

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

Strength for Today (5-25-2012)

Paul: Joy in Spite of Trouble

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

- *Philippians 4:4*

The apostle Paul was a model believer who did not let his troubles steal His joy in the Lord.

According to today's verse, believers should never let a negative outlook replace our joy, no matter how bad life seems to be. The apostle Paul set an example that was far different. He wrote to the Philippians that in spite of being imprisoned in Rome, he was still rejoicing. Even though Paul was restricted under trying and harsh conditions, he was glad because the gospel message was being declared, even among the prison guards. Paul was not so concerned about his own hardships but that others hear the saving good news of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 9:16).

Paul saw himself as a prisoner for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Therefore, he never gave in to any temptation to indulge in self-pity but rather focused on his duty of telling others about his Lord and Savior. Some of Paul's other letters also mention his imprisonment (see Eph. 3:1; Col. 4:10) but always positively, because the apostle never forgot that being a prisoner was merely part of the role he was called to as an ambassador for God's kingdom. Paul's Roman imprisonment resulted in his joyful attitude extending out in evangelism: “My imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well-known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else” (Phil. 1:13). However, Paul's ultimate impact on the guards and others was not just from his outward expressions of happiness. Rather, those who heard him were changed because they saw an attitude of joy and a message of truth deeply fixed in a man experiencing great trials and afflictions.

What a profound example Paul is for you and me today. For instance, we can make difficult witnessing opportunities easier by exhibiting Christlikeness and godly joy no matter how events are pressing us down. Such attitudes, so different from what people naturally expect, will give us many chances to testify of God's grace (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Suggestions for Prayer:

Ask the Lord to help you look above and beyond your problems and focus on what He has done for you.

For Further Study:

A very striking example of Paul's rejoicing in the midst of suffering happened at the Philippian dungeon. Read Acts 16:22-34. What did he and Silas do to make the best of that trial?

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