

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

unbreakable

JOY

Unshakable: Finding Joy That Lasts. November 2, 2025

READ

Read the Scripture of the week: Phil 1:12-13

DISCUSS

- Share about a time that was difficult to get through and identify what helped you get through it.
- What are one or two truths or "nuggets" from the sermon that stood out to you?

COME AND SEE

Consider these words from Paul: I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (Phil 1:12-13)

These words came from Paul in the midst of some of the most difficult circumstances. **See if you can remember some of the things Paul experienced from the sermon.**

What is the difference between happiness and joy? Happiness says, "I feel good because things are good." Joy says, "Things might not be good, but God is good, and that's enough."

There is a unique type of joy to which God's people are called. It's more than a happy mood. It's a choice to trust that God will fulfill His promises, and it's a joy that is long-lasting and life-giving.

THREE SITUATIONS THAT TEST YOUR JOY

1. JOY WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES CONFINE YOU

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. (Phil 1:12-14)

Paul is in prison, and he's saying, "This is actually working out for God's purposes." He's saying: "What has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 'I'm in chains. AND God is using these chains.'"

Question: Can you think of another biblical example when God used someone's (or a group of people's) difficult or painful circumstances for God's own purposes?

2. JOY WHEN CRITICS ATTACK YOU

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. And because of this I rejoice. (Phil 1:15-18)

Paul is saying there are people preaching the gospel to hurt him. They're doing the right thing for the wrong reason. They're leveraging Paul's imprisonment to build their own platforms. They're using Paul's pain to gain followers.

Question: How would you summarize in your own words what Paul is prioritizing in this excerpt?

3. JOY WHEN THE FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN

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. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil 1:18-20)

Paul doesn't know if he's getting out of prison. He doesn't know if he's going to be executed. He doesn't know if this is his last letter. And he says, "I eagerly expect and hope..." Notice he doesn't say, "I know exactly what's going to happen." He says, "I have hope."

Question: Paul was not one of the 12 disciples, yet he speaks with such assurance. Can you think of one time in Jesus' ministry that he taught his disciples to have such assurance or hope?

FOLLOW ME

Contemplate the following:

1. **Identify your confinement.** What's limiting you right now? Ask God, "How do You want to advance Your gospel through this?"
2. **Release your critics.** Who's attacking you? Who's questioning your motives? Give them to God and say, "If Jesus gets lifted up, I win."
3. **Embrace your uncertainty.** What don't you know about your future? Say out loud, "Christ will be exalted, whether by life or by death. Either way, I win."

GO AND BE

Here's what joy says in the middle of uncertainty: "I don't know what will happen, but I know WHO holds what happens."

- Take time this week to pray about the uncertainties in your life and to focus on the things that you know to be true God (i.e., God is trustworthy, faithful, all-loving, gracious, forgiving, all-knowing, etc.). Focus on praying about how God can further the gospel through your challenging circumstances.
- Pray for others who are struggling with uncertainty, suffering, grieving or challenging circumstances. Pray that they could experience the peace, love, and joy of knowing God has "got their back" despite all appearances to the contrary.