

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHEN TEMPTATIONS EMERGE | REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

AARON BROCKETT | MARCH 5, 2023

Alright. What's up Traders Point family? Good to see everybody. Want to welcome everybody joining us at all of our locations and online.

And I don't know if this is really coming through the cameras or not, but if you're here at our Northwest campus, if you smell kind of a strange, funky stench in the air, that's because 2500 fifth and sixth graders took over the building this weekend. Man what an incredible weekend they had. My fifth-grade daughter was so excited to come. She had such a great time.

And I just want to take a minute to thank the hundreds of difference makers around here who served at Superstart and many of them came back to serve this weekend. Man, they are true heroes. You guys are just incredible and I just want to thank you for the investment that you are making.

We dropped our daughter off Friday night and I was just so proud of that whole team. It was like a well-oiled machine. They were doing such an amazing job. And everybody who I interacted with just had this joy to them. It was crazy. It was almost as if we are in a sermon series about it. It was just amazing to see. So I just want to thank you guys for that.

And I also want to let you know, last week, if you weren't able to be with us, you really missed a significant weekend where toward the end of the message we just created some space for God to show up and to pour out His Spirit in the room. I love what Jon Tyson says, "God goes where He is wanted." We just kind of cried out to God at the end of the message across all of our campuses. And I just invited you to lay the baggage that perhaps you've been carrying for a long time at the alter and to just take a posture of kneeling before God.

And so many of you did across all of our locations. I had texts and DMs and emails from people throughout Sunday and even during the week just telling me, not specifically what they confessed, but that they confessed. And there was this spirit of reconciliation and repentance in the room.



I heard from married couples who took a step toward health in their marriage. And I heard people say, “Man, I was carrying around these bags for a decade and I finally let go of them.”

It was just an amazing taste. I don’t think it is everything God wants to do to reawaken us to what He desires for us, but it was a taste. So I’ve come back thirsty this week, I don’t know about you, just to have more of an encounter with God.

Every Monday our leadership team gets together. We sort of evaluate the previous Sunday and kind of forecast where we are headed. And all of us were in agreement that we sensed God doing something. I pointed that out last week—across our nation, college campuses, Jesus got His own commercial at the Super Bowl and there is a movie out right now. All of this stuff is happening.

And it feels as if God wants to reawaken us and He wants to pour out His Spirit. So we can’t delay any longer. We need to do a worship night, just an extended period of time when we can hear from Him. We did not have a worship night planned for 2023. There are a number of reasons for that. But we just called an audible this last Monday and we said that we need to do a worship night. So we’re going to do one this coming Wednesday, 7 o’clock, here are the Northwest campus. I want to encourage you to be here.

You know, you can worship God... I totally believe this. The Spirit of God will meet you in your living room. He will meet you in your car, but there is something about a pouring out of His Spirit when you gather with others, crying out before Him. So I want to encourage you to be here.

We did a worship night about a year ago, and in my estimation, that was the turning point for our church, post-COVID, for God to really begin to do some things in and through our church. So I’m really expecting God to show up in big ways this Wednesday night. We expect to fill up, so come early, carpool so that way the parking lot isn’t a nightmare. And if this room is too intense for some of you, we’ll have other venues around the building for you to join us in worship just with the gathering. We’ll have rooms for families. We just want you to be here for that.

I also want to point out this. I’ve had a trip planned to Israel for about six months and I leave Tuesday morning. So I’m super bummed that I’m not going to be able to be here for this, but I will join you via screen from Israel. Alright? I’ll be in Israel. I’ll be there for about 10 days and back. So I’m looking forward to that.



If you have a Bible and a guide book, go ahead and find Philippians, chapter 2. Philippians 2, verses 12 through 18 is the ground we're going to cover today.

If you're just now joining us for this series, we are in week six of a 10-part series where we are just walking our way through the book of Philippians, verse by verse seeing what God has for us in this. And we're calling the whole series *A Rebel's Guide to Joy*.

You may be like, "Well, what in the world does that mean?" And, historically speaking, to be a rebel within our culture meant somebody who would shrug off societal norms and expectations and just sort of do their own thing. You know, just kind of march to the beat of their own drum. It's the James Deans, or Lady Gaga at the moment—depending on your generation.

Somebody says, "Okay, let me just kind of look and see where everybody else is moving. I'm going to go in the opposite direction." That's what it means to be a rebel. And I think a lot of us sort of envy that. We aspire to that. We may not always have the courage to do that. But that's what we desire.

Well, here's what we're doing. In our culture today it kind of seems like what everyone appears to be doing is anger, addiction, and anxiety. What everyone seems to be doing is cynicism, criticism, and cancel culture. We've got all of those things down. So to be a rebel would mean that we would move in the opposite direction of those things.

The norm now a days is that we would chase after things that would hopefully fill us or would provide fulfillment only to find that they are leaving us emptier than ever. So, with rare exception, the default of most people is impatience and irritation. And what we would desire to do as the people of God who encounter God, is that we would rebel against all of that in the best way and stand out within this culture in which we live.

So we've just been saying that the thing that this broken, hurting, divided angry world needs right now, more than ever, is a joyful church. People who will be authentically joyful—not faking it, but it would just be spilling out of us because we have been people who have encountered God.

Now, thankfully, Paul writes a letter that kind of guides us through how to do this. And if you've been here during the series, I've just pointed out that Philippians is Paul's happiest letter. He is so joyful as he writes this, which was really wild considering the circumstances in which he wrote it.



Now, we've already pointed out that he was imprisoned, quite possibly on house arrest in Rome for two to three years during this time period when he writes a series of letters, Philippians being one of them. And he was also chained to a palace guard as he writes to encourage us to be joyful.

Now, I've shared that with you already. I haven't really given you a lot of back story around Paul. Let me just give you the Cliff notes version. Paul traveled all throughout Europe starting churches and then he goes to Jerusalem to teach in the temple about Jesus.

The Jewish leaders are furious that he is there. So a mob attacks him. They drag him outside of the temple and they are just about to beat him to death when somebody calls the cops. And the cops happen to be the Romans. So the Roman guard showed up and they are getting ready to arrest Paul. And Paul mentioned in that conversation that he had dual citizenship. He is a Jew, but he also is a Roman citizen. And that kind of changed things.

They were like, "Well, we'll just let Rome deal with you." So they put him on a ship across the Mediterranean to Rome. But while he is on the ship this massive storm blows up and he gets caught in the storm and they are lost at sea. Likely Paul is chained at the bottom of this vessel, in the middle of a storm, with no Dramamine, so that would have just been the worst.

They finally wash ashore. They are shipwrecked for about three months. Finally they get to Rome and they put him on house arrest or they put him in prison for two to three years and then one day they get the knock on the door and they say, "Hey, Paul. We're going to go for a little walk God Father style." And as they would do with a lot of high-profile prisoners they would march them three to four miles out of town where they would behead them in private, that's how things end for Paul.

Anybody else had a week like that? I have. I had a flat tire this week. I went to the IU game this week. I'm so sorry Hoosier fans. That was awful. That's about the worst that happened to me all week.

But here Paul had all of this stuff happen to him. Here's my point in saying all of that, if anyone had a reason to complain, if anyone had reason to be bitter, it would have been Paul.

But instead he encourages us with things like this, "Rejoice in the Lord," sometimes? No. He says all of the time. Always. He says, "To live is Christ to die is gain." He writes

things like this, “I consider everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may be in Christ.”

Which means this. If Paul could find joy in those circumstances, then I can find joy in mine. If Paul could find joy in those circumstances then there isn't any circumstance where I can't.

That doesn't mean that today I want to minimize what you are walking through. Please don't hear me say that. I know that some of you right now are in the middle of a really dark season. I know that some of you right now you are walking through unbearable pain and grief and trauma. Your knees are about to buckle because of the pressure that you are under. So, I'm not trying to minimize any of that.

I'm actually trying to show you a way to grab on to joy. I want you to begin to think about joy this way. It is a bullet proof vest that you wrap around your soul to say, “Nothing can touch me. You can take away my health. You can take away my resources. You can take away relationships. You will not touch my joy, because Jesus conquered a grave so that I could have it.”

So we are a people that simply say this, “Come at me what will, but I'm going to be a joyful person.” because joy is never dependent upon our circumstances. It is always dependent upon who God says we are in Christ. That can never be taken from you.

However, here's the thing. Here's what I want you to see. Paul's going to drive at this in the text today, when you come across people hopefully like those of us gathered today who are just running after joy, you will always find the joy suckers among us. You know—don't look at them—but it's the Eeyores, the Karens, the wet blankets among us. Alright? They are there.

There is an Eeyore in all of us. You know? If we can find something to complain about, if we can find something to grumble about, if we can find something to be bitter about, we'll find it. That just means that we are human.

And this is what was happening in the church in Philippi. So, today's text, verses 12 through 18, is really a continuation of verses 1 through 11 that we covered last week. And this is what Paul addressed.

Now in my opinion, it's just my opinion, the church in Philippi was Paul's favorite. It was a great church. Out of a lot of the churches that he wrote to in the New Testament, this



church has a lot going for it, but it still wasn't perfect. And it's just another reminder that no matter how great or healthy a church is, there is always room to grow, there is always room to improve.

So Paul kind of presses on that with them and this is what was at the center of Philippi's issue, they were a good church, They loved Jesus. They were on mission. They loved each other. But they were under a tremendous amount of pressure from the outside. They were living in a Roman province and there was a lot swirling in Roman culture.

So Rome was putting all of this pressure on the church in Philippi from the outside to the point that their lives began to shake and it created tension from the inside and they began to become divided over secondary things that were happening within the culture. Sound familiar? So there was all of this pressure.

Now, here's what I want you to write down in your guide book:

Pressure always reveals character.

Character is not necessarily who you are when everything is going great. Character is who you are when things are falling apart. Character is who you are whenever you are carrying a heavy load. Character is who you are when there is pressure.

This is why I've told my teenaged daughters—and I don't know if they're too excited about this—but I've told my teenaged daughters that one day when they find a young man who they might want to marry, let's just say 30 years from now, I've just told them, "You know what I'd really love to do is before he proposes marriage to you, I'd really like to take him on a trip. I'll bring him back. But I'd like to take him on a trip, maybe overseas somewhere, maybe the slums of Kenya, somewhere high stress, like culture shock. I just want to intentionally put him in a place where he's stressed out. I don't want to kill him. I just want to get close. And I just want to see what comes out of him when he's stressed. I don't think they are too excited about it. But that's what I'd like to do.

This is what was happening in the church at Philippi. All of this pressure, all of this stress, I think it's something for us to be reminded of. Anytime we have an economic downturn, anytime we have a presidential election, anytime we have a pandemic, any time we have racial tension and social division it reveals about who or what we are looking to. It reveals a lot about the character we've been developing. It reveals a lot about the Spirit of God either with us or not with us.

So Paul urges them to be unified. That was last week's message. We're not talking uniformity, we're not saying that everybody needs to look alike, talk alike, act alike, think alike—that's a cult—a church is a group of people who look very different, multiple generations, different ethnicities, different perspectives, political persuasions all unified into Jesus Christ and on mission for Him to advance His kingdom.

So as we come to verse 12 today... How in the world can we do this? And Paul would say, "Well, we look to Jesus, who being the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but He made Himself nothing. He got low. He emptied Himself. And then God lifted Him up." That's where we left off last week. The hymn the early church sang.

Now, as we come to verse 12 Paul's going to resume. Here are three things that I see in this text. If you're taking notes you might write these down in your guide books. Within every one of us, things that are tempting to divide us and actually leave us bitter rather than joyful are temptations. Here's what I mean:

Temptation to do my own thing.

Temptation to get my own way.

Temptation to make it all about me.

As is often the case, this outline comes straight out of the text and it is a personal confession. I just want you to know that I am often tempted to do my own thing. I'm often tempted to get my own way. I'm often tempted to make it all about me. And I would imagine that there are many of you who would say, "Yeah, I have the tendency to do the same."

And all three of these are kryptonite to relationships, marriages, families, work environments, and churches. You get a group of people who are tempted to do their own thing, get their own way, make it all about them then you will find incredible division and strife.

Temptation to do my own thing.

So the first thing, the temptation to do my own thing. Look at what Paul writes in verse 12.

"Dear friends," just want to point out once again, how these people were so loved by Paul, *"you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important."* Philippians 2:12a (NLT)

So what is Paul saying? Well, Paul started the church. He was their pastor for a little while. He was there physically doing life with them, living with them. He married and

buried them. He cared for them. He led their group. He went for coffee with them. He was there. He was their lower case “p” pastor. He was their lower case “s” shepherd. And he said to them, “Guys, when I was with you you were so great to do everything that I instructed. You were applying the teaching to your life. And we were a community of faith together. But now that I have left, everything is starting to fall apart.” And Paul is broken up about that.

How many of you can remember the very first time that your parents left you at home alone? How many of you can remember the very first time that you got the keys to the car and you were the only one driving? First time ever. You didn’t have your mom or your dad in the car with you. You had this freedom. Who you were in that moment says a lot. I remember the very first time I ever got the keys to the car and I didn’t have my mom or dad with me, my mom was making dinner, she said, “Aaron, can you run to the grocery store and get a gallon of milk for dinner?” She handed me the keys and I got in her car for the first time. Nobody else was in the car.

And I kind of lost my mind. I remember I turned the music up way louder than my mom would ever let me. And I listened to the songs that I was not allowed to listen to. You know? Metallica’s *Enter Sandman*.

I went to a Metallica concert a couple of years ago. Everybody was old. It was wild. But I digress.

So I’m in the car and here’s the other thing that I did. Not recommending this. But I jumped my mom’s car. Not with cables. Like all four wheels off of the ground. I figured out how to do that. I hit the curb and jumped it. That’s what I did with that freedom. Right? When no body else was there.

Here’s what Paul is saying, “Hey, guys. Now that I’m not there...” I had a mentor tell me this a long time ago, he said, “The quality or the legacy of someone’s leadership is not how things go when they are there but after they are gone.” So I think Paul is broken up about this. I think that Paul was a very popular pastor. And now he’s beginning to wonder, “Was your devotion to me? Or was it to Jesus? because now that I’m not there, you guys are arguing with each other, you guys are taking your eyes off of Christ.” This is why I just want to say to you guys, it is the honor of my life to be your pastor. I do not want this church to be built around my personality. That’s why I share the teaching. I do not want this church to be built around who I am. That’s why I want to continue to point to Jesus. I have zero desire to be a celebrity pastor. Those words make me throw up in my mouth.

Amen. Don’t agree with that too much.



So here's the deal. I want to do everything I can to earn your trust. I would never expect it. But please don't put your trust in me. Please don't put your trust in Pastor Ryan. Please don't put your trust in a campus pastor or a group leader or worship leader. Now, love them. Honor them. Encourage them. We need your encouragement.

Two things make me cringe. When somebody walks up to me in the lobby and they say, "Oh, it's like I'm meeting this celebrity." That makes me cringe. The other thing that makes me cringe is, "Well, I don't want to compliment you because I don't want you to get a big head." Both of those things are like off. Right?

I'm a human. I need encouragement. I need your prayer. Trust me, don't put your trust in me. Put your trust in Jesus. If you are here for any other reason than chasing after Him, then we will let you down.

So, long range for me, I'm currently trying to lead and make decisions for the day, hopefully way off in the future, when I pass this off to somebody else. My desire and prayer is that this church would continue, wouldn't even skip a beat, because you're still chasing after King Jesus.

Paul goes on and he says this. He goes I want you to:
"Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear." Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

That can be kind of a little bit of a scary verse, but remember what I said last week? We cannot earn salvation. Right? Jesus earned it for us. Jesus paid the price. So he's not saying earn your salvation. We are saved by grace through faith. He doesn't say work for your salvation. He says, "Work hard to show the results of your salvation." Ah, that's different.

Jesus died to make me clean, Jesus redeemed me, He saved me by grace so now I'm actually working hard against those things that would actually show, "I'm a Christian, but I'm not very gracious toward others. I'm a Christian, but I'm not very patient. I'm a Christian, but I'm not very joyful." He goes, "We are all human beings. We are all in process, but we work hard not to earn salvation but to show the results of it." And then he says, "Do this toward God with deep reverence and fear." That's a little bit of a scary thing. What in the world does that mean? I think it simply means this. Give God the weight He deserves. Honestly, we speak of God too lightly. God has no interest in being your co-pilot. He wants to be the pilot. God has no interest in being your add-on, your assistant. And oftentimes I think we have a tendency to sort of talk down toward God as if He is in our debt or as if He owes us an explanation.

I love what God says to Job, and I think He says it very directly, He says it very pastorally. Job's whole life fell apart and Job is questioning God, saying... I've never forgotten this. God just says to Job, "Hey, Job. Where were you when I was laying the foundations of the world?" And all of a sudden I think it dawns on Job that he realizes that he's well above his pay grade. It's this idea that we're going to give God the weight He deserves. God has a perspective that I do not have.

Secondly:

Temptation to get my own way.

Paul addresses this in verse 13. He goes:

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

Pop quiz everybody. But it's an open book test, which are my favorite kind. So we'll leave the verse up on the screen. And I want you, if you know the answer, to yell it out audibly even at our other locations. So, from that passage, who is at work?
God. Yeah. Say it confidently. God. You're in church. You can say it.
At work in who?

You, me, I'll also accept us. That's good.

Is God a giver or a taker?

He's a giver.

Are desire and power bad things?

No. Not according to that verse. Apparently a lot of this depends on motivation and to what end.

Who provides this desire and power?

God. He's the one who fills us with it.

To do what?

Please Him. Yeah.

There is a lot of good theology in that verse. So we're chasing after, we're working hard, God is the one who is at work.

Somebody needs to hear this today. God is at work in your life right now. And some of you are still asking the question if He even exists. He's at work. He's sanding away some of the rough edges. He's trying to heal you from trauma. He's trying to get your attention. He's trying to help you discover the you that He made you to be before sin messed all of that up. He's chasing after you. He's wooing you.

Here's the thing about what God desires to do in you. God is way more concerned about who you are becoming than delivering you from the set of circumstances that you are



walking through. This is why His answer to prayer isn't always yes. It isn't always right away. Because God is trying to form you and me into the character and the likeness of Jesus Christ.

I wish this wasn't the case but just from experience and observation over the years, I've just seen that the times and the moments where I've grown the most are when I've walked through some of the darkest valleys, when I've experienced some of the most pain.

God desires not that we become conformed to the world around us, but that we would be transformed. And listen. That takes some time. And that takes a process. And we've got to trust God in this.

You know, I remember years ago I was going through a really challenging time. And it was really ministry related. It was with my job. I won't even go into all of the details. But I remember pulling the car off to the side of the road on a Sunday afternoon. I was by myself and I just started crying and crying out to God. I was really frustrated. And I was frustrated because I felt like we weren't getting the results that we needed to get in church. I was just discouraged for a lot of different things.

And as I was crying out to God this kind of just spilled out of me. Apparently I'd been watching *Jerry Maguire* or something. Because this is what Jerry Maguire said to Cuba Gooding, Jr. in the locker room. My prayer to God was like, "God, I'm trying to help You." I was like, "God, help me help You." Can you believe that I would pray that? I didn't have time to really think about it. It's horrible theology. It's bad emotion. I was just like, "God, help me help You."

And I remember in that moment, I said it and then I just sat quietly in the car and I just had this sensation that He was smiling at me and then it sort of turned into laughter. I was like, "Alright, thanks." I started the car. Went home. And I was feeling sorry for myself.

That evening my wife asked me if I would move the couch from one side of the living room to the other. My son, Conner, he's 20 now but he was like two at the time. So I'm moving the couch. I'm pushing it across the living room. Conner is in his diaper. He gets between me and the couch and he starts pushing too. And he's grunting but he isn't doing anything. I'm the one doing the pushing. And I remember that at one point he looked up at me, and he was like, "Help me, Daddy."

And then I realized why God was laughing.



Oftentimes we're like, "Hey, God. Can you join in on the thing that I'm doing?" Hey, God. Can I get Your attention?" "Help me help You." And God's like, "Actually, I'm not..." It's not that He wants to come through and give us a set of circumstances; He's trying to conform us into His image.

Temptation to make it all about me.

Paul goes on, man. He says this. It's just going to get a little harder before it gets better. Verse 14:

"Do everything without complaining and arguing..." Philippians 2:14 (NLT)

To which, I kind of complained about that this week. I was like, "Really? Everything? Everything, God. You just took away two of the things I'm actually good at." Complaining and arguing, that's like America's favorite pastime. I'm half convinced that collegiate and professional sports exist so that we can complain and argue.

It's always amazing to me to watch grown men, if you're at the game or watching the game, yell passionately at the screen or the wide receiver who is an elite athlete and a specimen of a human drop the ball. "I can't believe you dropped the ball!" And I'm like, "Well he was running." Right? "Faster than you'll ever run, from somebody way bigger than you'll ever run from." How many of us have ever dropped our phone and we're just standing there? So maybe we could cut the elite athlete some slack.

Paul says, "Do everything..." And I think most of us know that we shouldn't complain and argue, but in certain exceptions, I feel entitled to complain and argue.

Well, what is complaining? Well, let's just break it down. Complaining is useless verbal commentary about things you cannot change. It is the Twinkie of relationships, feels good to do it—absolutely no nutritional value. You walk away from it and you are like, "I kind of feel gross right now. It kind of felt good in the moment, but I don't know that it was worth it." Because it wasn't. And it actually really chipped away at that relationship. What is arguing? Well, James 4 explains it so well. James says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" Then he answers it, "They come from your desires that battle within you. You desire but you do not have. You covet but you cannot get what you want. So you argue and fight."

This is plaguing the western world. And it is the cancer of relationships, marriages, friendships, relationships with your kids, and churches.

Have you ever been so stubborn that you're in an argument with your spouse and then all of a sudden it dawns on you that you know you're wrong, but you keep arguing

anyway? Yeah, me neither. But, I'm sure somebody out there probably had that experience.

So what is that? It's this idea that I desire and I want but I'm not getting what I think I deserve. And the source of this is the sense of entitlement. In other words, it's the temptation to make it all about me. So I become the focus. So why should we do everything without complaining and arguing? Well, The answer is in verse 15. I love how the NIV puts it so I'm going to read this verse out of the NIV. It says:

"...so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault," he's quoting from Deuteronomy, 32. When Moses was leading the Israelites who were often always complaining against him. And he says, "...be blameless and pure in a warped and crooked generation." Philippians 2:15a (NIV)

If we can manage to eliminate or minimize the complaining and arguing then actually we're going to really stand out in a warped and crooked generation:

Complaining NEVER wins the culture.

Complaining never wins the culture, it just drives them away. If we can manage to do the opposite, then we will stand out, which is what he says at the end of verse 15. He goes: *"Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people."* Philippians 2:15b (NLT)

Any of you ever been out west, maybe to Wyoming or Idaho and you walk out and you're miles and miles from any city and you just look up at the sky and it's so dark and yet the stars are so bright. That is what Paul is driving at. You can look at the darkness of our culture through a certain set of lenses. You can look at it with a lot of fear and trepidation, or you can look at it as an opportunity to shine like stars.

He doesn't say anything... It doesn't mean that truth isn't important. It doesn't mean that morality isn't important. Those are important. But notice where he says for us to start. It kind of eliminates complaining and arguing. Try to make this not so much about you and me, but begin to really focus on others.

Something strange happens when you begin to put the focus on somebody else, then you've earned the opportunity to speak. Then you've earned the opportunity to serve. Then you've earned the opportunity to influence.

Then he says in verse 16:

"Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless." Philippians 2:16 (NLT)

So he says, "I want you to hold on to the word of life." And I want to encourage you to do the same. I want you to chase after. I want to ask you how you are doing when it comes to God's Word. Are you looking at it as an add on? Or is it something that you are really devoted to? Is it something that you are thirsting for? Is it something that you are chasing after.

I want to encourage you not to turn a sermon into something that you just consume on a treadmill on a Tuesday morning. Not that you can't listen to sermons on treadmills, but what are you bringing to that? Are you asking God to... Are you looking to have an encounter with God, not just a few little take-aways that you can apply to your life. The sermon isn't living and active, but the Word of God is. So the Word of God is living and active and God wants to speak something fresh into your life. Are you holding onto that? And then in verse 17 he says:

"But I will rejoice even if I lose my life," wow, such a tremendous amount of faith there, *"I will rejoice even if I lose my life,"* and then he says this curious phrase, *"pouring it out like a liquid offering"* some translations say drink offering *"to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God."*

I want you to think about that. As you serve others, really what you are doing is you are pouring your life out as unto God. And then he says this: *"And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy."* Philippians 2:17-18 (NLT) So here's what Paul just said. He said, "As God fills you up, as you cling to His Word, as you hold on to Him, then you pour yourself out, that's a joyful person." A joyful person is somebody who places themselves in a position to have an encounter with God, where God does what only He can, He fills my cup. And then, as an act of gratitude, I pour myself out to others for His glory.

So this idea of liquid offering or drink offering is not likely a phrase that you used this past week. It's something that came out of the Old Testament sacrificial system where they would have a burnt offering to God and then they would come and they would pour a drink offering over that, a liquid.

Here's what it would do, just like whenever you have a little fire on the grill and you pour some water on it, the flames shoots up and there is some smoke, same would happen on the burnt offering. And they saw it as something tangible where there was this billow of smoke going up to God. They looked at that as a tangible offering up to Him. This is what Paul says that his life is like and it's what he invites all of us into as well. Now, here's the thing. This is so counter intuitive to us. Because we've been disciplined by culture. And culture says, "Well, you need to fill yourself up. You need to do you. You need to go after the thing..." And I'm not against self-care, but I think self-care is dangerously close to this whole idea of, "Well, I'll fill myself up." Instead of this idea of,

“I’m going to put myself in a position where I’m going to have an encounter with God and I’m going to let Him fill me.”

I think, for so many of us... We’ve got a lot of empty cups among us. I know at times, even for me. I just have to watch it. I have to monitor my heart. I have to monitor if I’m empty. And if I’m empty that’s a red flag.

Now, I think for many of us, when we’re empty, we’re hurting. And when we’re hurting and we’re empty, we have a tendency—we are likely to fall into the temptation of getting my own way, making it all about me. And the irony is that it just leaves us emptier than ever.

Or we pull away. I don’t know how many people I talk to who I just stop seeing at church, where they pull away from serving, and I’ll bump into them somewhere. And they’ll come up to me and say, “You know, I was just going through a rough time.” And one of the first things to go is church. It seems so counter intuitive. I get it. But it’s what the enemy would want you to do. He wants to isolate. “I’m empty, so I’m going to pull back for me.” But where are you going to get filled?

Or we do this. You have one empty cup that meets another cup and they decide to get married. And so it’s like, “You fill my cup.” “Well, no I thought you’d fill my cup.” And eventually it falls apart. Because your spouse can never fill your cup, or a new friend. This is where unmet expectations come from. I had this set of expectations. You didn’t fill me. So I got offended. And then my unaddressed offense turned into bitterness and my bitterness turned into contempt and then the relationship fell apart. This is a work environment. This is a church, “I’m not getting filled here so maybe I need to go to a different church.” Or whatever it might be. So we look to get filled by someone or something else.

Now, I want to say something here and I want to get the tone right. I want to say this very pastorally but very directly:

It is no one’s responsibility to FILL YOUR CUP!

Nobody else can fill your cup. The only person who can fill your cup is God. And when you look to somebody else to fill your cup, whether that’s a spouse, or a friend, or a boss, or a pastor you place upon them a weight that they cannot possibly live up to or bear. They are not your Savior. Jesus is.

As your pastor I don’t know everything that I need to know to fill your cup. As your pastor, there is not enough of me to fill everybody’s cup here. My responsibility is not to



fill your cup. You may be like, “Well, what good are you then?” Fair question. Fair question. I don’t know.

Here’s the thing though. There have been some times early in my ministry where I tried. Somebody would say, “The sermon isn’t deep enough.” Well, okay. Let me study harder. Let me try to fill your cup. “You know, we need to do such and such ministry.” “Well, okay. Let me try harder. I’ll try to fill your cup.” And it’s futile. So if you’re looking for joy, if you’re looking for fulfillment, if you’re looking for more, then here’s what I want to ask you to do. I want to ask you to place yourself in a position where you have an encounter and an outpouring of God’s Spirit to fill your cup, because only God can.

Start focusing on EMPTYING YOUR CUP.

And then, as God fills your cup, here’s what you do. You start emptying your cup. This is the equation for joy. Joy is that you allow God to fill your cup and then you start pouring yourself out into the lives of others.

Now, listen. I’m not talking about being taken advantage of. I’m not talking about allowing yourself to just be burned out. I’m saying that the anecdote to burn out is not to pull away and isolate, or to make it more about you. I’m saying the anecdote to burn out is to get alone with God on a consistent basis to hear from Him, to let Him fill your cup. And then what you do with that full cup is you just start emptying yourself out. You start pouring yourself out to other people, just as Paul modeled and Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Here’s where I want end today. Last week I had a bunch of bags up here, weighed down. And I just encouraged you to bow and to, figuratively speaking, remove the weight that you’d been carrying by confession and repentance and just giving it to God. Here’s what I want to ask you to do this week. Have we got any empty cups here today? Burned out souls? Beaten down. Discouraged. Dry. What I want to ask you to do... Last week we asked you to bow and by all means you can bow this week as well if you’d like. I want to ask you to extend your hands—just two open hands. This is a posture of desperation. This is a posture of receiving. This is a posture of, “God, I’m a dry cup.” And maybe right now you’ve been running after someone or something else to fill your cup and it’s just led to more burn out and bitterness. But maybe today we would just sit and have an encounter with Him. And here’s what God has promised. Where He is wanted, where people are pursuing Him, He pours Himself out. He reawakens us. He fills us up. He does a work within us. And it’s an encounter.

I want to encourage us to have an encounter with God. I want to encourage you to go from being a watcher to a worshiper where you come to God just as you are and let Him fill your cup. And then, from what He fills you with, you pour yourself out. You know why?



So that way He can pour more in. And so we're going to do that right now. Just an extended time to pray. Just an extended time to receive.

Maybe you might just want to pray in groups around the room. Maybe you might want to get on your knees. Maybe you want to keep your hands extended. But right now, here's your prayer:

God, would You fill me? God, would You fill me? I've been trying to do this my own way. Would You fill me up so I can pour myself out?

Lord, God. We're so grateful for the example of Jesus. We're so grateful for the writing of Paul. So, God, we just come to You right now and just ask that You would forgive us for making this too much about us, for living our lives through a sense of entitlement, maybe looking to a spouse, or a friend, or a boss, or a pastor to do for us what only You can.

So, there is a time and a place for the intellect. There is a time and a place for counseling. There is a time and a place for hands on practical application. There is also a time and place for just an encounter.

You know, our relationships are not just the sum of what we know, they are the sum of what we feel. So, God, we just ask You to pour out Your Spirit in this room. I pray that something supernatural would happen. That somebody would be reawakened, that somebody would come alive, that somebody would be set free, somebody would know that he or she is loved. That there would be healing and change and a shift in perspective.

God, we just want more of You. We're hurting and we're dry. We need what only You can provide. In the name of Jesus, we ask.

