

Joy Amidst the Struggle – Outline

I. Introduction – How does Paul find joy amidst struggles?

- a. My Story – When I accepted Christ, life was not all Lollipops & Rainbows – Life got harder, not easier. In the World but not of the World

Romans 5:3-5 – Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

- b. Learning that the Holy Spirit was with me through it all.

James 1:2-4 – Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 1:6 – Greatly rejoice, though now and for a little while you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

- c. We all have struggles. For me, it's a struggle against depression, for you, it may be parenting, or work, or something else. Today we'll explore how Paul found joy in the midst of struggles.

II. Background – Prison Epistles (Paul imprisoned in Rome in Acts 28)

- a. Paul likely under house arrest. Difficult for a travelling missionary.

III. Paul Finds Joy in Prayer

Philippians 1:3-6 - I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.

- a. Paul finds joy in prayer for others – Even in a precarious position, Paul focuses on others.
- b. Paul finds joy in knowing that his partners are praying for him.
- c. Paul finds joy in sanctification and salvation. Return to verse 6.

Philippians 1:18b-19 - Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 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.

Romans 8:28 – And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Philippians 1:9-11 - And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- d. **Galatians 5:22-23** (Fruit of the Spirit) – Focus on These!
- e. Paul is not mired up in his own circumstances. He continues to focus on others.
- f. What circumstances are holding you back from praising the Lord? Are they bigger than God in your own mind? It's not easy to avoid this catch.

IV. Paul finds joy that Christ is being preached.

Philippians 1:12-18 - Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 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. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 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.

- a. Paul does not focus on those who are wronging him.
- b. Amidst your struggles, can you still proclaim Christ's glory? Can you still proclaim the hope you have in the provision of God and the salvation of Christ?
- c. Christians get scattered (**READ Acts 8:1-4 and 11:19-21**).

V. Paul finds Joy in Obedience

Philippians 1:27-28a - 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 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

- a. We can't always control our circumstances, but we can often choose how to react to them.
- b. (**READ Isaiah 1:19**) – We will eat the best of life if we obey.
- c. Can we find joy amidst our struggles, by focusing on one another in prayer, focusing on preaching Christ, and being obedient to Christ in all circumstances?

- d. (**READ Matthew 22:36-40**) – If we are about God’s business and others, our own struggles may fall into the background.

VI. Pray

VII. Invitation