

# Discovered by Joy

Philippians 1:1-2 and Acts 16

## Introduction:

- The situation surrounding a letter greatly impacts what it contains.
- If I read to you a short love note, you might think that it is precious.
- If I tell you that it was written shortly before a man died, you might think it important.
- If I tell you he wrote it with gunfire and mortars exploding around him in a trench during World War I, it becomes dramatic.
- If you learned that, after writing the note, our author single-handedly ending a battle that would have cost countless people their lives, we would celebrate him a hero.
- The point is that occasions and situations matter.
- For this reason, we will spend today looking at the background surrounding Philippians.
- Philippians is an epistle written by a man named Paul
  - This is a missionary support letter
- Paul is writing from Rome... in prison...
  - As we will see, this is one reason why the theme of the letter - **encouragement to live a life of joy and progress in the gospel** - is so striking
- The specific occasion for letter becomes clear at the end of chapter 2: The Philippians had sent Paul financial support with their friend, Epaphroditus, but he came down with a life-threatening illness and almost died. He is just now healthy enough to trek back home. Paul sends Epaphroditus with letter in hand so that the apostle can joyfully encourage and thank them for their partnership in the gospel.
- Where did it all begin? **Title: Discovered by Joy - Let's pray.**

## Acts 16, Discovered by Joy: The Philippian Church

The Apostle Paul went on a series of missionary journeys over his years. He is now on his second missionary journey traveling with a young man named Timothy, who was half greek, half Jewish, but sold out for Jesus.

### Acts 16:6-10, The Holy Spirit's Guidance

*And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the*

*vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

- Guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Obedience to the Holy Spirit
- Purpose and Goal of the Holy Spirit → to proclaim and glorify Jesus
  - In their lives and in your own

## Acts 16:11-15, Discovered by Joy: The Entrepreneur

*So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

- Philippi was an important Roman Colony on a trading route, former home of Emperor Augustus and a leading city in Macedonia. It's residents were citizens of Rome.
- Roman citizenship brought with it unique rights, like the right to vote, to hold office, to a legal trial, no police brutality, sue people, own property
- Lydia is the kind of person you would expect to find in Philippi
  - White collar, trader, wealthy, purple was for the finest in society
    - Ex: Cape May businesswoman who sells things only the wealthy buy
  - As God forms the church here in Philippi, we should be reminded that we need people like this.
    - Avoid prosperity theology (if you're godly you're rich) and poverty theology (if you're godly you're poor). Both are false.
    - God gives some people an incredible ability to make money. Make it, and leverage it for his glory and the good of others.
    - RG LeTourneau (Luh-tur-new) gave 90% of income away
- Lydia is discovered by Joy, and in the process is transformed forever
  - Access point for the gospel into her circles → group conversion
  - Hosts Paul and Timothy generously

## Acts 16:16-24, Discovered by Joy: The Exploited

*As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.*

*But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

- Slave girl, owned by mankind, exploited for evil → the very opposite of the gospel
  - Slavery vs. freedom... Selfishness vs. Selflessness... Ill-gotten gain vs. grace...
    - She is both spiritually and physically enslaved
- Upon her freedom from spiritual bondage, her owners are furious
  - They don't care about her, only their own gain
- The slave girl is the kind of girl you find along the outskirts of high society
  - Ex: Sex trafficking, drugs, drinking buddies, even many churches
    - People don't care, they just want to use you
    - We want to care more about how you're doing than what you're doing
  - The church needs to have within it and to go help people like this.
    - You don't have money. You have a story money can't buy. And God will make it more majestic than you could possibly imagine if you let him.
- The slave girl is discovered by Joy, the name of Jesus sets her free
- Paul and Timothy aren't rewarded with hospitality, but with lashes and prison

## Acts 16:25-34, Discovered by Joy: The Everyman

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*

- Paul and Silas are praying/singing, prisoners listening → what a testimony!
- Earthquake, jailer thinks everyone escaped. He goes to kill himself. He's desperate.
  - Jailer = Joe the Plumber, the everyman, most of us.
  - Hardworking folk who do what they need to do, but are one tragedy away from desperation and seeming hopelessness (business collapse, injury, job loss, etc)

- C.f. Family Promise stories
- Compare how Paul and Silas respond to a desperate situation vs. him
  - This is the testimony of the gospel that opened his eyes!
  - What might have happened if Paul and Silas just sat there glum and depressed?
- You might say, “I don’t get a chance to tell people the gospel. I’m dropping the ball.”
  - How you respond in trials, stress, tragedy speaks volumes.
  - Key theme: Paul’s joy can’t be stopped b/c he is rooted in the gospel.
- He (and family, group) comes to faith, is baptized, serves Paul and Silas.

## Pulling it all together: Common Ground

- It is to these people and more that Paul pens Philippians 1:1-2
- What do all of these people have in common?
  - A personal connection and a love for Paul... Their hometown... Joy... Woven together in the gospel...
- They become the foundation of the church in Philippi to whom this letter is written
  - What a family reunion! The entrepreneur, the exploited and the everyman.
  - Having been discovered by ‘Joy’ Paul is going to encourage them to continue in it
- These stories are the seedbed of the themes of the letter. Paul writes them from prison, not dreary and depressed, but overflowing with joy. He knows they have hardship, trials, tribulation and persecution, but he also knows firsthand what they need to do in it.
- Even the most used words in the letter are rooted here in Acts 16
  - Joy... Fellowship, Partnership, or Commonality... Citizenship... In Christ... Gospel...
- What is the key theme? **Encouragement to live a life of joy and progress in the gospel.** Within this Paul is going to encourage them to:
  - Live as citizens of heaven, not of Rome
  - To serve other people as Paul served them
  - To have a godly attitude in life with the gospel at the center, not their trials
  - To cling to the godly leadership that was modeled to them in Paul, Timothy, Silas, Epaphroditus and to do likewise

## What does it mean for you this week?

- **Who do you relate to most in the story?**
  - The entrepreneur...
    - God wants to redeem your influence and wealth for kingdom movement
  - The exploited...
    - God wants to redeem your brokenness and mend it into a beautiful story
  - The everyman...
    - God wants to bring purpose and meaning to your daily life which can, at times, feel so empty and meaningless
  - Maybe it’s Paul in prison, standing up for joy when he has reason for despair

- Don't waste your cancer, your pain, your misery → cling to the gospel, cling to joy and watch God move
  - I kept asking myself this week, "Am I joyful? Is my joy contagious or am I stressed and grumpy?"
- Regardless of who you relate to, YOU are an important part of the story here at Revolve.
  - If you're here, God has brought you here (surprise). This week, reflect on the question, "Why has God brought me, specifically, to Revolve instead of any of the other 200 plus churches in Cape May County? What does God want ME to bring to the table for the sake of my church family and the gospel?"
  - Your testimony, your story, the gospel at work in you is part of the work God is doing and wants to do
  - With the gospel as our common ground, and not some shared affinity or interest, we stand on a foundation of joy together, in Christ, for the sake of the forward movement of the gospel!
- As a community, our story is still being written. Let's make it a story that is rooted in joy, defined by joy, with an aim towards spreading unstoppable joy to all people - 3 E's - in Cape May County and beyond.