

## JOY IN TRIALS AND DIFFICULTY

Today we are beginning a **4 Part Series** where we will be preaching through the Book of **Philippians**. For those who are new to the Bible, Philippians is located in the NT portion of the scripture and is named as such after the Greek city Philippi which was the first town in Macedonia where the Apostle Paul established a CHURCH. **(Show MAP)** The church in Philippi was established while Paul was on his second of what we consider to be 4 missionary journeys. What we refer to as the Book of Philippians is actually a letter that Paul wrote to the church while he was first imprisoned in Rome which is considered Paul's 4th and final missionary journey. Paul was taken to Rome because he had appealed to Caesar when he was being accused by the Jews of teaching against the law and violating Temple customs. Paul, even though he was Jewish by birth he was also a Roman citizen and as such he had certain rights as a Roman that allowed him to avoid trial in Jerusalem where the intent of Jewish religious leaders was to have Paul put to death. While in Roman custody Paul was able to write several letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon) were the others. What is beautiful about Paul's letter to the Philippian church is that in spite of his imprisonment and persecution by the Jews, the dominant tone of the letter is one of **JOY** and that **No matter what we face in life, we shouldn't let our circumstances keep us from the pursuit of Christlikeness.**

So, with that as our introduction let me pray for us as we begin our examination of Paul's challenge to all of us to continue our pursuit of Christlikeness. **(PRAY)**

As we come to Chapter 1 Paul begins his letter by encouraging the Philippian Church to find JOY even in trials and difficulties. If there was ever anything that we would consider to be complete opposites it would be JOY and TRIALS. But for the Apostle Paul he had discovered an important Christlike characteristic and it is in Chapter 1 that Paul shows us how we can have JOY in the middle of TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

**Philippians 1:1-2 (NIV)** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: **2** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. After his greeting to the church at Philippi Paul gives us the FIRST of two important perspectives we need to have if we are going to find JOY in spite of TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES:

### **WE MUST ALWAYS MAINTAIN A HEART OF THANKSGIVING**

**Philippians 1:4-5 (NIV)** I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, Paul was **THANKFUL** for their **FELLOWSHIP!** It is a great comfort to know that we are not ALONE. We have others to SHARE our burdens. Others to PRAY for us as we go about our faith journey. HELP with the workload we have been given. Thank God for fellowship!!!

**Philippians 1:6-11 (NIV) 6** being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

**7** It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. **8** God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

**9** And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. **Paul was THANKFUL for what God was doing in their lives and that they were able to partake of the wonderful GRACE found in Christ!** There is great JOY to be found when you see fruit growing on other people's trees and to know that God used you and your witness and testimony to plant the seeds that are now bearing fruit in their lives!!! This causes our troubles, whatever they are, to fade away. It is extremely encouraging to know that no matter what, God is always working through us even in our struggles and in our trials.

**Philippians 1:12-18 (NIV) 12** Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

**15** It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. **16** The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. **17** The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. **18** 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. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, **Paul was THANKFUL that God used everything to further the GOSPEL.** When it comes to God He wastes nothing! Whether it is suffering, imprisonment, the motives of others, or our past failures. Christ is being preached and therefore we should rejoice in that alone!!

Complaining and a loss of thanksgiving is rooted in the lies of Satan and is a demonic influence on our lives. A common strategy of Satan is to make us into people who are dissatisfied with God's good things. Listen to what Paul says to Timothy at the beginning of 1 Timothy 4.

**1 Timothy 4:1-5 (NIV)** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. **2** Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. **3** They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. **4** For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, **5** because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

## WE MUST ALWAYS MAINTAIN A HEART OF THANKSGIVING

The SECOND perspectives we need to have if we are going to find JOY in spite of TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES:

### WE MUST ALWAYS SEE LIFE IN CHRIST AS A WIN-WIN

If we truly understand what we have in Christ Jesus we cannot lose. No matter what happens in life we WIN! We come out as victors.

**Philippians 1:19-26 (NIV)** **19** for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. **20** I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! **23** I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; **24** but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. **25** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. No matter what we win with Jesus! If we live we live unto Christ and He will be exalted in and through our lives. Our lives will bear fruit for the KINGDOM. The kingdom is advanced and God is glorified. If we die, we are free from the burdens of this life and can gloriously worship God without the hindrances or distractions of our flesh. We receive our reward and what we receive we will enjoy forever. So what's the problem? The worst that can happen to us is death and even in that we win if we have faith in Jesus! Victory is ours either way!

Paul reminds us of the nature of our victory in Romans 8

**Romans 8:31-39 (NIV)** **31** What, then, shall we say in response to these things? What are "these things" Paul is referring to here? There are difficulties, persecutions, sin, and trials of every sort that he makes mention of in the preceding verses. **31** What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? **33** Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. **34** Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36** As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

**37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39** neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice how Paul concludes this opening chapter.

**Philippians 1:27-30 (NIV)****27** Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel **28** without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. **29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. Therefore, let's continue to pursue Christ without being discouraged by our trials and difficulties. Let's press into Jesus and pursue Christlikeness like never before.

**Invitation:**