

### Ln 3 Enjoying Life in the Midst of Adversity

#### [Philippians 1:12-19](#)

Paul wrote the book of Philippians, which describes "stress-free living" in the midst of all kinds of adversity. After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem for preaching the Gospel, false testimony about him is given in court, and he is then imprisoned in Caesarea for two years. Since he is a Roman citizen, Paul uses his right to appeal to Caesar and is transported to Rome. A storm adds to his problems by causing his ship to run aground.

Then, according to [Acts 27:41b](#) what happens?

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After swimming to shore, Paul is bitten by a poisonous snake. When he finally arrives in Rome, Paul is put under house arrest, where he spends about two years chained to a Roman guard as he awaits his hearing before Caesar. Paul not only can't continue his missionary journey or visit churches he has established, but he also has no personal privacy. During this time Paul writes a letter about stress-free living because he knows how to enjoy life, not just endure it. To enjoy life in the midst of adversity, we must do **three** things. First, we must...

#### **Keep problems in perspective** [1:12-14](#)

After years of severe adversity and while chained to a prison guard in Rome, what does Paul write in [Philippians 1:12b](#)?

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This part of Paul's life seems to be a series of setbacks, but Paul says his circumstances have helped the **furtherance** of the gospel. Paul can keep his problems in perspective because he knows God has a purpose for allowing them. One purpose for his imprisonment has become clear because he writes, *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places* ([1:13](#)).

The word translated **palace** (*praitōrion*, prahee-toh'-ree-on) refers to the elite Praetorian Guard who provided security for the Caesar's palace and served as his bodyguards. They were also the future generals and leaders of the Roman Empire. These guards changed about every four hours, which means he was chained to six different guards every day. Six times 365 days equals 2,190, and 2,190 times two years equals 4,380. As a result, many of these guards became believers, and history tells us even some of Nero's family, including his wife, became believers.

The phrase *in all other places* could refer to palace servants, government officials, and even members of Nero's family. Paul was successful in winning some of them to Christ because he writes: *All the saints salute you* ([4:22a](#)).

Then, what does he write in the rest of that verse?

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Paul sees himself as a preacher with a "captive audience." Therefore, instead of having a "pity party" about his problems, Paul writes a letter about joy and stress-free living.

The Devil tries to use our problems to discourage us and destroy our witness, but God often uses them for the good of other people. That's why Paul writes: *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear (1:14).* Our attitudes toward our problems will either **encourage or discourage** other believers because we either let God or the Devil use our problems to affect others. Faith is more "caught" than taught because faith is contagious. No one will ever be encouraged by your faith until they see how you respond to severe adversity.

Like Joseph, what could Paul say to those who conspired to have him put in prison ([Genesis 50:20a](#))?

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Do you believe that verse? Do you live like you believe it when you have severe adversity? It's easy to talk the talk, but adversity reveals whether or not we walk the walk. To enjoy life in the midst of adversity, **keep problems in perspective** and...

### **Keep critics in context [1:15-18](#)**

If you want some stress in your life, just let other people start criticizing you. Paul has this problem too because he writes: *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife (1:15a).* Some other preachers apparently envy Paul and are using his problems as an opportunity to discredit him. The word **envy** refers to feelings of displeasure produced by seeing or hearing about the success of others.

Some envy Paul's success in proclaiming the Gospel and the fact he is recognized as an authoritative apostle. In over 30 years of pastoring I have observed that people who are always criticizing church leaders are usually envious of them. Sometimes they are envious because they think people less spiritual than they hold positions of leadership in the church. Some are envious because they see someone else getting recognition and they feel ignored. Whatever the reason, *envy* is a terrible sin.

That's why [Proverbs 27:4](#) asks what rhetorical question?

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This means *envy* (or jealousy) is more serious than *anger*. I would rather have someone angry with me than jealous of me. Why? People get over being angry, but jealous people get more and more vicious.

That's why [James 3:16](#) gives us what warning about envy?

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Envious people gossip, criticize, and try to cause all kinds of problems for people. Envy is always followed by strife (Philip. 1:15a). Envy is the emotion, and strife is what envious people try to stir up. Envious people are mean. They don't care if they cause *strife*, and they don't care who gets hurt or what damage is done to the church or whatever organization of which they are a part. They only care about their own agendas and getting their own way.

However, Paul also writes that some *preach Christ... of good will (1:15b)*. Referring to this group, Paul declares in [verse 17](#): *But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.* When we have people problems, we sometimes focus only on the bad guys and forget about the others who do love us and are good people.

Referring to the first group, Paul writes: *The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds (1:16).* They are preaching the Gospel but with the wrong motives. Some of them are apparently trying to take Paul's place while he is in prison and are only interested in notoriety or influence, not in getting out the message.

Though some are preaching Christ out of jealousy and causing *strife*, Paul writes that regardless of the motive, at least the Gospel is being preached ([1:18a-b](#)).

What is Paul's response to this (see [1:18c-d](#))?

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Paul knows even when someone preaches the Gospel with the wrong motives, people will be saved. Therefore, Paul could keep his critics in context. I can honestly say I have learned more over the years from some of my critics than from any other group. Sometimes my critics have been totally off-base, but many times God has used them to teach me something.

When dealing with critics, especially those who are destructive rather than constructive, I have found [Proverbs 15:1](#) invaluable. Write it below:

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Remember, God can use your critics to teach you many things, as He has me. **Enjoying life in the midst of adversity** means you **keep problems in perspective, keep critics in context**, and...

**Keep prayer and the Paraclete in the plan [1:19](#)**

Paul continues: *For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (1:19).* No matter what the problems or who the critics are, there are two things that will strangle the stress they cause. The first one is prayer. One thing that reveals our faith is our willingness to ask others, especially prayer warriors, to pray for us. Our pride often prevents us from asking anyone to pray for us.

Failing to ask for the prayers of others shows our lack of faith in what promise in [James 5:16b](#)?

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If you really believe that, when problems or critics cause stress in your life you will ask others to pray for you. When you do, you will immediately be on your way to "stress-free living."

Paul also says his deliverance will be the result of *the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, who is the Holy Spirit ([1:19](#)). When Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit in [John 14](#), He called Him "**the Paraclete**" in Greek, but that word is translated **Comforter**.

What wonderful truth does [2 Corinthians 3:17b](#) tell us about the Holy Spirit?

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When we allow the Holy Spirit to fill and guide us, we experience freedom from all kinds of stress. Prayer and the Paraclete work together to strangle stress in our lives. To enjoy life in the midst of adversity, you must: **KEEP PROBLEMS IN PERSPECTIVE,**

**KEEP CRITICS IN CONTEXT,**

**KEEP PRAYER AND THE PARACLETE IN THE PLAN.**