Joy In Times of Trouble
**Philippians 1:12-18 (NKJV)**

Tonight as we continue with our series of messages from **Paul's Letter to The Philippians**, please turn with me in your Bibles to **Philippians chapter one**. And let's read **verses 12-18**.

**Philippians 1:12-18 (NKJV)**

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,  

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;  

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.  

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:  

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;  

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.  

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.
INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION

Even if you are not a fan of classical music, I'm sure you are familiar with the name of composer, George Frideric Handel.

When Handel wrote the “Hallelujah Chorus” his health had deteriorated to the point he was completely paralyzed on his right side. Also at that same time Handel was virtually bankrupt and was being threatened with imprisonment.

And yet it was during the most difficult time in his life that he composed his greatest work ever, The Messiah.

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Perhaps this evening you are going through one of the toughest seasons of your life. Perhaps you or a loved one is going through a serious health crisis and you don’t know what the future holds in store.

Or perhaps you have a family member who is trapped in a self-destructive addiction and its pulling down every member of your family.

Or maybe things are very tense in your marriage relationship right now and you’re not sure you can keep it together. Or maybe you are having trouble with a rebellious son or daughter who has made some really bad choices in friends or behavior.

Or maybe things are very stressful at work right now and if things don’t change soon you may have to search for another job. Or perhaps things are really tight financially and you are wondering how you are going to pay your bills when they come due at the end of this month.
In tonight's message I am going to challenge you from the word of GOD to look at your difficult circumstances from a totally different perspective.

As we are going to see from the example of the apostle Paul, it is possible to experience JOY IN THE TIMES OF TROUBLE.

There are two key points I would like to note from our scripture text.

First of all......

I. We Can Have JOY In Difficult CIRCUMSTANCES (vs.12-14)

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

1. Notice what Paul says in the first part of verse 12, “But I want you to know.....” In other words, “Wait till you hear this” or “Boy do I have some good news to share with you!”

2. What is this good news? Its the good news that GOD has used his difficult circumstance of being imprisoned for the furtherance of the gospel.

3. Paul had desired to go preach in Rome for a long time. In Romans 1:10 (NKJV) Paul talks about how he had been praying for quite some time that God would allow him to come to Rome to preach the gospel.
4. Well, Paul wound up in Rome alright, just not the way he had planned. If you remember from our study of Acts, Paul was arrested in the Temple at Jerusalem. He was taken to a Roman jail in Jerusalem and when it was learned there was an angry mob plotting to storm the jail and kill Paul, Paul was transferred under the protection of a garrison of Roman soldiers to the prison in Caesarea Philippi. *(Acts 21)*

5. After spend a year in the prison at Caesarea Philippi without having his case heard, plans were made to transfer Paul to the prison in Rome. And if you remember, while Paul was aboard a ship to Rome, they encountered a powerful storm in the Mediterranean Sea and wound up shipwrecked on the Isle of Malta. *(Acts 27)*

6. Eventually Paul did arrive in Rome and he was imprisoned there, but the conditions of his imprisonment were quite interesting.

   *Acts 28:16 (NKJV)* says, “Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.”

7. Paul was NOT put in the common prison with the rest of the prisoners. He had not committed any crime against Rome. He had been imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. So rather than throw Paul in with the rest of the prison population, they placed him under “house arrest.” Compared to being incarcerated in a cold, damp prison with hardened criminals, perhaps being under “house arrest” sounds as though Paul had it easy. But keep in mind, he was chained to a guard twenty four hours a day and couldn't leave.
8. Paul was being guarded by an elite group of Roman soldiers called The Praetorian Guard. These men who were handpicked by the Roman Emperor were like a combination of the Secret Service and Special Ops Forces. They were the most prestigious group of soldiers in the world in Paul's day.

9. Well here is how it worked. According to Roman custom the guards would change every six hours. Over a twenty-four hour period four different guards were chained to Paul.

10. Now, think about this from the guard's standpoint for just a moment. Think what it was like to be chained for six hours to a preacher who never stopped talking about Jesus Christ. This gives a whole new meaning to the term “captive audience” doesn't it?

Keep in mind Paul was in prison for two years in Rome. This means over the course of two years, or 730 days, Paul had the opportunity to share the gospel 2,920 times. (Experiencing God's Peace by Elizabeth George, p. 36 Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, Copyright 2000)

11. Now listen to what Paul says in verses 12 and 13 again and I think you'll see it in a different light.

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;
12. The Greek term Paul uses for the word **furtherance** in **verse 12** is the word **probope** (pro-bope-ay) which depicts a group of woodcutters clearing the way through an impenetrable forest for an advancing army.

13. Paul was literally “clearing the way” through the forest of false teachings so that the members of **the elite Praetorian Guard** could come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And not only that, **Verse 14** tells us, that other believers were so encouraged by Paul's **JOY and BOLDNESS** in proclaiming Christ despite being in chains, that it boosted their confidence to be more bold in sharing the gospel with others.

14. Here's the point! **We can have JOY even in our most difficult CIRCUMSTANCES.** That doesn't necessarily mean we will be happy about our circumstances, but remember there's a difference between happiness and joy.

**HAPPINESS** is like a thermometer, it goes up and down as the environment changes. **JOY on the other hand is like a thermostat that adjusts to the environment and remains steady.**

15. You see, even in the bitterness and sorrow of our most difficult circumstances, there is a sweetness in knowing that **GOD will work His purposes in the midst of our pain. And that is why we can experience JOY in our difficult CIRCUMSTANCES.**
ILLUSTRATION

Last Sunday afternoon at Betty William’s funeral service, Bro. Greg Sexton talked about Betty’s joy in her final days of life. He said, even after the doctors told her there was nothing they could do for her, she would hold up her hands and with a smile on her face, she would say, “I am not afraid. I am one of God's children, and this is in His hands.” Oh, wouldn’t you like to think when our time comes that we might face death with that same kind of joyful confidence Betty had?

II. We Can Have JOY In Dealing With Difficult PEOPLE (vs. 15-18)

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

ILLUSTRATION

Charles Spurgeon once said, “How often, if one Christian brother does a little more than his fellow-workers, they begin to find fault with him; and if one is blessed with greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightingly.”

1. The apostle Paul would say a hearty “AMEN” to what Bro. Spurgeon said. Paul is letting his brothers and sisters in the Philippian Church know that he had come under vicious attacks by some of his fellow ministers.
2. In military terms, Paul was getting hit by “friendly fire.” These men were believers. They weren't false teachers. They were “preaching Christ” but with a very jealous and contentious spirit.

3. Paul is saying these men were preaching Christ from “envy and strife.” In other words, they were not motivated by a desire to reach lost souls for Christ, their motive was to attack Paul, to put Paul down, and to discredit Paul's ministry.

4. When these fellow preachers heard that Paul had been put in prison they were probably tickled to death. They saw his imprisonment as an opportunity for them to advance their own ministries.

5. Did Paul want to be liked? I'm sure he did. Did it hurt when he found out these men were bad-mouthing him and using his imprisonment for their own selfish advantage? You know it did!

6. But to show you what kind of man Paul was, he was able to look beyond the hurt caused by these men, and rejoice that God's word was still being proclaimed even though their preaching was tainted with personal attacks against him.

7. Paul knew his critics would one day have to answer to God for their attitudes and actions; so rather than walking around with his bottom lip dragging the ground, Paul chose to rejoice in the ministries of his critics.
8. Nothing will threaten to steal your joy more than having to deal with difficult people.

Perhaps its that nitpicker who finds fault with everything you do or so.....or maybe its that chronic complainer who drives you nuts with their incessant whining.....or perhaps its that eternal pessimist who tries to cast a dark cloud of negativity over your brightest days.

Or maybe its that over-bearing sister-in-law .....or that obnoxious, foul-mouthed co-worker.......or that bully in your class at school.......or that brother or sister-in-Christ with the abrasive personality that grates on you like fingernails on a chalkboard.

9. These kinds of people can make your life miserable and steal your joy if you allow them to. Difficult people can have no more control over you than you give them.

10. The apostle Paul made a willful choice NOT to allow difficult people to steal his joy, and we must choose to do the same.

11. Think of it this way: GOD doesn't allow difficult people into our lives to make us miserable, but rather to test the genuineness of our love......our faith......and our patience. DO YOU PASS THE TEST???
CONCLUSION

Over the years you have heard me use a number of illustrations about the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great nineteenth century British preacher. In fact I quoted him earlier in this message.

While many have heard of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, few know the story of his dear wife, Susannah. Early in their married life, Susannah Spurgeon became an invalid.

It looked as though her only ministry would be that of encouraging her husband and praying for his work. But God gave her a burden to share her husband’s books with poor preachers who were unable to afford them.

This burden soon led to the founding of “The Book Fund.” As support began to come in from all over the world, The Book Fund provided thousands of preachers with the literary tools to assist them in their own ministries. All of this was supervised by Susannah Spurgeon from her home.

God sometimes takes our most difficult, most challenging circumstances and uses it to advance His kingdom.

The next time you find yourself in a difficult circumstance or find yourself dealing with difficult people just remember, God may be using your difficulty to make a difference in someone’s life!

Yes, we truly can experience JOY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE