

Joy Suckers - I Will Choose Joy

8 Decisions from the Book of Philippians: #1 – Philippians 1:12-23

Being confident of this: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of the Lord Jesus...For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain....that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the father...Whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ...Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

There's no other way to say this, church, so I'm just going to put it out there. I've learned the hard way in ministry that there are some people who exist, both inside the church and outside of it, who see it as their mission, their assignment from God, to see the Joy of the Lord as your strength and try to steal it from you because they don't have it. And if they can't steal it from you, they will most certainly do anything and everything they can to dampen your spirit. Those people are called Joy Suckers. They come armed with Wet blankets, vituperative comments, and condescending glances. But friend, if there are Joy Suckers, there are equally Joy Choosers. They don't define joy as a flash of emotion. Instead, they define it as a state of inner rest and contentment that says regardless of the way my cookie crumbles, it will be well with my soul as long as God's grace is operable. Philippians is a great book to study during any cultural climate, much less ours. Here's why: the Apostle Paul wrote it from the death row of a Roman prison just after he had been beaten 39 times with lashes for the 5th and final time and just before he was to be beheaded. And the theme of it is this: joy. Paul made a decision not to let anything or anyone steal the gift of inner contentment because God gave that gift to him after his salvation. We must make that same decision: the decision to be a Joy Chooser. But that decision doesn't come without barriers. I want to share with you 4 types of Joy Suckers, barriers designed to prevent you from living with inner contentment and peace from Philippians 1:12-23.

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,^[b] that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear

throughout the whole palace guard^[c] and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ 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. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ 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. ^[d] ²⁰ 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. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Decision One:

I will let anything, or anyone steal my joy in the character and purposes of God that He gave me at salvation.

Barriers (Joy Suckers):

1. Unjust Circumstances (1:12)

- **Hurricane By Bob Dylan (circa 1976)** – (1) Here comes the story of the Hurricane. The man authorities came to blame. For something that he never done. Put in a prison cell, but one time he could have been the champion of the world. (2) Carter charged with triple murder in Patterson, New Jersey in 1966. (3) Spent 19 long years in prison before he was exonerated.
- **Paul Before Death Row (2 Cor 11:24-28)** ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from

rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

- **Paul On Death Row (Phil 1:12)** – (1) What has happened to me has served to advance the Gospel. (2) “served” is in the Perfect Tense in the language of the NT; (3) Meaning an action that started in the past has implications for the future.
- **Implication 1:** Joy, therefore, isn’t circumstantial, a feeling or an emotion. It’s internal rest and peace in the character and purposes of God that manifests itself on the exterior in productive ways.
- **Implication 2:** It’s God given and can only be stolen if you abdicate your role in ensuring it’s guarded in your heart.

2. Self-Serving Motives of People (1:15-18)

- **Flim Flam Man** – (1) Someone skilled in pitching something that seems like it will change the world; (2) Flex Seal Commercial; (3) Takes a canon and shoots a boat; then saws the boat into; (4) Then does some Backwoods Engineering and tapes it up with Flex Seal; (5) However, when others tried the same thing: their boats sunk like a sack of hammers. (6) “When the product doesn’t perform as expected it’s typically because it wasn’t applied correctly.”
- **Your Pastor’s Greatest Joy Sucker** – Pastors that can’t identify with “knowing Christ and the fellowship of his sufferings” because they’ve learned along the ministry route that being treated like royalty is far better.
- **Same Was True With Paul, But He Didn’t Let Them** – (1) It is true: there are many flim flammers operating in Jesus’ name (15); (2) It is manifested most clearly in envy, rivalry, greed and selfish ambition (16); (3) Some of them seem like the devil’s spawn (17); (4) But nevertheless, Christ is preached. And for that I rejoice.
- **Implication 1:** Flim Flammers and people with self serving motives are common. If you can spot them, God can too.
- **Implication 2:** But the moment that you wonder how in the world people can operate that way, then you have given them control and surrendered your joy.

- **Implication 3:** Let God deal with the flim flammers. You rejoice that Jesus is glorified; even through imperfect means.

3. Road Ahead (1:20)

- **Valley of the Shadow of Death** – (1) Actual place in Israel; (2) 414 meters below seal level; (3) In ancient times, shepherds followed migrating patterns; (4) In an arid place like the Sinai Desert, the only place you could go to get water was below sea level; (4) And if sheep happened to be thirsty in the Sinai Desert, they had to take a trip to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. (5) But for Paul, difficult roads had to be traveled to lead to beautiful destinations.
- **Paul's Valley of the Shadow of Death** – (1) Was literal and he indicates as much in verse 20; (2) Paul was a Roman Citizen accused of insurrection, rebellion, and inciting rebellion against the crown. (3) That meant he would stand before Caesar himself if he kept appealing.
- **Our Valley of the Shadow of Death** – (1) Occurs when it seems like the road ahead is equivalent to pushing a bolder up a mountain. (2) And that's the route we have to take because there's no other route.
- **Where Paul and Us Are Different** – (1) We dread roads we can't avoid; (2) Paul looked forward to it, even given the prospect of death, because it was a chance to share the Gospel with Caesar.
- **Implication:** Even if your road involves physical pain, suffering or death, the ultimate destination is far sweeter. Don't let the road steal what God's given you: rest and peace in His character and purposes.

4. Anxious Decisions (1:21-23)

- **Falmouth Springs and Anxiety**– (1) The World's Shortest River is in Falmouth Springs, in Live Oak Florida; (2) Water bubbles up from an underground cave system; (3) Travels 450 feet and then disappears; (3) Anxiety is like Falmouth Springs. It's a thin stream of fear that runs through mind; (4) If encouraged, it cuts a channel a lot more than 450 feet long, floods everything you do and renders you immovable; (5) But it doesn't have to.
- **Being Torn in a Decision Produces Anxiety** – (1) If I go this way, then this; (2) If I go this way, then this; (3) As a result, I'll neither go this route or that route; (4) I'll make no decision at all and shrivel up into a cocoon.

- **A Proverb For The Anxious (Prov. 16:13)** – “Commit your way to the Lord and he will establish your plans
- **A Command For The Anxious (Phil 4:6)** – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God. And the peace and joy of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.”