



MOMENTS TO PONDER
UNVEILING JOY:
EXPLORING THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Episode 90: Philippians 2:19-30

Hi Friends! Welcome to Moments to Ponder. This is a podcast designed to help you spend a few moments in God's Word wherever you are and take away something to ponder.

We live in a loud, busy world that can make it hard to find the time to get into God's word and I'm grateful for these moments we have to ponder the book of Philippians in the series that I've titled, Unveiling Joy. I'm Betsy Marvin and this is episode 90.

(music fades)

How old are you?

And, when you think of your age, how do you feel?

I'm not aware of your age as you listen today, but whatever it is – may you feel blessed to be the age you are.

I'm in that age group that no one likes to check when they enter it...it's the one that gets the AARP emails and the senior discounts. As I record this, I'm closer to 60 than 55 and I'm actually...ok with it. Sometimes I even have to remind myself of my age because I don't feel like the 58 year old that I am. And, although I would love to have the physicality of my 30 year old self, I am grateful for the lessons learned, insights gained and growth that comes with living since the late 1960s.

As we approach the section of verses at the end of chapter 2 today, I realized that Paul would have been in his mid-to-late 50s, like me. By this time he had learned so much about leadership, mission work, churches, and people and he just wants to share his experiences and wisdom with them. He also values mentorship.

When we look at Paul's ministry, we see that he often had a younger disciple with him. In his first journey, Paul had a falling out over a young disciple named John Mark. This rift separated him from his missionary partner, Barnabas, for a season as they dealt with conflict over this young man. But that doesn't stop Paul, maybe with the example of Barnabas and help of Silas, from investing in another young man, Timothy.

In Vs. 19, Paul writes, *If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along.*

Timothy was from the city of Lystra and became a Christ-follower during Paul's first missionary journey. He was both Jew and Greek, being raised by a godly Jewish mother and grandmother while having a Greek father. He traveled with Paul during his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys and, as spoken of here, is with Paul while he is in prison writing letters to the churches they have been a part of.

Later, Paul would write 1 & 2 Timothy as pastoral letters to Timothy as he leads the church in Ephesus. Through those letters, we discover that Tim had a rather timid, reserved nature and struggled with those that felt he was too young for his leadership. We don't know his age, but if you've ever been a young leader, you might understand the chip on his shoulder. With that in mind, listen to verses 19-24 in chapter 2.

If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

He goes on to speak of the other person with him, a friend from Philippi.

²⁵ *Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need.* ²⁶ *I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was*

very distressed that you heard he was ill. ²⁷ And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

²⁸ So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. ²⁹ Welcome him in the Lord's love^[1] and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. ³⁰ For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away.

Two men that have been by Paul's side as he's sat in prison. He shares incredible words of praise for a man that had become close like a brother even through terrible sickness. A co-worker, fellow soldier, messenger, and servant, Epaphroditus will be sent back home to his people and church with honor and great joy.

And glowing words and recommendation for Timothy! Paul speaks of him as a son, serving with him like no one else, proving his love for Christ and the church. He points out that rather than just think of himself, like most young people, Timothy genuinely cared for them thus, Paul's desire to send him to the church – to encourage them and pull them together and then return with good news.

As focus in on Timothy today, knowing his struggle, I wonder how he felt as he heard these words? When you are given words of praise or encouragement, do you deflect them or receive them?

Does your answer depend on who is given the encouragement or praise?

I have mentored, coached, and walked alongside many young people over the years as they sought to discover what God had for them in their lives. And, like Paul, I have encountered many that have a belief that is limiting them in some way. I can just see Paul here, writing these words, as a way to remind Timothy of who he was in Christ and of how Paul saw him in order to help him see past his age to the purpose God had for him - pastor.

It's so hard to get past a limiting belief which is something that limits what you believe about yourself. As in, I'm too young to be a pastor in Timothy's case. It would hold him back, limit him, because he believed it was true rather than what God was

telling him. These beliefs limit us mostly because we don't even see them until someone points it out in love and reminds us of a truth we already know – but didn't think applied to us. As I continue, ask yourself, Do I have a belief that is limiting me?

Maybe you think you're too old...or too young. Maybe you think your past actions limit who you can become. Maybe it's your gender – girls can't do that. Maybe it's your finances....It isn't until you face the lie, call it out, and accept the truth that you will move forward.

Recently, I was with a group of ladies that had me in awe of all they were accomplishing, and after a conversation one said to me, I love your wisdom. My reaction internally was; me? Wise? (pause) I thought about her simple comment over the next few days – honestly, even weeks asking myself why that hit me so deeply? Why my first reaction was – I'm not wise...

With some reflection, I realized that her words spoke to a deep part of me that beginning to believe that all my experiences didn't really have value anymore, that I was irrelevant. I was falling to the limiting belief that my age and experience were a detriment rather than an asset and this was affecting my work, my self-esteem, and my ability to dream.

Her simple statement reminded me that there are so many people who have experiences and insights to share and learn from if we'd only listen - BUT it requires humility, being teachable, and valuing the insights of others – which isn't high on the list in our independent culture. My experiences have brought me wisdom and insights, and whether that is valued by others or not, doesn't determine my relevance. So, facing the lie that says I've aged out, and remembering the truth that my years of walking with God and working on myself have brought me wisdom, I can move forward knowing that God can use me no matter my age or position.

We have no idea what brought on the belief within Timothy, but Paul tells him in his letter, *“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”* 1 Timothy 4:12

In other words, live into who you are. John Mark had jumped ship and gone his own way, while Timothy had been steadfast and willing, proving himself to be trustworthy and after all their time together, Paul loved him like a son. As his mentor, Paul was speaking truth into Timothy as he also encouraged the church to follow him. Timothy was there when Paul wrote, I can do all things through Christ and I have learned to be content...and when he believed in who God made him to be, no matter his age, he moved forward.

This section is full of so many things. For those of us that have lived awhile - speaking encouragement and guidance into those we influence is so needed and powerful. Bless your grandchildren, speak affirmations into your kids, encourage those you lead - look for those moments of fear and limits and point toward the truth. Whether you're in your 20s or 80s, there is someone behind you that can learn from you if you are willing to share your life with them.

And second, we all need a mentor. I'm not sure we ever outgrow the need for the wisdom of someone older to encourage us through their experiences. And to be clear, it's not necessarily age, but experience in an area that more than yours. There is a wealth of knowledge and perspective to gain if we just seek it out. A mentor or coach can help us see where we are limiting ourselves because of a lie that has found root in our hearts. I am forever grateful for the mentor and coaches in my life.

As we close for today, it's helpful for us to remember that Jesus didn't succeed with every disciple and neither did Paul. So, I won't be either. And...neither will you. There will be moments when those we have poured into - our children, students, mentees, interns, those we lead - will decide to go their own way. It's hard, defeating, and painful but it didn't stop Jesus or Paul from continuing to pour into those that stayed, in fact, John Mark and Paul do reconcile in his later years. If you have suffered from a broken relationship with someone that you have mentored or raised, may the story of John Mark bring you hope.

Dear one, when you next hear a compliment or encouragement - take it in. Allow your heart to hear the blessing within the words and receive them. You are a worthy child with gifts and talents that glorify God when you use them and it's ok for others to tell you they see it. You are valued just because you are His, just

being you brings Him joy. And, no matter your age, position, gender, skills, health, or finances...

You are loved.

Amen.