

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEBRUARY 11 - 15, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

Philippians 3:12-21; Hebrews 5:12-14

As we consider Philippians 3:15-21 this week, our theme being “joy despite adversity,” let’s step back three verses today for context. Paul writes about “pressing toward the goal” (Philippians 3:12-14), calling for Christian growth. In verse 15, he challenges, “*Let those of us who are mature think this way.*” Each day this week we’ll highlight different faith walks, some embodying joy in trials and others not.

Last week we explored sanctification, in Paul’s case often spurred by intense persecution. Today’s example of Christian maturity in adversity is Corrie ten Boom. “Corrie ... was born in [Holland] in 1892 and grew up in a devoutly [Christian] family. During World War II, she and her family harbored hundreds of Jews to protect them from arrest by Nazi authorities. Betrayed by a fellow Dutch citizen, the entire family was [subsequently] imprisoned. Corrie survived ... and later told her story in a book entitled *The Hiding Place*. ... Through [their efforts], it was estimated that 800 Jews’ lives were saved ...

“Corrie ten Boom returned to the Netherlands after the war and set up a rehabilitation center for concentration camp survivors ... [including even] those who had cooperated with the Germans during the occupation. In 1946, she began a worldwide ministry [serving] 60 countries.” (Biography.com) “She received numerous tributes for her work and courage, including being knighted by the queen of the Netherlands. [Corrie] was also honored by the State of Israel ... invited to

plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles ... where Oskar Schindler is also honored.” (Crosswalk.com)

Did Corrie ten Boom seek honor as WWII and the Nazi genocide escalated? Obviously not—she saw great injustice and embodied the “Good Samaritan” on a grander scale. Her family’s love for oppressed neighbors cost several their lives in Nazi concentration camps. But she faithfully persevered, serving many for God’s glory.

Corrie’s joy shows clearly in two of her most famous quotes: “In darkness God’s truth shines most clear.” “Trying to do the Lord’s work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.” (goodreads.com)

QUESTION

What’s the relationship between “joy despite adversity” and Christian maturity? How were Corrie ten Boom and her family like the Good Samaritan of Luke 10?

Perhaps You Noticed our daily prayer requests have changed. In order to be better mission partners, we are taking on the discipline of praying for the ministries and individuals our mission dollars support. Our hope is to better cover these ministries in prayer and for all of us to become more familiar with these individuals and ministries.

PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Pray for Shepherd’s Pantry, which serves food to over 100 individuals and families every week. There are many living in our community with a critical lack of income, resulting in substandard situations and an inability to afford food.

TUESDAY

Philippians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:2-14; Titus 1:4-5

The Apostle Paul is famous for his conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9), church founding and development, and brilliance as a witness, scholar and Christian communicator. However, he's also notable as a world class mentor, one who developed Kingdom-builders. Paul used challenging circumstances not only for personal growth, but also to coach protégés in joyful service.

“[The Apostle Paul] was ... a role model, mentor, and example for others to follow. Paul knew the gospel would continue beyond his life because he invested in the discipleship of new believers. ... Paul mentored from the overflow of his own walk with the Lord ... [Paul called leaders] to follow Christ and be led by Him first ... [and then] also challenge others to follow their lead.” (LifeWay Women) “Paul [made] it clear that he [took] a personal interest in [his protégés’] spiritual development. Paul’s view and practice [was] that a central task of the church is to provide role models for the spiritually formed life.” (Timothy Gunnels)

“Timothy, his mother, and grandmother probably converted to Christianity on Paul’s first visit to Lystra. ... The Apostle trusted Timothy with many critical assignments: to encourage the Thessalonians under persecution (1 Thessalonians 3:2), to confirm the faith of the new converts in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), and to pastor the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).” (John Dahlager)

“Having trained [Timothy and Titus], Paul trusted them to deal effectively with sticky ministry challenges, whether confronting, and if needed removing, sinning elders ... or appointing qualified leaders.” (Biblical Foundations)

Paul understood a coaching dynamic that I learned via athletics and business: to spur others’ “growth spurts,” effective mentors often need to “push hard and support hard.” Accomplished pro-football coach and Christian, Tom Landry, said: “Leadership is getting someone to do what they don’t want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve.” (Brainy Quote) Paul enveloped this with love for his protégés, thus calling Timothy “my beloved child” (2 Timothy 1:2) and Titus “my true child (Titus 1:4).

Have you considered, like Paul, the joy of mentoring another who’s younger in the faith? Glenkirk Church provides related avenues, whether assisting APU students or a fellow covenant partner.

QUESTION

What were a couple of “secrets” to Paul’s efforts as a Christian mentor? Where might God be calling you to mentor another, one who might benefit from the trials, gifts and maturity you embody?

PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Pray for strength and wisdom for the Shepherd’s Pantry clients; may their eyes focus on God’s goodness in their lives.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 3:16, 18; 2 Peter 2:15-22

“Charles Templeton, born in 1915 ... was generally acknowledged to be the most versatile of the new young [mid-1900s] evangelists.” (Ken Ham and Stacai Byers) “[He] converted to Christianity in 1936.” (Chancellor Christian Church) “Templeton soon rose to prominence [in global Christian ministry and outreach] ... In 1946, he was listed among those *best used of God* by the National Association of Evangelicals ...

“Templeton also became one of three vice presidents of the newly-formed Youth for Christ International organization in 1945. He then nominated his good friend, Billy Graham, to be field evangelist for the new ministry. Templeton, Graham, and a few others regularly spoke to thousands, winning many to Christ both in America and in Europe.” (Ham and Byers) Templeton worked alongside Billy Graham for many years, both in ministry and preaching at evangelistic events.

“Despite his popularity and seeming success as an evangelist, all was not well with Charles Templeton. The more he read, the more he found he was beginning to question the essentials of the Christian faith. ... He could no longer believe God’s Word beginning with Genesis.” (Ham and Byers) Despite his mounting doubts, Templeton attended “Princeton Theological Seminary, which would eventually lead him

to become an agnostic in 1957.” (Chancellor Christian Church) Thereafter, Templeton became an active opponent of the faith, authoring anti-Christian books and articles, etc.

“In doing research for ... *The Case For Faith* ... [circa 2001, author Lee] Strobel sought out and was granted an interview with Templeton ... [When Strobel asked him about Jesus Christ, Templeton responded,] ‘He was the greatest [Person] who has ever lived.’... Strobel quietly commented: ‘You sound like you really care about Him.’ ‘Well, yes,’ Templeton acknowledged, ‘He’s the most important thing in my life. ... Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus.’ ... He then said, ‘I ... miss ... Him!’” With that the old man burst into tears; with shaking frame, he wept bitterly.” (Wayne Jackson)

Had Templeton “lost his salvation,” if this is even possible? Had he merely gone prodigal in his 40s, returning to God in later years? Only God knows. What is apparent, however, is that he’d lost the joy knowable only in active, faithful relationship with Jesus.

QUESTION

How did Charles Templeton appear to lose his joy? What lessons might we take from the example of his life?

PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Pray for wisdom for the Shepherd’s Pantry Board and leadership team to reach new communities in the upcoming year.

THURSDAY

Philippians 3:10-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; John 17:14-19

Today's Philippians verse addresses the "natural person," representing each of us in our fallenness. This returns us to the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve's story and the incident afflicting every human thereafter with an inborn, corrupting sin nature.

Like the living God—Father, Son and Spirit—each of us is triune, consisting of spirit, soul and flesh. Adam and Eve were created in close communion with God, led by their spirits [eternal essence, enabling relationship with God], their souls [personality, will, intelligence, emotions] following and flesh subordinated. Upon Adam's and Eve's rebellion, they "flipped upside down," flesh-led, soul following the flesh, and spirit deadened apart from God. Unfortunately, each of us since has inherited this fallen nature—we're sinners not because we sin, but sin because we are sinners.

When the LORD asked Adam, post-fall, "*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:10), His question wasn't geographically based. God was prompting Adam to recognize where he now was spiritually, his actions separating him from God. Fortunately, God didn't abandon Adam and Eve in their fallenness, but clothed them (Genesis 3:21), perhaps anticipating the animal sacrifice later essential to the Jews' atonement for sin.

Each of us can be grateful, likewise, that God doesn't forsake us despite our sinfulness. When Jesus instructed Nicodemus that one must be "born again" for right relationship with God (John 3:3), He was talking about the means whereby we're restored to "right side up." Christians are reoriented to being spirit-led, communing with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit, our souls following and flesh [natural appetites and inclinations, including pride and selfishness] subordinated to spirit and soul. Such right orientation doesn't perfect us—that's a process, sanctification, incomplete until we're physically with Jesus—but God sees us thereafter as righteous due to Jesus Christ's merit.

Did Adam and Eve irreparably lose their capacity for joy after falling? The Bible doesn't say. God's banishing them from the Garden (Genesis 3:23-24), however, provides glorious encouragement. God's plan for eternal life would come via the Redeemer (John 3:16-18), not through wretched, fallen people eating from Eden's Tree of Life and suffering thereafter forever!

QUESTION

How are humans a "trinity" in design? When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, how were they "flipped upside down"? Why did God banish them from the Garden after the fall, and why is this a blessing to humankind?

PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Pray for a continued heart of love and compassion from the Shepherd's Pantry volunteers who serve each week.

FRIDAY

Philippians 3:20-21; Acts 6:8-15, 7:51-60; Colossians 3:2-3

We end the week considering Stephen, the newborn church's first martyr. Little is known of Stephen's life other than he was appointed among the church's "first deacons" and was used by God to perform mighty signs and wonders (Acts 6:1-8). We also know of Stephen's exceptional grasp of Israel's history and powerful witness per the Acts narrative, as well as his subsequent execution by stoning. Faithful service and truth-telling followed by a wrongful, brutal murder—is that the stuff of joy?

"The godly manner in which Stephen died [contrasted] with the grisly wickedness of [the] supposedly respectable Jewish leaders. He was calm, clear-headed, articulate, and kind, even [while being stoned to death]. But these ... members of the [Jewish] high council were out of control with rag. ... They rushed upon him, drove him out of the city, and stoned him to death." (Bible.org) Who had a life awash in joy? Stephen—possessing "the face of an angel" despite this unjust trial (Acts 6:15)—or God's enemies? In Christ-like fashion, Stephen even asked forgiveness for his executioners (Acts 7:60).

"A worldly Christian is no threat to [Satan's] domain of darkness. He gets to live for the selfish pursuit of comfort, with a little church attendance thrown in to round out the good life. It doesn't hurt

[the enemy's] cause when the pastor gives sermons that make everyone feel good about themselves, teaching them how to use God for personal well-being and overall family happiness.” (Bible.org)

Stephen embodied Paul's famous tenet, “*To live is Christ, to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21). “Far better to die with Stephen under a hail of rocks crushing our skulls and welcomed into heaven by the risen Lord Jesus, than to die peacefully in the midst of worldly comforts, surrounded by family, but then to hear, ‘Depart from Me, I never knew you!’” (Bible.org)

When Stephen gazed heavenward just before dying, he saw Jesus standing at God's throne (Acts 7:55). It wouldn't be surprising if our Lord then said the words each of us longs to hear one day, “*Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Enter into the joy of your Master*” (Matthew 25:23).

QUESTION

Why did the Jewish officials revile and execute Stephen, the church's first martyr? How were Stephen's actions and attitude particularly like those of the Lord Jesus Christ as He faced His enemies?

PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Pray for the continual blessings of donations and food support for Shepherd's Pantry in 2019.

Sources

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