

# STRENGTH FOR STRESSFUL TIMES

## Part 3: How to Have Joy No Matter What

The best book of the Bible for learning about joy is *Philippians*. The word “joy” is used in the book 16 times, yet it was not written under happy circumstances!

### Background:

For four years prior to writing this letter, Paul has been in miserable circumstances:

- \_\_\_\_\_ years in prison
- Shipped in chains to Roman trial
- Shipwrecked
- Stranded on island
- Bitten by poisonous snake
- \_\_\_\_\_ years on Roman death row
- Chained to Roman guard
- No privacy
- New guard every \_\_\_\_\_ hours
- Constant illness

Yet his attitude is joyful: “... *I rejoice... and I will continue to rejoice.*” *Phil. 1:18*

### Four Essentials of Joyful Living (Philippians 1)

#### 1. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to live from

Paul’s view of his circumstances: “*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.*” (v. 12)

“*As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.*” (v. 13)

“*Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*” (v. 14)

“*We know that in **all** things God works for the good of those who love Him...*” Rom. 8:28

Lesson:

#### 2. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to live by

Paul’s response to his critics: “*But what does it matter? **The important***

*thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*” (vs. 18)

“*In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.*” Prov. 3:6 (LB)

Lesson:

#### 3. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to live on

Paul’s source of strength: “... *I will continue to rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed...*” (vs. 19,20)

“*I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.*” Ph 4:13 GN

Lesson:

#### 4. I need a \_\_\_\_\_ to live for

Paul’s reason for living: “*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” (vs. 21)

“*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*”

Phil. 3:13- 14

Paul’s concern: (vs. 22-26)

Lesson:

“For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_” (How do you fill the blank?)

## Daily Meditations

Here’s a chance to spend some time each day this week meditating on today’s topic!

**This week’s memory verse:** “*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*”

*Phil. 1:21*

### Monday

Read Philippians 1:12-13. Paul mentions his chains in verse 13. Who was Paul chained to? How did this advance the gospel?

Has God chained you to anyone (in a hospital bed, office, family, etc.) in order for you to share the gospel with them? How can you use these chains to the advantage of the gospel?

*Ask the Lord to help you view your circumstances, even your chains, with joy - true joy that comes from knowing He can use even your pain to further His work! Ask God for His power and peace specifically in the area you feel powerless.*

## Tuesday

Read Philippians 1:14 How have the other Christians responded to the fact that Paul is in chains? Why are they now more free to share the gospel rather than living in fear?

Why do you think the church tends to grow rapidly when under persecution?

Recall a time when you felt persecuted or like your faith was being pushed to its limits What impact did that have on your life? How did your spiritual life change?

*Today ask the Lord to help you keep your eyes on Him when you go through tough times! Pray for Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world now being persecuted to their faith - pray that you'll experience their commitment and they'll experience your freedom.*

## Wednesday

Read Philippians 1:15-17 According to these verses, did even some of the early Christian preachers have mixed motives?

Why do you think preachers sometimes are tempted to preach Christ out of vanity?

What is Paul's attitude toward these people? How does this compare with your attitude toward pastors of churches of whom you are suspicious?

Why do you think Paul is so tolerant of these preachers he mentions in this passage and yet stand so firmly against the false teachers mentioned in Galatians chapter 1?

*Today ask God to give you Paul's equanimity toward Christians with whom you many not totally be in agreement. Ask Him to give you strength to stand against those who are truly warping the gospel.*

## Thursday

Read Philippians 1:17-18. How does Paul feel about his circumstances? How might your circumstances serve to advance the gospel?

What hinders you from having Paul's attitudes toward people and circumstances? What do you do to have a better attitude?

*Ask God today to show you how to live more joyfully toward the people and circumstances in your life!*

## Friday

Read Philippians 1:19. What two things keep Paul going, according to these verses?

Write down some tough things you are facing right now. How do these two things help you focus in your tough times? Which of the two is hardest for you to focus on? Why?

*Ask the Lord today to help you remember that you are not alone! Hang in there and let the Spirit of God strengthen you today. God is on your side.*

## Saturday

Today finish any devotions you may have missed and polish up the memory verse at the top of the previous page. Looking back over this week's passage from Philippians, what major theme or lesson has meant the most to you? How have you seen these truths make a difference in your life this week? Please pray for the services this weekend, that they will encourage people and glorify God.