

I. The Introduction

- A. There is an ancient philosophy gaining a lot of traction today, especially among online influencers.
- B. Whether it's Tim Ferriss, Joe Rogan, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Brady, or Chris Williamson, there's a sudden interest in a philosophy going back over 2,000 years. I'm sure you've heard of it; it's called Stoicism.
- C. The ancient Stoics—philosophers like Seneca, Epictetus, and the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius—were not fools. They looked at the world and came to a very clear conclusion: life is painful, unpredictable, and outside of your control.
- D. In other words, they recognized a very biblical concept: you may have heard it before.
 - 1. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.
- E. You could sum up their entire view of life on earth in the statement:
 - 1. **Life is hard, then you die.**
- F. You might be surprised to know of another author who lived at the same time as Seneca, who interacted with the Stoic philosophers, and whose influence permeated Rome even more than Stoicism.
- G. You know that author as St. Paul. Paul was the primary interpreter of Jesus Christ. Paul brought the teaching and gospel of Jesus to the world with such power and precision that Stoicism eventually melted away in the face of Christianity's advance.

II. Series Intro

- A. Welcome to Pathway Church, and welcome to a series of messages on the little book of Philippians in the Bible.
- B. The series is called: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't**
- C. My message today is part 5 in the series. And here's my title today: **Quit Telling Yourself “Life is Hard, Then You Die.”**
- D. Stoicism is having a major cultural moment, and many people, without even knowing the name, have adopted a sort of “pop-Stoicism” as their default operating system for dealing with life.
- E. On the surface, Paul can sound a lot like a Stoic. But if you look just beneath the surface, at the source of their strength and the substance of their hope, you find two completely different worlds.
 - 1. I'd say the Stoic way is one of the best that human philosophy can offer.
 - 2. But Christianity is something entirely different and exceedingly transcendent over anything Stoicism—or any human philosophy—has to offer.

III. Transition

- A. Stoicism, for all its nobility, places a crushing weight on you. It says, “Life is hard; you must be harder.” It's a philosophy for the tough-minded and the strong-willed.
- B. But what if you're not strong? What if your will is broken? What if your heart is shattered?
- C. The Gospel is good news precisely for you.
 - 1. It does not say, “Be stronger.” Christ says, “I will give you strength.”
 - 2. It does not say, “Control your emotions.” Christ says, “Feel your honest emotions and bring them to me.”
 - 3. It does not say, “Find the answer within yourself.” Christ says, “The answer is a Person, and I will come and live within you.”
- D. The Stoic says, “Life is hard, then you die.”
 - 1. Paul says, “For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” That is a better way.
 - 2. So please think with me about...

IV. 3 Reasons to Quit Telling Yourself Life is Hard, Then You Die

- A. **Because God invites you to stop enduring your life and start enjoying his grace.**
 - 1. The Stoic way is the way of endurance. It's you, alone, gritting your teeth and bearing the weight of the world. “Life is hard; you be harder.” All you've got is your toughness.
 - 2. But Paul says, No. What you've actually got is your God.
 - a) *“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...”* (Philippians 1:19)
 - 3. If you want to quit telling yourself life is hard, then you die, you have to factor in God.
 - 4. And when you factor in God, you have to see him as a Father who cares for you. A father who loves you, supplies you, watches over you, feels for you with tenderness and affection.
 - a) The Stoic says you must muscle it up from within. God says, “I will put it there first, I will give you the supply of the Spirit and answer the prayers of your family, and you will be well supplied.
 - 5. This changes the entire goal of your life, which Paul explains in verse 20:
 - a) *“...according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”* (Philippians 1:20)
 - 6. Growing up, I was taught that my job is to glorify God—it was my duty, my burden, my responsibility. To glorify Him, honor Him, obey Him, magnify Him.
 - 7. The core of my Christianity was a giant sense of duty.
 - 8. So verses that talked about that duty—like this one—always felt like a sledgehammer, and the way of Jesus always felt heavy.
 - 9. But God was gentle with me. This thing called grace began to dawn on me, like a sunrise in the morning. More and more I began to see that Christianity not as a burden, but as freedom. Not the way of duty, but of privilege. Not the way of striving, but of receiving.
 - a) **Because God is not glorified by what I do for him [works] but by what he does for me [grace].**
 - 10. The Stoics said life is hard, so be tough.
 - 11. But they never got around to saying, Life is hard, but God is good, so believe him. Let him take your hand and walk you through the busy streets of life.

- a) Let him revive you. Let him heal you. Let him provide for you. Let him fill you. Let him comfort you. Let him strengthen you. Let him guide you. Let him defend you. Let him teach you. Let him equip you. Let him arm you. Let him love you.
 - (1) That is mental health right there.
 12. This is not grit-your-teeth endurance.
 - a) **To magnify Christ means that Christ and his grace become so big in you that everything else becomes small by comparison.**
 - b) **Yes, life is hard, but it isn't grim. Deep in your soul there flows a river of grace, and because there flows a river of grace, you can always find streams of joy.**
 13. God invites you to stop enduring your life and start enjoying his grace... all that ever takes is a little bit of faith. That's the first reason to quit telling yourself Life is hard, then you die.
- B. Because God invites you to stop defining your life by your pain and start defining it by His Person.**
1. In verse 21, Paul states a new way of thinking about your life. It's basically a new operating system.
 - a) *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21)
 2. This is not just a nice Bible verse. This is the line of code that rewrites everything.
 3. Your old, broken operating system has been running your life for years. It whispers to you every morning:
 - a) To live is anxiety. To live is shame. To live is brokenness. To live is a constant fight. To live is depression and despair. To live is addiction. To live is stress. To live is labor
 4. That is the "life" you've been forced to live—a life defined by the wound, by the fallen world, by your chaotic family, by abuse, by the Stoic ideals of toughness and survival of the fittest.
 - a) It's enough to make a person ask, Why bother? Why not just jump to the finish and end it all?
 5. Paul says, For me to live is Christ.
 6. What does this mean? It means...
 - a) His powers. His privileges. His status. His identity. His riches. His glory. His dignity. His throne. His presence. His promises. His inheritance. His history. His destiny. His everything.
 7. It means Christ Himself becomes the direct replacement for the very things that are broken inside you:
 - a) Where you feel empty, He is your fullness.
 - b) Where you feel worthless, He is your value.
 - c) Where you feel unloved, he says, "With bands of love, I have drawn you" (Hosea 11:4).
 - d) Where you feel pain, he sends another comforter, the Holy Spirit.
 8. To live is Christ means that Jesus himself can actually flow through your mind, your emotions, your relationships, and your daily existence... in spite of pain, in spite of a horrible family, in spite of loss, in spite of anything.
 9. And the second part, "to die is gain," is the ultimate security update. It's freedom from the final fear.
 - a) For the Stoics, death meant being snuffed out like a candle. Death is the end.
 - b) For Christians, death is the beginning of something better. To die is gain... meaning promotion to glory and the fullest technicolor experience of all your blessings in Christ... to live is Christ... to die is gain.
 10. And this presents a kind of dilemma.
 - a) *"But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you."* (Philippians 1:22-24)
 11. This is a profound gift to anyone who is tired.
 12. The Stoic ideal is *apatheia*—it means "no-feeling," a calm indifference free from emotional disturbance. Paul rejects apathy. He admits, "I am hard-pressed." He is weary. He is torn.
 13. He feels the weight of it all.
 - a) So I want to say, if you're feeling the weight of your journey, that's not a spiritual failure. It's okay to long for relief. It's healthy to be homesick for heaven. I am.
 14. But notice Paul's way of turning it around. He holds onto the sacredness of life, not out of grim duty, but out of love for his spiritual family. He says so:
 - a) *"And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again."* (Philippians 1:25-26)
 15. Let those words sink in: for your progress and joy.
 - a) Progress... that's a powerful word, used for an army's advance, cutting its way forward through obstacles.
 - b) Joy... that's the heart and soul of psychological health.
 16. This is the reason to choose life. Life is sacred. You need me to stick around. I need you to stick around. That's how we all win our battles together.
 - a) **For anyone whose past has been defined by pain and survival, the idea that your future could be defined by bringing progress and joy to someone else is a revolutionary thought.**
 17. You move from "I am my pain" to "I am a channel of joy for others, because of the life of Christ in me."
 18. This leads to the final, powerful reason you can quit telling yourself Life is hard, then you die...
- C. Because God invites you to stop living from your broken history and start living from your glorious dignity.**
1. He gives the core invitation in verse 27. He basically says, "Awaken to who you already are!"
 - a) *"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ..."* (Philippians 1:27)
 2. The original Greek doesn't have any word here for conduct or behavior.

3. This is the word *politeuesthe*. The *polis* was the city state of Greece and Rome. The *polis* was your identity. It was your privilege. It shouldn't be translated "let your conduct".
 - a) It should be translated this way: **Identify as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ.**
4. Paul is saying, "You Philippian Christians are proud to be citizens of Rome? You are thinking too small. I want you to start identifying as citizens of heaven, because that is who you truly are."
 - a) You are worthy of that kind of thinking.
5. When you see yourself in this way, you discover 3 powerful healings:
 - a) **1. Relational Healing**
"...that you stand firm in one spirit..." (Philippians 1:27)
 - (1) For anyone who has known the fragmentation and chaos of a broken home, Jesus tears down the walls that pain built and builds bridges to love again.
 - (a) He heals the broken places in your heart that made connection feel impossible.
 - (b) He erases the shame that makes you feel unworthy of love.
 - (c) He eliminates the guilt. He fills the unworthiness. He overcomes the fears. He dismantles the selfish streak in you.
 - (2) When Paul says you "stand firm in one spirit," he's describing what happens when Jesus heals your relational wounds.
 - (a) **The same Spirit that lived in Jesus lives in you, and as you walk with him, you begin to love like he loved, forgive like he forgave, give like he gave, care like he cared, and serve like he served.**
 - (3) Do you want to know the true signs of mental health? Emotional healing?
 - (a) Joy when joy makes no sense. Love when love makes no sense. Peace when peace makes no sense. Courage when courage makes no sense.
 - (4) This is more than Stoic indifference. This is passion. This is real love.
 - (5) Relational health is the first healing. The second is:
 - b) **2. Mental & Emotional healing:**
"...with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:27)
 - (1) There's that word striving, one of the favorite words of behavior oriented Christianity.
 - (2) But this isn't about obedience or behavior.
 - (3) This is about good news, the gospel.
 - (a) This is about faith in that. The faith of the gospel.
 - (4) This is God's game plan.
 - (a) Your striving should be striving to believe.
 - (b) Your primary fight is a fight of faith.
 - i) **As a Christian your primary work is the work of silencing the lies, rising above the doubts, dismantling the deceptions, deconstructing the worldviews, and casting down the strongholds that keep you from BELIEVING & RECEIVING the good news and gracious promises that God keeps telling you on every page of the Bible. (John 6:29)**
 - (c) This is the core of all Christian effort.
 - (5) Not to change the world... but to so change your heart that the world looks on in astonishment and begins to want to know your secret.
 - (a) How did you overcome that addiction?
 - (b) How did you rise above that difficult past?
 - (c) How did you shed those demons?
 - (d) How did you heal after such a horrible loss?
 - (e) How did you forgive such a betrayal?
 - (f) How did you get so happy?
 - (g) How did you get a generosity so big while living in a house so small?
 - (h) How did you ever come back to God knowing all the horrible things he let happen to you?
 - (6) And to all those *how's* the answer is the same:
 - (7) *HOW? You ask me? Here's how...*
 - (a) The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
 It goes beyond the farthest star,
 And reaches to the lowest hell.
 - (8) And it was in that lowest hell that I found the good news of the gospel even there, and I reached out my shaky hand of faith, and took hold, and I found a Father there, taking hold of me with love in his eyes and joy in his heart.
 - (9) I've been clinging to that good news, and he's been holding onto me ever since.
 - (10) And if you think I'm the only one, think again. Down the street over there at Pathway Church, we've got thousands of stories just like me. And we strengthen each other. We inspire each other. We serve each other. We pray for each other. We love each other. We're striving *together* for the faith of the gospel.
 - (11) We're citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and it's that glorious dignity, not our broken history, that defines each of us. Join us, friend. We're here for you too.
 - (a) That's how. Relational healing. Mental and Emotional healing... and then..

6. 3. Spiritual Healing:

“and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.” (Philippians 1:28-30)

- a) Christians have adversaries. We always have. We always will. We don't exactly fit in.
- b) It can be scary to stand up for Christ.
- c) But spiritual healing, for you Christian, means fearlessness. You are not in any way terrified by your adversaries.
- d) This fearlessness is the natural fruit of knowing who you are.
 - (1) **When you embrace your true dignity derived from your heavenly citizenship, and live with Jesus, two giant threats lose their power over your heart: (1) the threats of this world, and (2) the ghosts of your past. Your true SELF is un-injurable.**
- e) For the Stoics, courage came from self-reliance, from clenching your fists against the universe and saying, "I won't let this move me."
- f) But Jesus offers something deeper, something supernatural. Suffering for Christ is a profound privilege.
 - (1) Paul isn't calling all suffering a gift from God—that would be cruel.
- g) No, he's pointing out that suffering for Christ carries privileges with it.
- h) When you endure opposition for His sake, it proves to your adversaries their own separation from truth, and it proves to you your own salvation is straight from God.
- i) Plus God has tied you to an eternal reward that makes every loss for Jesus' sake worth it.
 - (1) “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10), or as Paul echoes elsewhere, “The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).
- j) So quit telling yourself life is hard and then you die. Start declaring: Life is a glorious adventure in heavenly citizenship, and then you truly live—forever, with rewards beyond imagination.

V. The Moment of Truth

- A. So here we are. You came in today carrying the weight of the Stoic half-truth: “Life is hard, then you die.”
- B. But now you know better.
 - 1. Now you know that God invites you to stop enduring and start enjoying His grace.
 - 2. To stop defining your life by your pain and start defining it by His Person.
 - 3. To stop living from your broken history and start living from your glorious dignity.
- C. The question is: What are you going to do with this truth?
- D. Because right now, in this moment, you have a choice.
- E. You can walk out of here and slip back into the old operating system. You can go back to telling yourself that life is just about surviving until the end. Or...
- F. You can choose the better way.
 - 1. You can choose to wake up tomorrow morning as a citizen of heaven who happens to be on assignment to earth.
 - 2. You can choose to live from the inexhaustible supply of the Spirit instead of your own depleted account.
 - 3. You can choose to let Christ be magnified in your body—not as a burden to carry, but as life returning to places that had given up hope.
- G. This Is Your Moment
 - 1. If you've never experienced this life in Christ, this is your invitation.
 - 2. Don't leave here the same way you came. The God who supplies every need, who heals every wound, who turns every trial into triumph—He's calling you home.
 - 3. Come to Jesus today. Receive him. Believe him. Receive His forgiveness. Step into heavenly citizenship.
- H. Or If you've walked with Him but grown weary, if you've slipped back into survival mode, if you've forgotten your glorious dignity—this is your reminder.
 - 1. You are not your trauma. You are not your worst day. You are not defined by your pain. You are a citizen of heaven, and your citizenship is your dignity.

VI. The Declaration

- A. So let's declare it together. Let's quit telling ourselves the old lie and start proclaiming the new truth:
 - 1. **Life is not hard, then you die. My life is grace, then glory.**
 - 2. **Life is not endurance, then extinction. My life is receiving, then reward.**
 - 3. **Life is not pain defining me, then the end. My life is Christ in me, then eternal gain.**
- B. So Go forth...
 - 1. Go from this place knowing that deep in your soul flows a river of grace, and because there flows a river of grace, you can always find streams of joy.
 - 2. Go knowing that Christ is magnified in your body, and His life is bigger than your pain.
 - 3. Go as an ambassador of heaven, carrying the presence of the King, living from your glorious dignity, writing a story that makes the watching world ask, “How did you do that?”
 - 4. And when they ask, you'll have an answer: Yes, life is hard... BUT...
 - a) The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell.
- C. That's how.