

## Oil Stains on the Driveway | *Philippians: The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength #2* | *Philippians 1:15-26*

*And restore unto me the joy of my salvation. And grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.*

Over the last month, visitors, passersby, and the homeowner's association enforcers have noticed a major problem on the left side of the driveway of the West Household. It's a problem that gets bigger by the day because there is an obscure oil leak someplace and somewhere on our 2013 Subaru Outback. It never seems to go away in spite of Derrick Goodwrench's and Mr. Goodwrench's best efforts to fix it. So when I had all "I could stands and couldn't stands no more," I decided to fight those dastardly oil circles with nearly every tool I had at my disposal. First, I decided to fight them with Formula 88 Degreaser and a hardwire brush. The stain just stared back at me and laughed. Then, I decided to fight them with non-choleric brake cleaner. The stain just stared back at me and laughed. Next, I decided to up my game by fighting them with a propane blow torch. Not only did the stain stare back at me and laugh when I finished, but the concrete got mad me and started to fracture. The oil stains still remain. Consequently, there is no joy in Mudville when it comes to Subarus and driveways.

Friend, I have yet to meet a man who is exceedingly joyful and glad about the oil stains that remain on his driveway. But I have met many men who, in their battle against the stains, have allowed the mere presence of the stains to rob them of the joy that comes from living in their residence. Joy is something that comes from God. He gives it to us at salvation. But friend, the devil wants nothing more than for you to focus more on the oil stains on your driveway than you do on the One who built his permanent residence inside of you. He wants to rob you of the joy of your salvation and will use every tool in his arsenal to do it. The question is will you let him rob you of the joy of your salvation by focusing more on the oil stains on the driveway? Or will you choose to live in the joy because of the fact that there is a permanent resident who lives inside of you in spite of the oil stains?

In Philippians 1:15-26, you are going to see 4 oil stains on Paul's driveway that could have robbed him of the joy of knowing Jesus. People could have robbed them of that. But they didn't. The path ahead could have robbed him of the joy of knowing Jesus. But it didn't. Choices ahead for Paul could have robbed him of the joy of knowing Jesus. But they didn't. And even something noble – concern for others – could have robbed him of the joy that comes from knowing Jesus. But it didn't. Why? In spite of being in prison, Paul knew the power that comes from living in the truth that to live is Christ and to die is again. We can to. Turn with me to Philippians 1:15-26. Let's read together.

*<sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> 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! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

### Oil Stains on the Driveway That Can Rob You of Joy:

#### 1. People (15-18)

- **Basement and Balcony:** (1) Do you know the difference between Basement People and Balcony People? (2) Balcony People are those that cheer us on. They encourage us. They believe in us. They sit in the balcony of our lives like a heavenly cheering section, saying "God is with you." (3) But Basement People are the discouragers. They may be people from the past, or present. But their words seem to follow us everywhere we go: "You can't do that." "When are you going to get it right." "You will never get it right." (4) The surest way to get robbed of joy is to the voices from the basement drown out the voices of God and his heavenly cheering section from the balcony.
- **If Anyone Knew How to Identify Basement People, It Was Paul:** (1) In 2 Cor 11, he tells us "five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones" (24-25) (2) Over his ministry, he was arrested 3 different times. It would have been six if he hadn't escaped. (3) He dealt with the Judaizers in Galatia. He dealt with heretics in Colossae. And he dealt with the "it's all about love and sin doesn't matter" people in Corinth.
- **As a result, He the Qualities of the Basement People Who Were Taking Advantage of His Current Incarceration:** (1) Envy, rivalry (v15); (2) Selfish ambition, lack of sincerity, stirring up of trouble (v17); (3) False motives (v 18)
- **But He Refused to Let the Oil Stains Rob Him of Joy of Knowing that God Can Still Work Wonders With Even Those People:** "the most important thing is that in every way...Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice (18).
- **App:** There is joy in the understanding that regardless of people, the purposes of God will prevail. If basement people can't thwart the plans of God, they shouldn't be able to thwart your joy either.

#### 2. Path Ahead (19-20)

- **Evolution of Parenting High Schoolers:** (1) My mom prayed "Lord, if I can just get my son through high school by making "C's" because "C's get degrees. (2) But today it's not like that. "Lord, if can just get my child through the 9<sup>th</sup> grade standardized tests, then the 10<sup>th</sup>, then the 11<sup>th</sup>, then the 12<sup>th</sup>, and then get "C's, I will be satisfied. (3) I have no doubt that the path ahead for students and parents alike is a joy robber.

- **The Path Ahead for Paul Was Unlike Anything He Had Faced in Life (20):** (1) in v20, Paul alludes to what lies ahead. Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote Philippians for a couple of reasons: (a) He was a Roman citizen who was accused of insurrection, rebellion, and inciting a rebellion against Caesar. (b) As a Roman citizen, he had the right to appeal those punishments. The more appeals he made, the further his case moved up the chain of command. It was headed straight for Caesar. In his case that would have been Nero, no fan of Christians. (2) That's why he prays for courage.
- **But the Path Ahead Already Had a Provident Outcome Before He Took It:** (1) Back in v19, Paul tells us "what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." (2) Deliverance here isn't some type of exorcism. It's physical. (a) He'll either be set free by Nero and return to ministry or he'll be (b) killed by Nero and go be with Jesus. (c) It's deliverance either way from his perspective.
- **App:** The best way to be joyful in your path is to know that as you are walking it, God has already gone ahead of you. And the path will lead to a provident conclusion because God is the one who created the path in the first place.

### 3. Choices Ahead (21-23)

- **Coffee and Joy:** (1) I drink coffee once in a blue moon. It brings me joy. But there is one place I can go to lose all the joy that comes from drinking coffee once in a blue moon: Starbucks. (2) I'm not qualified to order coffee there. (3) "Can I have a cup of coffee?" "Would you like dark roast, light roast, or in between roast?" (4) "You pick." "Ok then, would you like a Demi, a Short, a Tall, a Grande, a Venti, or a Trenta?" "I'd like to get out of here as fast as possible. Thank you". (5) Choices can rob us of joy when we labor over choosing between good options.
- **Hard Choices Tend to Cause Tremendous Anxiety in Our Lives** – If I make this choice and go this way, then this will happen. If I make this choice and go that way, then this will happen. As a result, we tend to make no choice and go into some kind of shell.
- **Hard Choices Caused No Anxiety For Paul:** (1) We see this in 1:21. This verse has been called Paul's life theme. It would take a lifetime to unpack: "For me to live is Christ (choice one) and to die is gain (choice two).
- **We Tend to Focus On the Second Part:** "To die is gain." Why? To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8). There is no reason for Christians to fear death. For after death, we are with Jesus forever and ever amen. That's a glorious thing.
- **But We Should Focus More On the First Part:** "To live is Christ." (1) Everything Paul tried to be, everything he was, everything he looked forward to being pointed to Jesus. (2) He preached in synagogues, at riversides, as a prisoner, as an apostle, and as a tentmaker. And his message was constant. He preached to kings, soldiers, statesmen, priests, philosophers, Jews and Gentiles, men and women. (3) But the most important thing about what Paul meant by "to live as Christ was this: he was willing to give up anything that prevented him from knowing Jesus further. (4) "Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss in comparison to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."
- **We Have Many Choices Ahead, But Our Main Objective is the Same As Paul's:** "for me, to live is Christ." Like the song we sing on Sundays occasionally: "Knowing you, Jesus. Knowing you. There is no greater thing. Your my all. You're the best. You're my love. My righteousness. And I love you, Lord." That's Joy.
- **App:** Here's what Paul would say about finding joy in the choices that lie ahead: Jesus is the center point of our mind, heart, body, and soul. As we "run the race," one filled with choices, may we "fix our eyes on Jesus." For he is our life. For to live is Christ and to die is gain. Amen.

### 4. Over Concern (24-26)

- **A Big Heart:** (1) One of the greatest compliments you can ever receive is to be labeled as someone with a big heart. (2) That means you care. (3) But there is another side to a big heart: big worries and big concerns – sometimes even to the point of anguish – over the ones you have a big heart for. (4) If that is you, then there is something the worry reveals: your propensity to think that the more you labor in concern the better the outcome for the one(s) you are concerned about will be. (5) It can rob us of joy when it gets out of balance.
- **While Shackled to a Wall in a Roman Prison, Paul Was Concerned More for the Philippians Than He Was for Himself:** Verses 24-26 reveal to us where his heart was. (1) Notice the volume of references about the Philippians in just these three verses: "But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body (v 24). (2) "And I will continue with all of you for your all of your joy in the faith." (v25). (3) "So that through my being with you again" (v26).
- **But What Paul Desired Is Not What He Got:** (1) He was concerned for the Philippians so much that he links their joy and progress in the faith with his desired presence in v25. (2) But soon after he wrote Philippians, Paul sealed his message of Jesus with his blood. He was martyred and never returned to Philippi.
- **Where Our Concern for Others Differs from Paul:** (1) Paul was joyful through the whole book because he knew the Philippians could do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthened them. (2) We often lose the joy that comes from others because we labor in concern so much that we think we are capable of doing the strengthening in the other person, not Jesus.
- **App:** There is joy in caring and doing for others. But there is all the more joy in knowing that while our care is finite, Jesus' care and concern is infinite. Trust him to strengthen those you are concerned about. That's his job, not yours. I will assure you that He cares more about the stains on their driveway than you even do. And he's perfectly capable of cleaning them up. Amen.