

“The Epistle of Joy (Part 3—Philippians 1:12-18)”

Philippians 1:12-18: *“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.”* (NKJV)

Since the Gospel changes everything, it must change everything about us!

This passage gives us three ways to find joy. The **first** way to find joy is to ***see your problems as a platform for the Gospel***. Instead of focusing on his problems, Paul celebrated the fact that everything that was against him actually turned out for *the furtherance of the Gospel*! In a similar sense, our problems can pave the way for God’s purposes to be accomplished. One commentator advises, *“When difficult, even life-threatening circumstances face us, we should take Paul as our example and look for how God might be working in such circumstances to advance the Gospel either in our lives or in the lives of others.”* Don’t despise the things that you are chained to – instead, see it as a witness opportunity for Christ.

The **second** way to find joy is to ***view your responses to problems as a way to encourage Christians***. When you view your problems as a platform for the Gospel you end up giving courage to others to do the same. When the believers in Rome heard how Paul viewed his problems as part of God’s purpose, and how he made the sharing of the Gospel his goal – they, too, became more courageous. Be encouraged by the example of persecuted Christians’ faithfulness unto death in sharing Christ. Have natural conversations with others every day about what Christ has done in your life. Embolden others by your example.

The **third** way to find joy is to ***rejoice anytime the Gospel is preached***. Like Paul, look past other’s ulterior motives and imperfections as long as the message of Christ is going forth. Think about it – people can be saved even when Christ is preached insincerely or by one of your least favorite television preachers. Tie your greatest joy to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not to which Pastor or Church or Christian ministry is doing it. Be primarily concerned about the message. Let what truly matters be whether the true Gospel message is being proclaimed. Speak a good word about someone else’s Church or Ministry to demonstrate that you are truly partners together in the Kingdom work of spreading the Gospel.

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. When you're in an adverse situation pray that God would use that problem as a platform for His purposes or as a witness stand for Christ (to advance the Gospel).
2. When a problem comes your way, ask: *How will this problem position me to present the Gospel to someone?*
3. Be inspired by other's example of faithfulness; and then turn around and do the same.
4. Visit the Voice of the Martyr's website at www.persecution.com
5. Don't judge another of God's servants. Remember, they will answer to God, just like you will answer to Him.