

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHEN PRIDE CREEPS IN | REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

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One of the greatest movies of all time, in my humble yet accurate opinion, is the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. And if you haven't seen it, it's this movie about this soldier by the name of James Ryan who was serving with his three brothers in World War II. And his three brothers all die in battle.

And the military decides instead of risking having to send a fourth son home to this poor mother in a body bag, that they wanted to get him out of there. So they send a small platoon of soldiers, led by none other than Tom Hanks to go find Private Ryan somewhere in this theatre of battle and to get him home.

Now, I hate to ruin the movie if you haven't seen it. And yet, at the same time, I also want to point out that it's been 25 years. Alright? So, where have you been?

But I think all but one of the soldiers ends up dying. They give their lives trying to save a man that they had no relationship with. And the second to the last scene of the movie, Tom Hanks is taking his final breath on the battle field and he grabs James Ryan, played by Matt Damon, and he pulls him close and he reminds him of the tremendous sacrifice that has been made to get him home.

And then he says these two words that, in my opinion, are both touching and really kind of terrible at the same time. He says these words: "Earn this." Earn this. You know what he's saying? He's saying, "You better go home and you better live a really, really good life. You better go home and find a cure for cancer, you better go home and serve ice cream to little kids, you better go home and save baby Pandas." I don't know. "You better do something to earn the sacrifice that has been made on your behalf."

Now, can you just imagine the amount of pressure that would have been like? Fast forward, the very last scene of the movie, 40 or 50 years into the future. James Ryan is an old man. And he's visiting a cemetery and the graves of the soldiers who gave their lives so that he could live. And he's got his wife and his kids and grandkids with him. He's lived a full life.



And he has kind of like this emotional breakdown at the gravesite. And he turns to his wife and he asked this really haunting question. “Am I a good person? Did I really earn this?” And it’s a moving scene, but at the same time you can just kind of feel this burden, this weight that has been placed on his shoulders. You know that question would have been in the back of his mind throughout the decades of his life. And really what he’s asking is, “Is the life I’ve lived worthy of the sacrifice they made?”

Now, at the very end of Philippians 1 where we left off last week, in verses 27 and 28 I just want to point this out. Paul writes something that I think we would have to acknowledge sounds similar, at least on the surface. And Ryan did a great job covering these verses.

I just kind of want to go back and remind of us of what Paul said. Paul writes these words, and I’m kind of paraphrasing here, but this is essentially what he wrote. He goes, “I want you to live your lives worthy of the Good News about Christ.”

Now, what is he saying? Is he saying something very similar to what Tom Hanks said to Matt Damon? Is he saying, “You need to earn this; you need to earn the life that Jesus died for you to live”? And I just want to go ahead and answer that question very clearly. Unequivocally the answer to that question would be: No. You don’t need to earn the sacrifice that Jesus died for you to have.

Saving Private Ryan is about five guys who didn’t have any relationship with James Ryan at all. They didn’t know him from Adam. They were simply following orders. And, by the way, they really weren’t happy about it, either.

But the gospel message, as Paul explains it so well in his letter to the Philippians, is not that Jesus was following orders. Now, He was on a rescue mission. But it wasn’t like He was following orders and that He came to rescue people He really didn’t know or care for, and so He did so begrudgingly. The gospel message is that Jesus knows you intimately and He loves you so much that He chose it. He chose. Nobody took His life. He willingly laid it down.

So, when Paul says to us through that phrase in chapter 1, he’s saying, “Live a life worthy of the gospel,” is he saying we need to earn this? Well, no. For starters, *worthy* does not mean deserving. You and I could never ever deserve it. I know there is a big emphasis now a days, kind of like, “Hey, it doesn’t

really matter what you believe, just sincerely believe it. As long as you don't hurt anybody, just follow your own path. And just be a good person."

But who defines good? Because oftentimes we look at what somebody thinks is good and others say, "Well, that's bad." In fact, the prophet Isaiah would even say that all of our acts, you just take your whole life, however long you've got on this planet, 60, 70, 80, 90 years, and you just amass all of the good things that you can manage to do, pile them all up—the prophet Isaiah in a very sobering way says that all of that is like filthy rags. The debt is too high. No amount of effort could ever cover it.

No, *worthy* does not mean deserving. Worthy means this: a right response. So when Paul says, "Hey, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ," he's saying, "Live your life as a right response to what Jesus has done."

What is a right response? Well have any of you ever done something or said something to somebody else and you didn't get the response you were looking for? I think we all have.

Let's just say Christmas morning, the kids come downstairs in the pajamas. And you're like, "Hey guys. Guess what? The Christmas gift is we're all going to Disney. Get in the limo outside. We're going to visit Mickey." And the response here that you wouldn't be looking for is if they act all disappointed and they are like, "Oh, we were kind of hoping that we would go to Holiday World." No offense to the Holiday World fans. But that's not the response you are looking for.

Fellas, let's just say you meet miss perfect and you've been dating and she's gorgeous and she's the woman of your dreams and you are like, "She's the one." And six months into dating you worked up the courage to say those three little words first, "I love you, baby." Added a fourth word in there. And the response she gives you is, "Thanks." That wasn't the response that you were looking for.

This is what Paul is driving at at the end of chapter 1. He's like, "Hey, live as a right response to what Jesus has done." So he says, "Live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ." Here's what he is saying, "In light of what Jesus has done for you, in light of the sacrifice that He's made, our right response should be the way that we live our entire lives."

It's the way I spend my time. It's the way I handle conflict with difficult people. It's the way I view my bank account and resources and gift set. It's, as Ryan

covered last week, how I see problems and pain. I'm not trying to earn anything. I'm responding to what has been done on my behalf.

So in light of what Jesus has done to save my life, that should change the way that I see everything. And that pretty much sums up the entire message of the book of Philippians.

If you're just now joining us, whether in person or online, we have been studying through this letter in the New Testament called Philippians. We're halfway through. We're five weeks into a 10-week series. So it's not too late for you to jump in. And hopefully you brought your guidebook and you've been following along. And I hope that this study continues to be enriching.

You know, one of the things that I've noticed when we do a series longer than five weeks, it starts off with a lot of momentum and then you know, just human nature, the momentum kind of begins to wane. And I'm kind of hoping that we pick back up the momentum here as we enter into chapter 2.

So if you've got a Bible, go ahead and turn to chapter 2. We're going to walk our way through 11 verses in chapter 2. And as we've been saying since the beginning of this series, Philippians is Paul's joy letter, which is ironic given the fact that he was chained to a prison guard as he wrote these words about joy.

That would have been pretty miserable. He's close enough that he could have smelled his bad breath and B.O. And he's writing about joy. Personally, very convicting for me because I wrote at least part of this message on an airplane and the person sitting next to me kept fighting me for the armrest. And I wasn't very joyful about it.

So Paul, what he's doing is saying joy is not like some sort of naïve optimism, "You know. Life just stinks but I'm going to be joyful." That's not what it is.

Joy is a response, not a task!

Joy is a response to what Jesus has done for us. Now, as we come into chapter 2, I just want to point this out. Most of our New Testament is really letters that Paul wrote. So it's letters that Paul wrote to regular people like you and me who are trying to live out their faith in Jesus in the midst of a very hostile, joyless society.

So, Colossians, Ephesians, Galatians all of those were just letters to the churches in those cities. And Paul was a church planter and he was a pastor.



So he had all kinds of churches that he had relationships with. In my opinion, the church in Philippi was his favorite.

Now, I know we're not supposed to have favorites, or at least admit out loud that we do. But we do. You've got a favorite barista, you've got a favorite waitress, you've got a favorite preacher—you just keep that to yourself, I don't want to hear it. You've got a favorite kid. We know we shouldn't but we do. We do.

And Paul had a favorite church. You know, some churches were really problem churches. The church in Corinth was just a mess. Philippians is one letter, four chapters long. It required two letters to the Corinthian church.

I point that out to say this is his favorite church. They were probably the most together, and yet, there were still problems. I just want to point that out.

Theologian Karl Barth said it this way. He said:

“The letters to the churches in the New Testament sprung out of the problems found within those churches.”

The reason why Paul wrote the letter was because they weren't perfect. If you're looking for a perfect church you will never find it. If you happen to find it, don't go. You'll mess it up. And so will I.

So, that's the thing. Paul just kind of writes to address the problems. And that's what he's going to do here. He's not just cheering the Philippians on, he loves them so much to confront them in their sin.

And that's the balance we tried to cover every week. This isn't just a rah, rah session. Rah, rah live your best life kind of a thing. It's also not just like a come down on you hard session. This truth and grace. This is good news and bad news in every message. Because it is in that tension that we find life transformation. And this is what Paul is going to do.

Now, here's really the kind of question that we're going to address in the text today. What is it that was keeping them from cultivating joy and what is it that was taking their eyes off of what Jesus had tasked them to do? Like the purpose of their life in Philippi.

So, I've got three things out of this passage as we walk through it if you want to take notes. Here's the first one. It's simply this:

Joy stops when division starts.

Joy stops when division starts. So Paul starts in verse 1 of chapter 2 with a series of questions. Listen to the questions. He writes to them:

“Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?” Philippians 2:1 (NLT)

So this is a series of questions, bulletpoint style. And honestly I think that here’s how Paul intends for it to come across. They are just rhetorical questions. They are questions meant for their own kind of personal reflection. They are taking their guidebooks, early in the morning with a cup of coffee and they are just kind of thinking through these questions. Here's what he is doing. He’s trying to remind them of their experience of grace.

How many of you have ever had a phone app on your phone just randomly sends you a notification indicating, “Hey, here’s a series of pictures of your memories. Here’s going through your life.” And you’re in a meeting and you’re running errands and all of a sudden, bing, it comes up memories from 2017. And it’s that trip, it’s that experience, it’s that holiday that you’d forgotten about.

And I don’t know about you guys, but I am like, “Well, this looks interesting.” And I click on it and by the end of it I’m in tears. And somebody is like, “Why are you crying?” “Allergies.”

This is what Paul is doing with this series of questions. He’s getting ready to confront them in their sin, but what he does is he takes them back and he says, “I just want to ask you, do you remember where you were and who you were when Jesus radically changed your life?” Like, “Do you remember what you were rescued from?”

Now, keep in mind this letter comes about 25 years after Jesus’ resurrection. This is a relatively new... These are like first generation Christians. So they would have remembered. There were no church kids in this group. They grew up pagans. And the rhetorical answer to his rhetorical question would have been, “Yeah. Yeah, we remember how messed up we were. We remember that back alley that Jesus found us in. We remember our experience of grace.”

And he’s like, alright verse 2. Now that you remember:

“Then make me truly happy,” I think the NIV translates it more accurately by saying, “...make my joy complete” “by agreeing wholeheartedly,” once again the NIV translates it a bit different, it says, “...be like minded,” “with each

other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Philippians 2:2 (NLT)

I think it is really important to point out, if you're new to Bible study, that the Bible was written to communities rather than individuals. Oftentimes we read it as an individual when we should be reading it as a community. Now, this doesn't mean that there isn't any application for our individual lives. There is. I'm just saying the Bible was written to we rather than me.

And Paul writes this to a community of faith. He's writing this to a church. In other words, the application doesn't fully land if we don't realize the one anothers here and how this is affecting our horizontal relationships with other people. This is what Paul is trying to point out.

Now, when he says, "Hey, would you make me happy by agreeing with each other, loving each other, and working with one another with one purpose," what do you think was happening in this church? There was some sort of disagreement going on. Imagine that! They had a congregational meeting that just went off the rails. They were disagreeing about music and programs and colors of carpet and all of the fun things. There was some division that was beginning to seep into this church. And Paul was hearing about it.

Here's the thing. When it comes to strained relationships, isn't that just the worst? Any of you right now embroiled in some sort of conflict with somebody? Now, it's one thing to have somebody honk at you in traffic and you have no relationship. You can kind of brush that off really quickly. But when you've got somebody in your life that you love and care about and now there is some sort of division, there is some sort of conflict, there is some of impasse that affects us greatly.

The quality of our life is really dependent upon the quality of our relationships. When your relationships are unified and healthy and fruitful and intimate, then life is good. But when relationships begin to fall apart, when there is division of some kind it affects the quality of our lives.

And this is what was happening within the church, and this is the reason why there is so much church division and oftentimes maybe even in your own past. Maybe you've got some sort of church hurt. And this is why Paul says here, "Be like minded and love each other and work together in one mind and purpose."

The term *like-minded* is a big deal to Paul. He actually brings it up 10 times in the four chapters of Philippians. When you read through all of his letters in the New Testament, he mentions it 23 times. So this idea of unity and of being like-minded, it's a big theme for Paul. So we've got to ask ourselves, "Okay, what does that mean and what does that not mean?"

Well, it does not mean that we are going to agree on every single subject. That's just impossible. You get more than two people in a room, they are going to have differences of opinion. It does not mean that we should be identical in lifestyle, in appearance, in personality, or in age.

It means that all of us come together, different generations, different ethnicities, different perspectives, different walks of life, different socio-economic places and we come together in this community of faith that Jesus died for us to have.

And it's not uniformity, where everybody kind of looks, talks, acts the same, but it is unity within a wide range of diversity. And that is one of the fruits of the gospel message and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So as a church, when we strive to be diverse we are not trying to be politically correct, we are trying to be biblically obedient, we are trying to surrender ourselves to the Lordship of Christ because He is the God of the nations. And it says that one day every tongue, tribe, and nation will come together and will see our Heavenly Father in heaven. This should be dress rehearsal for eternity. If the church doesn't look like heaven, then something is wrong. Alright?

Now, here's the thing. I'm afraid in our society that we don't hear that at all and we begin to experience all of this pressure from the outside. And he's writing to a church and he's saying, "Guys, remember your aim. Remember your purpose here. The purpose is to lift high the name of Jesus and move the gospel message forward. And they were beginning to forget that because their relationships were breaking down.

So the church in Philippi, the core reason why Paul writes this letter is because the church in Philippi was facing all of this external pressure from the society in which they lived. That's Satan's number one aim.

We got a little bit of a touch of that a few years ago when the fever pitch of society, when everything was swirling around: pandemics and racial tension

and political division and economic downturn—all of this pressure from outside of the church, it shook the church.

We went after each other. We were divided. And that's Satan's number one play. He will try to get the church to water down the truth or to cave to external pressure and if that doesn't work, then he'll go behind enemy lines and he'll try to stir up dissension from within.

Satan is not a fan of unity. In fact, he adamantly opposes it and passionately hates it. So Paul is writing to say, "Remember who the real enemy is here and be unified around the mission and the purpose of Jesus."

One of things that I love about the fact that we are one church in multiple locations is... In fact, many people have asked, "Hey, where have you been the last couple of weeks?" I've been at our other campuses. And I've just been walking through, hanging out in the lobby, talking to people, ministering to people, praying with people. I love that.

And one of the things that I love about visiting some of our other campuses is that the buildings all look very different, they are in different parts of our city, different sets of people come to these campuses and I'm talking to them and I'm just listening.

Part of it is, I just want to get a pulse of what God is doing in our church. And I'm hearing a lot of the same things from different people. They are saying things like, "God is at work right now." "Aaron, I've just recently been released from this thing that I've been wrestling with." Or, "I've just been pinned down in shame." Or, "Man, the ministry of this church has just radically changed my life." God is doing something. Lots of tears. Lots of people returning to church, coming to church. There is something happening.

Can I just point this out? Just in my 15 years here, I've actually never seen our church more unified than it is right now. And I'm grateful for that. And here's the thing. I know how fragile that is. I know trust can never be demanded. Trust has to be earned and maintained. And unity is really a supernatural work of the Spirit.

And right now, for whatever reason, God's hand is on us in that. I want us to be attentive to that. I want us to recognize that doesn't mean that we will all get along. It means that our eyes are fixed on Jesus and what it is that He has called us to do. And in the midst of a very, very divided, hurting culture it needs a healthy, unified, joyful church. And that can only come through this



outpouring of the Spirit of God. And we need to be praying for that and seeking that, and asking for that.

So the second thing that I want you to write down out of this passage is that:

Joy slips out the back when my ego steps up front.

Look at what Paul writes in verse 3. He says, “Hey, guys.”

“Don’t be selfish;” now this is part of what causes relationships to break down, isn’t it. Selfishness on the inside. He says, “don’t try to impress others. Philippians 2:3 (NLT)

Now I would say that most of us would get on board with the selfish thing. None of us want to be selfish, but he also kind of attaches this to impressing other people. In other words, “I care too much about what other people think.” So that obviously affects the way that I act, live, and even the way that I interact in my relationships with other people.”

And he says:

“Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.” Now I know that’s not a very popular thing to say. We don’t hear that very often in our culture. So, I simply want to ask you, how does that land on you? This idea of thinking of others as better than yourselves. Hold that. We’ll sort of come back to it in a minute. Verse 4. He says:

“Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.” Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)

Can I just say how that just runs against the grain of the culture in which we live. We don’t hear that. And it’s really, really challenging. Most of the time culture says to us, “You need to speak up for yourself. You need to get what’s yours. You need to use your voice.” In the words of the great theologian Katy Perry, “I’ve got the eye of the tiger. You’re gonna hear me roar.” That’s kind of the mantra by which we live.

And I don’t want you to misunderstand me here. Most of the time culture will talk about self-advocacy, and self-respect and I’m for all of those things. I don’t even think what Paul writes here is diminishing any of those things. But isn’t it true... I think you’ve tasted this a bit in your life, whether you’re following God right now or not, have you ever just kind of noticed that when you make it all about you, then it just sort of... it gets missed on you?

When I try to draw attention to myself, it's just never as good as when people just notice on their own. When I take the posture of a servant it's more fulfilling than when I try to take the posture of, "Hey, look at me." There is something to that.

Paul is simply saying... He's not saying that you need to allow others to treat you like a doormat, he's saying get your eyes off of yourself and actually look to the interests of others.

Listen. I know that when I am really, really discouraged then I need to go and I need to encourage others. And there is something that happens when I encourage others, it's this weird thing, I end up getting encouraged. It's this idea, "I'm going to take my eyes off of myself. I'm going to stop navel gazing. I'm going to look up and say, 'Who is it that You want to put in my path that You want me to serve?'"

Now here's the thing. If anyone deserves to platform himself, it would have been Jesus. But He said of Himself, "I have not come to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many." And Jesus isn't just your Savior, Jesus is our model.

Can I just say this? One of the things that I think has happened in the western church, the thing that I think keeps the Spirit of God sort of pinned down is this idea... I think it's maybe two things. We really haven't released and repented of our sins. We really haven't let go of those things. We're still carrying them around. And we read the Bible through the lens of me, rather than we.

So we come to church and we maybe wonder, "Well, am I going to get anything out of this?" Now, please don't misunderstand me. I want you to get something out of this. And it's not that you can't start with that question, it's that you can't stay with that question. So if you just kind of become a part of a church with, "What am I going to get out of this?" eventually, eventually you'll move on. You'll find something that you don't like.

We are not a perfect church. There are all kinds of things around here that I don't like and wish we could do better. And half of those things are my ideas. So I understand it is not a perfect. Here's the thing. We've got this little phrase in our conference room here in the lobby: Be the church you've always wanted to attend.

It's this idea of ownership where we come together and I've talked about this before, I want you to have a spiritual bib when you come to one of our church

campuses, meaning that you are prepared to be nourished by the Word of God. We'll work hard at that. But also I want you to come with a spiritual apron to serve.

And oftentimes we get those out of whack. I would say what leads to burn out and even church hurt, oftentimes it's when we've got a lot of people who are just wearing a spiritual apron and they are run ragged, running on fumes. And they are hurting. And if that's you, maybe you came to this church and you're like, "I don't want to be known. Aaron, I don't want to meet you. I don't want to jump in and serve others. We just need to find a place to heal and be fed for a while."

Can I just say this? Man, you are more than welcome here. You take all of the time you need. You pull a seat up to the table, even if it is in the back, and you just come and heal. Sometimes our church needs to be a hospital for hurting and broken people.

There are others of you, though, all that you've been wearing is a spiritual bib. Man, you are in 14 different Bible studies, you listen to 21 different pod casts, you're like, "I wish this teaching was deeper." You are just like, "Feed me, feed me, feed me, feed me," and you're still not happy. And can I just say this? Maybe you need to take off the bib for a minute and put on an apron and begin to serve others.

Why? Because we need you. No. Because Jesus modeled that. Jesus, Himself, said, "Hey, I've not come to be served but to serve. And there is something about that. Get your eyes off of yourself and you begin to serve others—you step onto a campus and you're not just wondering will somebody talk to me, but God, "Who do you want to cross paths with me for me to talk to them and actually serve and encourage them?"

God is doing something tremendous in our church right now that I'm so grateful for. I don't know if you guys have noticed but since December, we have just begun to grow really fast. And it's not just about the growth, but it is about wanting to serve more people, people who are hurting and hopeless. And right now we're beginning to feel a little bit of the pinch at multiple campuses.

It breaks my heart, but we have to turn families away from Kids Ministry pretty much every week. And I hate that. It's just because we don't have enough difference makers in the room, people to serve.



At our North campus, they are feeling the pinch maybe more than anyone right now. Our North campus has grown by 23 percent since the beginning of January. And right now, the parking lot is about as big as a postage stamp. A couple of weeks ago we had to turn 30 cars away because there was no place to park.

So all of our difference makers at North here's what they have done. They've just got a shuttle bus, and now they've actually just expanded it to two shuttle buses, and they are asking a whole bunch of people with spiritual aprons on to go park at a parking lot way down the road and get on a bus and ride in to leave as many parking spots for brand new people as possible.

I was there last weekend and they were doing it with joy. I was walking out the door with them and they were getting on the shuttle bus and they were all like, "Man, we're just so grateful for what God is doing in our church." There is just something about that that is fulfilling when you serve.

I read this last week about a conductor of a symphony orchestra who was once asked, "Hey, what is the most difficult instrument to play?" And he responded this way, "Second violin. Because I can find plenty of first violinists, but to find somebody who can play second violin with enthusiasm is a problem." But then he said this, "If we don't have a second violin then we have no harmony.

Can I just ask you this? Some of you, are you willing to step up? Are you willing to serve? Not because we need to fill a position, but because God desires to do something in and through you to bless the lives of others. Here's the by-product. You'll be encouraged and you'll be joyful.

Can I just say this from my own experience? People ask me all of the time, "Do you still get nervous preaching?" Every single time. And some Sundays I pull up and I'm like, "You know..." Any time I start to feel insecure about the message, which is often, and my flesh side starts to get in the way, it's like I wonder, "Is this going to be good? Am I going to get a lot of amens? Are they going to like it?" It's all of this kind of stuff. I'm a human being.

And usually what I have to do is shift my perspective to say, "Listen. I am not performing. I'm serving." I'm not here to impress you. I want to help you and serve you and try to do what I can to fan the flames of your faith, even if they are flickering. And losing myself in that, I get encouraged.

Here's the third thing if you are taking notes:

Joy is the result when Jesus is the aim.

Joy is the result when Jesus is the aim. Now, in verses 6 through 11 (I'm going to read it) Paul provides one of the clearest descriptions of who Jesus is and what He did in all of Scripture. He's not introducing anything new. In fact, the way he writes this, a lot theologians and historians believe that these next few verses here were written in the syntax of a hymn. Meaning that it appears Paul was just writing back to them a hymn that they often sang together when they gathered to remind themselves of who Jesus was and what He did.

These are some of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture. Look at what he writes in verse 5:

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." What is that? Well he describes it, verse 6:

"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

"Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:5-11 (NLT)

Here's what that is saying to us. It's not just telling us that Jesus looked like this or acted like this, it says that Jesus was actually God in the flesh. And God in the flesh took on the nature of a servant who paid the price so that you could step into a new identity.

I remember reading a book when I was in college by a guy by the name of John Stott called *Basic Christianity*. And I'll never forget what he said. He said, "When people understood who Jesus was, they always had a strong reaction to Him. They didn't all love Him. Strong reaction." You either despise Him or are changed by Him but you are never indifferent toward Him.

So those passages that Paul finishes our text for today shows us that because Jesus is God and not just some good, oral teacher trying to give us some principles to live our lives by...

This simply means that because Jesus was who He said He was and because He died the death for us to step into this new identity, here's what this means. This means that you can change. It means that you can change because Jesus died for you, not just to be forgiven and go to heaven one day when you die—like a good eternal life insurance policy. Jesus died this death so that you can be set free.

Now here's the thing that I think oftentimes holds the western church back. It's that we get disciplined by news media and other outlets and we're not disciplined enough by the gospel. And we all understand what it means to be forgiven of our sins by Jesus, but that does not mean that we have been set free. We talk a lot about forgiveness. But that doesn't mean that we are free.

This is the reason why many of you throughout your whole life time you've gone forward at church camp multiple times. You've raised your hand. You've filled out a commitment card. You've been baptized every single Easter for the past 12 years. You're just like, "I'm trying to re-up. I'm trying to maintain. I'm trying to earn it. I know I'm forgiven. I don't feel forgiven."

It's the reason why some of you right now are just absolutely pinned down with shame. It's the reason why some of you didn't just get divorced, you feel like are divorced. It's the reason why some of you have an addiction that got started, maybe when you were a teenager, and now it's become this thing that you're nursing your own emotional woundedness with. And you've become enslaved by it.

There are a lot of us right now who feel that we are probably hiding. And you know what? I get it because we live in such a divided society that we are like, "If I ever brought that thing out into the light, I would get cancelled." I want you to know that Jesus already knows and He nailed it to the cross. Here's the thing. We keep putting Him back up there because we're in bondage.

All throughout our lives, we just pick up baggage. You know, little vices, things that have been said to us, maybe your dad said something to you about your body and that's what started body image issue for you. Maybe you had a babysitter and your parents didn't really know him very well, but he took advantage of you that one night. And he said, "If you ever say anything, then I'll destroy you." And you know, you never actually told a soul about that. And what happened is that just becomes some baggage.

Some of you are addicted to something. You've tried to break it. You've tried to break the cycle, but you just can't. You've given in to it. Some of you have this



secret that you've never brought into the light, never told anybody about it. So what happens is we all kind of walk through life and we can't lift our hands up, we can't focus on others. We are just so bogged down with this baggage.

And I just simply want to ask you today: what's your baggage? What's the stuff that is weighing you down? I think the Spirit of God would say, "Why are you still holding onto that?" Jesus paid the price for you to be set free from that. And the only way to be set free is to let go.

I think it's amazing what is happening right now across all of our college campuses. It started at Asbury over the last couple of weeks. It's so encouraging. A few of our staff have actually gone down to see it. I tried to get down. I could never break free to go down but I watched the livestream of it. I think it is incredible. I'm encouraged by it. And I'm seeing it spread across college campuses.

Yet, at the same time it's not like we have to take some kind of pilgrimage down there to meet the Holy Spirit. You know the same Holy Spirit is in this room that is down there. What keeps Him held back is a lack of repentance and a lack of reconciliation. In other words, when you've got your hands full of your baggage, there is no room for Him to work.

So I just want to ask you this right now—today. We're just going to end our time this way. What is it that you need to let go of and experience freedom? Jesus wants to forgive you, you've not been set free. So the way that you get set free is you just take that thing kicking and screaming out of the darkness and into the light. You just confess it before God and perhaps to someone else. And you simply let go of it. You just watch the baggage begin to come off.

Some of you right now have been really divided with a family member. Maybe you are at odds with your spouse right now. You came here today in separate cars because you're planning a divorce. And I believe that the Spirit of God wants to reconcile that relationship. The Spirit of God will not outpour Himself upon us if we are divided with one another. So we need to let that go. We need to drop the bags one at a time.

And here's the way we do this even from the passage that Paul wrote. He said, "Hey, all tongues will confess that Jesus is Lord." We will bow before Him. So here is just a symbolic dropping of the bags that are keeping us in bondage.



Would you be willing at all of our locations in just a posture of letting go, would you be willing to bow before your Father, literally by getting on your knees? And if you don't have any room around your seat you can come out into the aisles, come down front in front of the stage. If you cannot get on your knees for health reasons, maybe you just take a seat and you just bow in a posture of prayer.

Right now if you need to be released from an addiction that you are scared to death to confess to others, would you bow? Right now if you are pinned down by your shame, you feel like your Heavenly Father hates you, would you be willing to bow before Him and just release the baggage? Right now if you're just hanging on by a thread, and your mental health is not good, would you be willing to bow? Because when you bow, you're basically saying, "God, I'm helpless. I need you. I need you to enter in. I need you to come in.

If you're divided with somebody right now and you need to be reconciled with, would you bow? Because maybe you've thrown counseling at it and you've thrown books at it, you've thrown conferences at it, but you've never invited Him in, would you be willing now to just begin to bow before our heavenly Father?

Here's what we're going to do. We're just going to spend a few moments inviting the Spirit of God to come in and do in this room what only He can do as we just begin to bow. More and more people. I see people all over the room beginning just to bow.

And I know that's weird and I know that feels vulnerable and I know you feel like everybody is looking at you. I promise you, nobody is looking at you because we're all in the same boat. We all need it. And we're going to spend a few moments doing this before we just begin to lift our voices up to God.

Here's what I want to ask. Sometimes I ask you to come down front and pray with a complete stranger. What if just circles of prayer just kind of open up all over the room? We saw that happen at Asbury. There is no reason why that can't happen here. It's the same Spirit of God. If we repent and we are reconciled and we let go of our baggage what might God do?

So, God, we just come to you right now in a posture of humility and repentance and prayer. God, we just fall to our knees recognizing just how much we need You. And, God, we are pinned down by so much baggage and shame that you are just unable to work. Your Spirit is here but our hands are full. So, God, would you help us to release?



I just pray that bags would drop all over the room, that we would confess our sins to You and to one another. That we would choose to be reconciled by Your Holy Spirit. That we remember whose we are. That we would live a life worthy of the gospel, not to earn it or to maintain it, but in a right response to what You've done to set us free. So, God, I'm going to stop talking and let You work in ways that only You can. Come Holy Spirit, come.

Worship:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

Helen H. Lemmel

