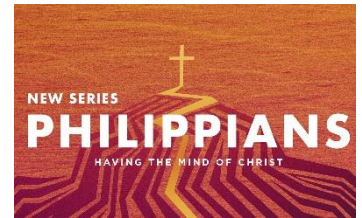


**Title:** Philippians Part 1: Unspeakable Joy

**Speaker:** Neil Chotai

**Passage:** Philippians 1.1-2

**Big idea:** To have unspeakable Joy we must accept 2 spiritual blessings from God.



Hello, my name is Neil Chotai I am the Pastor of Church Life. We are beginning a brand new message series on the book of Philippians - having the mind of Christ

We encourage you to do some personal study during our series. Look at the following resources to help you get the most out of this study on Philippians.

- *To Live Is Christ to Die Is Gain*, by Matt Chandler
- *Philippians For You*, by Steven J Lawson
- <https://bibleproject.com/bible-studies/reflections/sharing-the-attitude-of-jesus/>

Before we dive into the passage this morning, we will be looking at some background information on the book of Philippians.

One of the major themes in the book of Philippians is Joy. There are many references to the word joy or rejoice throughout this letter. The word joy and rejoice are used around 16 times in the 104 verses of Philippians.

Joy is a little word that has a lot of expression. For example, my oldest nephew just got married a few weeks ago in England, unfortunately my wife and I couldn't attend but we saw the pictures on social media. And we could see the joy on his and his wife's faces. We see joy at weddings, in fact right after this message this morning I am going to officiate a wedding of a church couple. And there will be joy there. Many of us have felt joy in different ways, joy in our job, marriage, in the birth of a child, friendship and so on.

When I was younger, I received a lot of joy when I got gifts. That didn't last long because my parents got the idea that instead of gifts, we should get money and that money would go to our education. I remember many birthdays, opening the card, seeing the money, and just handing that to my mom - that was a kill joy. However, if we really wanted something my parents would think about it and many times, they did buy me something that I really, really wanted. Now this is going to date me, what I really wanted one year was a Walkman.

Now for those of you who do not know what a Walkman is such as my children, let me explain it. It is portable music playing device. To listen to music, you needed to insert something called a cassette.

I know, I'm using fancy words that you may not have heard of. But in those days, there was no Wi-Fi or internet to download music. The best music, I'm sure you all would agree was 80s music.



My mom bought me the Walkman and I loved it. And I'm listening to the music, have the headphones on and it's so cool, it's portable. I have that music up high and loud. I'm a teenager of course I'm going to have it loud, right? I remember my mom saying, "It's too loud are you deaf?" And I responded, "WHAT?" I didn't care how loud it was, I was full of joy.

Today I want to share a message on unspeakable joy.

This is the joy that you just can't put into words because it is a divine joy.

In Greek it's spelled k-a-r-a and means wellspring. It's this wellspring that comes up that energizes us with something much deeper, because it's not based on circumstances. It's based on something deeper, which we're going to see in just a moment.

Continuing the background, we need to look at the context of this scripture.

When we look at any type of scripture, to do it correctly we need to understand the context of which it was written, we need to look at the history, meaning, and words that were chosen in the period it was written.

We can't put our 21st century mindset to a document that was written in the past. We need to remember that this document is 2000 years old, we may not have a reference point for the meaning of some things that are written. So, we need to find that reference point, we need to dive deep into scripture to understand what it means. Understanding the context helps us understand the scripture.

My family and I are south Asians that were born in East Africa. We left Uganda, lived in England for a couple of years and then came to Canada. I was exposed to words in Canada, especially at the elementary school level, and had no idea what they meant because I did not understand the context or meaning of the word properly.

One day I heard a kid in my class saying that he did something wrong and his parents found out. This kid then said that they were so mad at him, that he was grounded. I had no idea what "grounded" meant. I came from a different cultural context.

So, this is what I thought grounded meant for the longest time.

I literally thought that the parents made a hole in the backyard, put the kid in it and made him stay in the ground for the night until the next day. I thought Canadian parents were barbaric and treated their kids so badly. Someone needed to help this kid and call the police or something.



Knowing context, knowing original meaning is extremely important when we look at the Bible and we need to understand it carefully and the Holy Spirit guides us to know more.

The church in Philippi was founded about 11 years prior to this letter written by Paul.

We must look way back into the book of Acts 16 to find information on how the church in Philippi was born. When Paul on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, he received a vision from God of a man who was calling out from Macedonia Paul to come and help them.

This is important because this is the first time the Gospel goes to Europe.

So, Paul being obedient to the Holy Spirit, goes to a place called Philippi.

When Paul was in Philippi, he went to an area where there was a prayer meeting, primarily among the Hebrew people. He goes and he shares the Gospel. A woman by the name of Lydia becomes a Christ follower, she and her entire family believe in Jesus and are baptized.

The next day, as Paul and his ministry partner Silas, are going around sharing the Gospel a woman comes to him who can foretell the future because she is demon possessed starts yelling out "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the devil, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the evil spirit left her. Then this woman becomes a Christ follower.

Now, this woman's employers didn't really appreciate what Paul had done because she was not bringing in money anymore and that negatively affected their income. So, these employers took Paul to the city officials and complained what Paul had done. As a result, Paul and Silas are put in prison.

While in prison, bound in chains, they are praying, sharing the Gospel, and singing. As they are doing this, a violent earthquake shakes the foundations of the jail, the prison doors fly open, everyone's chains loosen, the jailer wakes up sees what happened, and he becomes a Christian, and then he and his family get baptized. In the morning when the city officials come, they can't believe all that has happened. Realizing this is causing so much of a commotion that they basically tell Paul to leave town.

That is how the church of Philippi, in Europe, is established.

It was under great persecution that the church of Philippi was born. But like every church since the creation of the Church by God, the church of Philippi had certain challenges. During this series we're going to be looking at those challenges and how they desperately wanted to know God and be good followers and disciples of Christ. They wanted to have the mind of Christ.

Philippians was written while Paul was in prison in Rome. The church that he founded decides to send him some provisions to help him. They are concerned for him and questioning how they can have Joy in their lives if Paul is imprisoned for the Gospel. But they need to understand that the Gospel gives Joy no matter the circumstances.



Open your Bible to Philippians 1 and follow along.

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Philippians 1:1-2

Let's look at verse 1.

Paul, the writer of this personal letter, states that this letter is from him. He includes the name of Timothy, not an author of the letter, but a person that he is mentoring, who will be coming to Philippi in the future. It was customary in the 1st Century to always say who the writer was first, unlike today, when we put that information at the end of an email or letter. He goes on to describe who they are.

Now when you hear the word servant or read it you may have certain preconceived notions of what a servant is. Today we're looking at the context of which this was written. So, what does Paul mean by being a servant?

When I was really young, I always imagined that one day I would be so rich I would have my own chauffeur, I would have a maid, I would have a butler, and I would live in a \$1,000,000 home.

Now I don't have a butler, maid, or chauffeur, but I almost have a \$1,000,000 home; and it's not because I'm a millionaire, it's because of the crazy housing prices and inflation in London right now. I had no idea that a \$1,000,000 home in 2022 would be a 3 bedroom, 1 car garage house on the property the size of a postage stamp. The idea of having any type of servant is out of the question for me.

So, as Paul is writing this to the church, he is trying to use words they will understand. When he says the term servant most of his followers at the church, would have had a Hebrew mindset and understood what he meant.

## Servants

Servant is a word that goes back to the Old Testament. It's a phrase that was used by Moses, meaning a God given authority as the accredited messengers of the Lord. To be a servant in the religious language of the Hebrews it meant to be one that was chosen by God. The title emphasizes not servitude, but being an instrument that God is pleased with, to work through individuals. It means to be in a humble position in which the person serves others with the word of God. It's about an authentic servant-leadership to the church in general.

And then he begins to address the church, to everyone.

## Saints

When we look at the word saint, we must ensure we look at the biblical definition of the word saint itself. If, for example, we use the definition of a saint being an individual who had died and was canonized by a religious organization such as the Catholic Church we would be doing a major disservice to the rendering of this verse itself. That definition of a saint was created by a religious organization for individuals who did certain things.

The true biblical definition of saint is the word holy which is equivalent to the Old Testament Hebrew word holy, meaning "to be separate". The Saints are separated individuals in a double sense.

- In one sense there is a separation from evil, from their old life of sin
- The other is a dedication to God in his service, engaging in a new life of purity, being a witness to the world.

All believers are Saints through their spiritual union with Christ upon salvation. There is nothing they have done to attain it, but by the objective status of Saint is given to each believer because of what Christ did for them. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the resurrection - The Gospel. Further it does not refer in any way, shape or form, that this is done after the death of a Christian. These saints in Philippi were very much alive.

These Christians stood out from the corrupt dark world of the Roman Empire shining their light from the Holy Spirit. They were easily distinguished as they lived a holy life in an unholy culture. It was blatant that they were on a different path and headed in a different direction than the immorality of the society around them. They stood out in the city, people knew who they were, and as a result, would have faced opposition.

The next word that Paul uses is,

## Overseers

Paul recognizes the leadership of the church - a group known as the "overseers" which we could translate as shepherds. They were the ones who would give the spiritual oversight and management to the church. By mentioning the overseers Paul intends to elevate the importance of these leaders in the church intentionally drawing the focus of the whole congregation to these men.



Serving alongside the overseers were the,

## Deacons

Deacon means the one who ministers at the table. While they do not have the same responsibility as an overseer, they nevertheless are vital in the care of people, and in implementing the ministries of the church. These were individuals that cared for the widows and met many of the practical needs of the people.

Many believe that the reason why Paul included both the overseers and the deacons was that this letter would first be sent to them and then they in turn read it to the congregation or the Saints in general.

This letter to the Philippians is addressed to everybody in the church. Not just 2000 years ago but those who are in the 21st century. That is, us - he is addressing the Church as a humble servant to all of us.

It was not easy being in the church at Philippi. As I mentioned before this was a Roman outpost, it was a colony. It was the place to be if you were not in Rome. And loyalty and service were only to the Roman Empire, specifically to Cesar, and to no other King, not even Jesus.

Here we have a group of Christ followers who are living their lives totally in opposition to the morality of the day they have separated themselves because Christ separated them from their world to live a life that is holy unto God. So, there would have been great persecution upon this church.

They still had to go about their daily life, they had to interact with the society but during their time things were tough and things were horrible and many of them could have been distraught in the world that they were living in, but Paul encourages them and us. Even though they are facing hardships in life, even though we face hardships in life, we must live lives of unspeakable joy. But how? Paul shows us in verse 2.

In verse 2 Paul writes...

<sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Philippian 1:2

To have unspeakable joy, we must receive Grace from God.

Let's look at the word grace. It's the Greek word karis.

Does that sound familiar to another word that we just saw a few minutes ago?

Joy is kara or sometimes, karas. Grace is karis. The word joy comes out of the word grace. So, the first word you must understand is the word grace. This wellspring joy comes out of an understanding of grace.

The best way to describe grace, is in the context found in [2 Corinthians 12:7-9](#)

<sup>7</sup>I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you".

Now, we don't know what the thorn in the flesh is - and it's good that it's not defined. But this was an issue that Paul had to face, and we have certain issues that we must face. It could be a relationship issue, a physical or financial problem, or something else. Whatever the situation is, we usually ask God to take it away immediately. But God has a different plan for us. He may not take it away, but he will give you the grace to face the problem. He says, "My grace is sufficient for you". I'm going to give you what you need to manage the challenges that you face in life. And therefore, you can have joy.

Paul's desire is that we enter into a fuller experience of grace in the Christian walk. It is for daily grace that we need to live in continually, that we would know the all-sufficient grace of God in our lives. Paul is asking that it be operative in the very depth of our souls, he is wanting that this God given power be in the core of our

innermost being. It's not receiving more grace from God, because God has given all of His grace to us upon salvation, but it is to experience that grace fully.

Secondly, to have unspeakable joy, we must receive Peace.

Paul goes on and uses the word peace. Peace in Greek is the word eiréné. It's such an important word. In Hebrew it is Shalom and used as a greeting - even today. The traditional greeting among Hebrews is shalom aleichem (peace unto you); to which the response is aleichem shalom (to you, peace). It's important for us to have peace in our lives as much as we can because it's only that peace that can help us in life and give us joy. Paul will describe this peace later in chapter 4.

In John 15: 11 Jesus was praying a prayer to the Father, He's saying, [“Father, I share these words with them so that their joy may be full.”](#) God wants us to experience a fullness of joy in our life. We can only experience the fullness of joy if we have peace. During all situations, being upset, full of grief, anxiety, it's hard to have peace in our lives, but it's not peace that we can create, because we can't, but we can receive peace that passes all the understanding of the world, from God, that will give us Joy. It's not greater peace, because all the peace that God had given was given to us upon Salvation, but it is a greater understanding of peace and experiencing it in our lives. It's when we are in God that we can experience this. King David in Psalm 16:11, says - [In your presence is fullness of joy. Not just a little bit of joy](#), but fullness of joy.

It's the inner assurance and tranquility that God ministers to the hearts of believers and that keeps us spiritually confident and content even in the midst of turmoil. It is the supernatural peace within our souls.

Only God can give this inner tranquility. This is the quiet calm within us in the midst of life's raging storms.

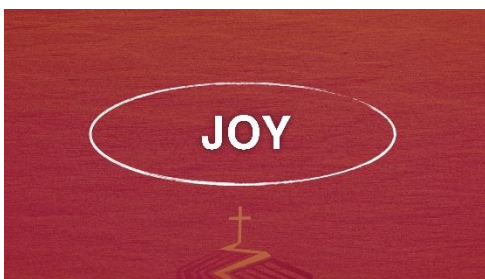
[Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.](#)  
[Philippian 1:2](#)

Paul is very clear on where this grace and peace comes from.

He declares plainly that grace and peace come from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is teaching us the fullness of deity that is shared equally by the father in the son. These two persons within the Trinity possess the same divine essence in attributes. This verse makes it clear, affirming the full deity of Jesus Christ. It places Jesus Christ on equal status with God the father. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, with all authority in heaven and earth. Jesus is submissive to the Father in his role within the godhead, but he is as an equal.

Paul assures the early church (and us) that no matter what situation we are in, we can receive grace and peace from the greatest source and that is God. All of us, whether we are saints or in leadership of the church can receive the unspeakable Joy that God gives.



For those who are Christ followers this is key to living our lives in the world that we are in. In the circumstances that can take the joy out of our lives we can still have joy because God gives us grace and peace to live each day.

There are those that may be out there who are Christ followers and somehow you have lost the Joy that God has given you. Don't let the enemy take the Joy that God wants you to have. As a follower, don't go down that road, for, he freely gives you his grace and peace upon your

salvation. Do you remember the day that you became a Christ follower, when you accepted Jesus Christ in your heart? That was the day you received the fullness of grace and the fullness of peace. You can't get any more of it because God has given all of it to you. But you can choose to accept it and live in it daily; experiencing it fully, or you can choose not to and live a life that is miserable, and the devil will let you. Don't do the devil any favours - God wants you to have Joy, an unspeakable joy.

The way to have **Joy** is to receive  
grace and peace **FROM** God.

But there is a prerequisite:  
you must first have  
grace and peace **WITH** God.

This letter from Paul is for the Christ follower. Remember, the saints, overseers, and deacons.

To have unspeakable Joy, we must freely receive the spiritual blessings of grace and peace FROM God.

But the prerequisite is, you must have a relationship with God to attain unspeakable Joy in the first place upon salvation.

This is what I mean, you must have grace with God, you must have peace with God and the only way that you can do that is if you become a Christ follower.

Grace with God is accepting the love of Jesus. Accepting what Jesus did on the cross for you, which was done out of love for you. It was only when Jesus came to earth that you could be forgiven of your sin because Jesus took your sin, put it onto himself, and died on a cross for you. He did this so that he would face the wrath of God for the punishment of your sins.

Peace with God is a relationship with Jesus. You are reconciled with God for all eternity, you begin a relationship with him. Because when Jesus died, your debt to sin was paid and you can have an everlasting relationship with God. There is peace between you and God, a peace that could only come from Him to you, because you could not do it on our own.

Grace and Peace - that's the Gospel message.

To have grace and peace FROM God, as we looked at today, we must have grace and peace WITH God. Do you have a relationship with God, do you have grace with God and peace with God to give you unspeakable Joy? Perhaps today is the day to decide in your heart to accept Jesus and make him Lord of your life. If that is you today and you want to make that decision in your heart, I will pray a prayer and would invite you to pray it with me, silently in your heart, as you accept Jesus into your life and become a Christ follower receiving Grace and Peace WITH God so you can experience the fullness of grace and peace FROM God.

I mentioned earlier that I had a Walkman and the last thing I said was I had it really loud. And my mom thought it was really loud because you know I'm a teenager and I like music and all my friends like music as well. But what we both didn't know is that there was actually a problem that was forming within my ears. It was not until my last year of Bible college when I found out. I realized I inherited a gene that causes early onset hearing loss. I was told that I had 7-14% chance to inherit the gene, which I did. And if I had the gene, I had a 50% chance of hearing loss, which I did.

I was in my last year of Bible College ready for a place of ministry, ready to do what God had called me to do. And then this hearing issue comes up. In my last few months of college, I had a hearing test and it was determined that I needed hearing aids. Thoughts were running through my mind, and it was like a battlefield. I didn't have the money for it, it costs thousands of dollars. I didn't know who would hire me as a young pastor in his 20s with hearing aids. I wondered who was going to date me, who was going to marry me, a person who has hearing aids.

I came from that doctor's appointment and went to the place where I was staying for my internship and just collapsed, everything that I wanted to happen in life may never occur, because of the news that I just got.

I was angry, I was hurt and all I could do was just sit on my bed and feel my world falling apart. I reluctantly, and I'm being transparent here, took my bible and opened it. I read a scripture that was written in it from a youth speaker at a retreat I went to a few years before... It was in the book of Philippians, 1:6 "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." I began to cry and then read all of Philippians. In the midst of my situation, my turmoil, I chose to receive the 2 blessings of grace and peace to have unspeakable Joy.

Since then, about 10 years ago I found out I could have a one time operation in both ears and for about 10-15 years I wouldn't need hearing aids. But that time is coming to a close and in a couple of years or so I will have hearing aids again. But that is ok...because I am deciding to accept the grace and peace from God and have unspeakable Joy.

No matter what you're going through God wants to give you the grace and peace that comes from Him, the ultimate source, so you may have joy. God wants to give you unspeakable joy.

Today is the day to accept it. It's up to us to live with unspeakable joy,