**25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.**

Everything that was noted before about the qualities of Timothy in his service to Paul are applicable here to Epaphroditus in his service to the Philippian church and to Paul. When he stated earlier that he had no one like Timothy who was truly concerned for them more than themselves, it’s as if he is saying here now that Epaphroditus is their Timothy. Epaphroditus is their ambassador that stands out as one with a true shepherd’s heart. We see his concern for them, that he was distressed because they heard that he was ill. It’s most likely that someone had been to Rome when Epaphroditus was ill and took that news to the Philippian church, but no one had been back to tell them that he had been spared by God. Epaphroditus is distressed over the concern he knows the church members must be feeling from not knowing his current condition, and he wants to bring them comfort by returning to them. It is not a selfish longing; his aim is their joy.

In verse 27 it says:

**27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.**

Paul testifies here to the seriousness of how ill Epaphroditus really was. Notice that it does not say, “I prayed for him and he was healed.” I am sure that Paul prayed for him. He was obviously deeply concerned and extremely relieved; he says that he was spared of “sorrow upon sorrow.” The narrative of these events points to a prolonged period of time that Epaphroditus was sick, so sick that he nearly died. There was no certainty that he would be healed. Paul acknowledges that God healed Epaphroditus, but it did not come about in a supernatural manner that many claim should be normal within the church. This letter was written toward the end of Paul’s ministry, and the kinds of supernatural miracles that God used earlier in Paul’s ministry to establish his credibility as an Apostle who spoke for God were no longer necessary. If the miraculous gift of healing had been primarily for the sake of those being healed, there would be no way to explain the lack of it happening in any of the later narratives of Scripture. The fact that Paul, who is one of the most spiritually gifted people who ever lived, was unable to heal Epaphroditus, is further evidence that the miraculous gift of healing had ceased.

We should draw comfort from knowing that God is our healer, and that He answers prayer. He even uses our prayers in conjunction with His acting in the world. It is a great privilege we have in being given the invitation, even the commandment, to present our requests to God. And when God answers our prayers, we can respond in worship knowing that He is good and always does what is good and perfect according to His will.

In 2 Samuel 12, King David fasted and prayed for seven days straight, not knowing if God would spare his child or not, and it says that when the child died, David arose, cleansed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, went to the house of the Lord, and worshiped God. I am sure those seven days were filled with anxiety over the uncertainty of whether his child would live or die, but David remained steadfast in His faith in God to hear his cry, and in the hope that God was merciful. And even after his request was not fulfilled the way he wanted, his faith remained strong.

As finite creatures who don’t know everything as God does, it is normal for us to live in tension between the anxiety over trials and tribulations we face in this life, and our confidence and certainty in God who is working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Paul goes on in verse 28:

**28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.**

It doesn’t say the specific cause of his anxiety. It may have been worry over them not having a shepherd with them to guard them from potential attack during a time of weakness and sorrow. It may have had to do with ongoing risk to Epaphroditus’s health. Whatever the reason, we can be pretty certain that it was not stemming from concerns to his own life or well-being; it was in regard to the welfare of others.

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul is expounding on his sufferings as an apostle, and at the end of a long list, he says in verse 28:

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

If we truly love one another, we are going to experience a level of anxiety over each other’s well-being, not for wordly, selfish reasons. Not because I might lose something that I enjoy getting from you, but because you might miss out on something good for you, and God might not be honored in your life as He should be.

When you read Paul’s letters and his style of writing, you can almost hear a pleading tone, how he longs for them to know Christ more and to grow in sanctification. Not because that’s his job, but because he truly loves them and he loves God, and he wants Christ to be known and enjoyed and worshiped.

Sin is the enemy of joy, and it is unrelenting in its deceitfulness and its resolve to defeat the people of God. Its constant threat is a valid reason for concern. This doesn’t mean that we think believers can lose their salvation, but we recognize that one of the means God has ordained to preserve His children unto final glorification is the loving truth-telling, exhortation, rebuke, and admonishment of one another. Because the threat of sin is real, we don’t just flippantly trust God to perform His will in some way that is outside of us. In other words, if I see my brother in sin, I don’t just pray for God to bring correction without also going to my brother in genuine love and concern for his soul, and speaking the truth of God’s word to him. In obedience to the revealed will of God, I honor His holy name by proclaiming gospel truth to my brother, trusting the Holy Spirit to work through the power of the gospel.

As I look around the room, I know that I could call on numbers of you to testify to your own experience of the love of God being manifested in your life through the loving admonishment and correction you have received from a brother or sister who spoke truth to you that exposed sin in your life that has led to repentance and sanctification in area of your life you had previously been blind to, or maybe had just become comfortable enough with it to not truly wage war against it.

I know that for me personally, the most glorious expressions of God’s grace in my life have been the times I look back on when He exposed sin in my life that has ultimately led to repentance and victory over that sin. I don’t mean that I no longer struggle with sin, but I don’t struggle in the same way. By God’s grace, there has been an ongoing pattern of growth in holiness that has come from the shame of being called out and having my sin exposed.

So to wrap up this point, there is a type of anxiety (so to speak) that God may often use as a means of keeping us engaged in the fight for the sanctification and holiness of our brother. It is more of a constant awareness of the potential danger in spiritual warfare that leads to a diligence and vigilance. It is not in conflict with Paul’s later command in chapter 4 verse 6 where he says:

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

The Greek word for anxious we see here is the same one Paul uses in verse 20 when he is speaking of Timothy’s genuine concern for the Philippians. We would certainly not take Paul to mean here in Chapter 4 verse 6, that we should not be genuinely concerned for others. The same word can be used in more than one way, with more than one type of meaning. Jesus used the same Greek word when He was teaching about the cares of this life in His Sermon on the Mount. The exact meaning of the word is derived from its context. Being anxious about the cares of this life is not something good that we pursue or condone, but there is a type of anxiousness that is expressed in a deep concern for the things of God that is good. When we sing “change my heart oh God” we are asking God to make us care the way He cares, to care for the things He cares about, to align our concerns with what He says matters. If this kind of concern for the things of God was disconnected from faith in God’s sovereign power to do all that He pleases, it would not be godly concern. True godly concern will be accompanied with hope in the promises of God to accomplish all that He desires. True godly concern will not be accompanied by worry and doubt.

Being overcome with anxiety is a sin, because it shows a lack of faith in the gospel and in the sovereignty of God. Please hear me on this point, because many of us struggle with worry and anxiety, so we cannot simply think it’s okay. We need to truly examine ourselves to see if it is unhealthy and ask others for input.

On the other hand, never being anxious at all may indicate an improper disengagement in our battle against sin and our flesh and might also indicate an indifference to others’ well-being and growth. That doesn’t glorify God either.

Ok, so Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to the church that they may rejoice, and Paul may be less anxious.

And in verse 29 we read:

**29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.**

The church in Philippi wanted to minister to Paul but they were unable, due to the distance between them. Their hearts were genuine, but what was lacking was a tangible and physical expression of their love for Paul and their support of his ministry to other unreached people. Epaphroditus risked his life rather than allowing the danger of traveling to prolong what was lacking in their service to the work of Christ. They had been greatly blessed by God through Paul’s ministry to them. By sending Epaphroditus, they were not only showing honor to Paul, but they were partnering with him in the work of the gospel.

Now Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to them with the very letter we are reading. I wonder if Epaphroditus had any idea that he was delivering Scripture that no one else had ever read yet. Maybe he was uncertain of whether his visit to Rome had really done anything beneficial. He shows up, gets sick, nearly dies, gets homesick, and then returns. I’m sure there was much more to it than that, but you can imagine how he may have at least felt that way at some point along the way. It’s quite possible Epaphroditus never realized the letter he carried would become part of the Bible that would edify and encourage the entire post-apostolic church.

This life will be filled with uncertainty. There will certainly be times that we cannot see or understand how God is using the circumstances in our lives for His good purposes.

So many people in this world are suffering from the fear of uncertainty in their lives. Look at the number of people who pay good money to have someone tell them their future--as if that were possible. If our joy is dependent on our certainty of how things will go in this temporal life, we will not experience real joy in this life.

As Christians, our joy flows from the certainty of who we are in Christ, as saved, loved, adopted children of the God of all creation, co-heirs with Christ, sealed and secured by the Holy Spirit. Nothing can undo that. We can be absolutely certain of everything that truly matters. We can say with Paul:

**2 Timothy 1:12** For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (NASB)

I’m really looking forward to our next mid-week, in two weeks from tonight when we look at the first part of Chapter 3. Until then, I pray that you will be pressing in to the word, meditating on the truths we are studying, putting it into action with those God has put in your life to disciple you and be discipled by you.

Let’s pray