

LOSS, WORTH AND THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

TYLER VELIN | MARCH 9TH, 2014 | PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

Because 2014 is the year of endless winter some buddies and I decided to go ice fishing the other weekend. For those of you who have never been, ice fishing consists of this: walking out onto the frozen ice, drilling a hole, sitting for a few hours out on the ice and then leaving.

But with that said there are some components of ice fishing that I enjoy. There is something about freezing with your friends that provides a good sort of bonding. But we had two groups of people who wanted to leave. One group swore that if they got there as soon as the sun hit the ice, the fish would jump out of their holes and sacrifice themselves. That group left at 4:30. Then there was my group, which left at 7.

At this point we hadn't gone through the passages in Philippians where Paul tells you to put aside your interest for the interest of others, so I desperately wanted them to have failed in their early morning fish. And they did, my one question to some of the guys was, "Was it worth it?"

Isn't that the question of our culture today? "Was it worth it?" We want to have labored for a purpose. We look at cost/value plans and we estimate how much work it will take to get a reward out of our investment. We want the joy, we want the reward, we want value in all that we do.

So does Paul. I am thrilled to preach this passage this morning because it is the choice cut of all Philippians in my eyes. Paul is addressing worth, he is addressing value, he is addressing joy, and he is doing it through the gospel. **Pray**

Paul has four points in this text for us today and all of them are connected to the theme he opens this passage with: **Phil 3:1**

In your community groups this week you are going to look at all the instances where Paul is telling us to rejoice in this book of Philippians.

Paul is passionate about joy. Real joy. Joy with no limits and no bounds, joy in the deepest sense of the word. Joy for Paul was not trivial, it wasn't a side dish for the faith. Joy for Paul was an essential response to those who have received the grace of the gospel.

In Paul's eyes, a Christian inhales the gospel, and exhales joy.

This the first point: **The Challenge of Joy**

In light of all that Paul has said, he is passionate about making sure believers rejoice. Paul has used the word rejoice four times already but that is not enough for Paul. It's no trouble to me and it's safe for you.

It is not that Paul is the emotional writer of scripture. God is passionate about joy. In fact, I did a little word search this week. You may have heard the unhealthy distinction between the Old and New Testament. The Old testament shows a God of wrath, the New is a God of love. Stop thinking that.

In fact I did a word search on some of the commands that we see in the Old Testament. The top command was "listen," but the I search for other words like "turn" "pray" "confess" "repent" "sing" and "rejoice." Outside of the command to listen, the next highest command I found in the Old Testament was a call to rejoice. God is a God of joy and celebration. In a few weeks Paul is going to emphasize this aspect of God again when he says: **Phil 4:4**

You see for Paul the command to rejoice isn't simply a proper response to the Lord, but it is part of the believer's

process of becoming like the Lord. Celebration is a portion of our sanctification.

Whatever level of joy you have in the Lord, rejoice all the more. Church: rejoice in the Lord. If you want to test your level of spiritual life, check your ability to rejoice. Certainly there will be times when we are lacking in joy, the Psalms are filled with this idea of spiritual depression, but Paul is urging us to fight for joy.

How do we fight for that joy? How do we protect that joy? Paul spends the remainder of the text answering those questions.

Paul first is going to warn us of **The Joy Trap**

Phil 3:2-7

We do wrestle with joy. Joy is often hard for us, but Paul here is identifying for us the very first way in which our joy can be hindered: a man-centered view of life.

Paul warns us that we should be vigilant in our watch if we are to rejoice. We watch out for the dogs, for the evil doers, for those who mutilate the flesh.

Paul is warning the church in Philippi of the Judaizers. The sect of Christianity who thought that in order to be saved by Christ you must uphold the law to the fullest stretch of the means. Paul warns of these people in **1 Timothy 1:6-7**

If you had to pin one of these people down, they would say that it was Jesus who saved them, but they would also tell you that Jesus saved them because of the work that they had done in their own life. They lived a pure life, they lived a holy life, an acceptable life, and God saw them in their perfection and rewarded them for it. While we don't have any Judaizers in here today, I'm sure we have some people with the same thought process. People who say that Jesus saved them, but he saved them because we deserved it. We worked for it. We were good people, honest people, hard-working people.

There are people in here who look at where they are in their life, where they are in their spiritual walk, and they say look at what I have done. I pray, I read my Bible, I talk in community group, I lead my family. If you are that person who takes hope in what it is that you have accomplished, and what you have secured, Paul is pleading with you for your joy.

Look back at **Phil 3:3-6**.

Paul says we, brothers, we have all the physical markings. We have the circumcision. But we put no confidence in our outward efforts. If anyone could put confidence in their ability to follow the law it would have been Paul. Paul was the Lebron James of Jews. He nailed it. Paul had all these reasons to rejoice. The career, the respect, the fame, the comfort, the praise. But look at verse 7.

You see the joy trap in your life is your selfish heart. We want joy according to our eyes, we want comfort, peace, notoriety, recognition, worldly accolades, we want people to look at us and say: "Wow, look at how sincere they are in their worship." But Paul's cry to the church is that there is no joy in this life. There is no joy in yourself. Whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Paul counted everything the world saw as gain as loss. Fame, loss. Relationships, loss. Power, loss. Prestige, loss. Recognition, loss. Wealth, loss. Why because he had found **the solution for joy**.

Phil 3:7-9

You see, it's one thing to give up something begrudgingly. It's another to leave it for an object of greater worth. Paul found an object of greater worth.

Time and time again in the New Testament Paul refers to the Christian faith as foolishness, as folly. **1 Cor 1:18** Do you see what Paul just said? Everything was a loss. Everything was rubbish. Rubbish. Pointless, useless, of lesser value, of diminished worth to what? To knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is the value of knowing Christ, look again **9**. To have a righteousness that comes from Christ, sealed by

faith. Your joy in Christ is not simply in the fact that he exists. You can know Christ, you can even claim to worship Christ and still miss the joy in Christ.

The joy of Christ is that he came and died for sinners. He came to absorb the wrath of God. To take dead hearts, bathe them in his blood, and fix them in his righteousness. That message of the gospel is to be believed in faith, and that faith we have will never disappoint.

Look at **Romans 5:1-5**. You see the capacity for our joy comes from the worth of Christ, and the worth of Christ is seen in the beauty of the gospel.

We rejoice because of the gospel. The world doesn't understand this, the unbelieving world will not understand this, because the unbelieving heart has not seen the glory of our King.

Have you seen the kind of life Paul lived? You couldn't keep the guy down. We may think that it is hard, and it is disappointing, and it is burdensome to preach the gospel to those in Missoula. But Paul had a greater challenge: **Rom 15:20**

You know what Paul endured grueling conditions, real hardship and suffering and yet his literature he screams celebration in Christ. God put a thorn in Paul's side, God afflicted Paul with suffering, but look at Paul's response: **2 Cor 12:9b-10**.

Hardship, gain. Persecution, gain. Whippings, gain. Beatings, imprisonment, trial, storms, shipwrecks, disease, snake bites, hunger, loneliness, abandonment, heartache, gain, gain, gain, gain. I will boast in Christ, because my eyes have seen his glory and my heart has seen his worth.

You want a joy that makes you do wild and crazy things, gaze at your savior. Look into the eyes of Christ, see the gain we have in our salvation. For what can separate us from the love of God?

Can persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword, can death or life, or angels or demons, or rulers, or things present, or things to come or powers or depth, or anything else in all of creation, no nothing will separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And in that joy, we sell everything we have, and we buy the pearl of great price.

We believe in the beauty of Christ, and we worship in the hardship, we celebrate in the tragedy because King Jesus sits on his throne.

Now how is this sustainable, let's be real here. Pain is real. Suffering is real. You cannot expect me to rejoice in this life when evil is so active.

Paul hears your thoughts, and he offers us: **The Sustainability of Joy**

Phil 3:7-11

The hope of a Christian. The sustainability of joy is the promise of death? Folly, folly, folly. And yet God chose what is foolish to shame the wise.

Paul's hope, is that in sharing in the sufferings of Christ here, we may be joyful because we also share in Christ's resurrection, we ourselves will one day be bodily resurrected, and we will see Jesus face to face, and all that suffering, all that pain, all the trauma we endured here on the earth will be worth it because our meager 80 years on this earth are nothing compared to the eternity we will one day spend with the father.

2 Cor 5:1-4

How can we rejoice here on the earth, because we know that all the suffering we go through gives us a platform to proclaim the words of life to those who are around us. Our life gives us the ability to treasure Christ more deeply, and to preach Christ more freely.

And one day, when we see God face to face, we will enter into the joy of our maker.

Church, the Christian life is bound in joy, because the Christian life is dripping with hope in Christ. We count it as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

What are your priorities in your life? Is your joy limited because you are attempting to find life in limited things? Or do you daily compare yourself to the vastness of Christ and fall on your face before the living Savior and say, worthy, worthy, worthy.

The fact of the matter is that all of this joy language we see from Paul was written while Paul was alive. The apostle Paul was eventually killed for his faith, and now he has that resurrected body he always wanted, he sees Jesus in ways he never imagined.

And you know what he is whispering to us in this text through the Holy Spirit. "It's still worth it. It's still worth it."

Outside of Christ is wrath and death. Inside of Christ is mercy and joy forever more. Are you living out of that joy, it is good for you to hear it, and safe for me to say it.

On the tombstone of every Christian should be written the epitaph: "Never has so much been gained by sacrificing so little."

Church, we have Christ to gain, and nothing to lose. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.