

“How to Be Joyful, No Matter What”

Text: Philippians 1:12-26

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Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church (www.pbpc.org)

Oakland, California

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PRAY!

Jesus and the Upper Room – betrayal, denial, desertion, pain, suffering and death.

- John 15:11, *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*
- What kind of joy did Jesus have that He has given to His followers that could overcome the storms of life?
- This morning Paul will help us to understand “How to Be Joyful, No Matter What”.

Read Philippians 1:12-26 & Pray!

Too many people don’t enjoy life; they just endure it. They don’t enjoy happiness. We think that life must be perfect for us to be happy.

- If I could just change my situation, life would be great.
- If I could just get rid of all my problems...
- But there’s no such thing as a problem free life.

If you’re going to learn to be happy, joyful, you must learn to be joyful in the situation, in the problems, in the very experiences of life.

“Happiness” comes from the word “happenstance” from which we get the word “circumstance”. It depends on happenings.

- Joy is internal. Happiness is external.
- You have a happy time at Disneyland, you leave and you lose our happiness. Joy is constant.
- How do you have happiness in spite of what is going on in your life?

The background of the story today is that Paul for the last four years has been miserable in circumstances.

- He’s spent two years in prison in the city of Caesarea (northern coast of Israel) for a trumped up charge.
- Then he’s put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Nero who is not known for his niceties toward Christians.
- On the way, he’s shipwrecked, stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, waits the winter there, continues on to Rome, spends another two years in prison awaiting trial to be executed.

- During this two year period in Rome he is chained to a guard for 24 hours a day. He has absolutely no privacy. Every four hours he gets a new guard.

Yet, in spite of all these situations, Paul says in Philippians 1:18, *“I rejoice and I will continue to rejoice.”*

- What’s Paul’s secret?
- How does he stay positive in prison, triumph over troubles, delight in difficulties, stay so happy, positive, joyful in spite of the fact that everything has not turned out the way he planned it?
- Paul gives us three secrets.

THE THREE ESSENTIALS FOR JOYFUL LIVING

I. I NEED PERSPECTIVE TO LIVE FROM

- A. Every one of you has problems. You’ve brought them in here with you. Your problems are not so important as how you are looking at those problems. The way you look at that problem is much more important than the problem. Your perspective makes the difference.
- B. Vs. 12, *“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”* I can see the best even in the worst. I can see God at work in the problems even when they don’t go my way. Non-believers are being witnessed to in my attitude toward them, believers are being encouraged.
- C. Vs. 13, *“As a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.”* Paul had always wanted to go to Rome. He meant to have a crusade. Instead, God put him in prison where he would write the New Testament.
 1. He’s chained to the palace guard, the crack elite troops of the Roman Empire, personally chosen by Caesar as his body guards. They were the highest paid people of the empire. When they retired after 12 years they were made leaders in Rome. There is not a more strategic group that Paul could witness to if he’s going to reach the Roman Empire.
 2. God puts Paul in Rome, Nero pays the bill and chains a future leader of Rome to him every four hours. In two years at four-hour shifts, Paul had witnessed to 4,380 guards. These guards had an inside route to the emperor and as a result even some of Nero’s family became believers. History tells us that Nero had his wife, mother and children killed because they became believers. A “chain” reaction. Paul had a captive audience.

- D. Vs. 14, *“Because of my chains most of the brothers and sisters have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”* My attitude towards problems has encouraged other people. Courage is contagious. It spreads like wildfire. Other believers became bold because of Paul being bold.
- E. The perspective you need to live from if you’re going to have joy in your life is Romans 8:28, *“And we know that in **All** things God works for the good of those who love Him...”*
- F. Lesson: God has a purpose behind every one of my problems.**
When you get this perspective you are on the way to joyful living.

II. I NEED A POWER TO LIVE ON

- A. I need a strength to make it, to keep on going. Life can wear you out. One crisis after another can drain you. You lose your energy and your power. Some of you are ready to throw in the towel. You say, “I’ve done the best I could, but it’s not good enough and I’m tired and sick.” You need a fresh power supply.
- B. Vs. 19, *“I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed.”*
1. Paul says, I have two things that give me strength and keep me going in spite of four years of imprisonment. One, the prayers of other people. And two, the help of God’s Spirit.
- C. Look at the word “hope” in vs. 19. You can’t live without hope. You’ve got to have hope to cope. Cornell University did a study of 25,000 POWs from WWII. They found that a person can handle tremendous stress and pressure as long as they have hope. The moment hope is gone you’re doomed.
- D. Where do you get your hope to keep on keeping on? Is that source reliable? God’s answer to personal energy crisis: Philippians 4:13, *“I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”*
- E. Lesson: With God’s power nothing can devastate me.**

III. I NEED A PURPOSE TO LIVE FOR

- A. Paul is old and tired and has been in prison for four years. He’s ready to go on to heaven. They’ve taken every single thing from him – friends, ministry, freedom, privacy. They’ve taken every thing from him except the one thing that cannot be taken from you and that is a purpose to live for.
- B. Vs. 21, *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* Paul is not suicidal but he’s anticipating death. He’s not afraid of dying. Death is just on to better things, out of the prison. “But while I’m here,” he says, “I have a purpose for living.”

- C. How would you fill in the blank? For me to live is _____.
- The ads on television tell us what the values are in our society, for they tell us what we want to hear. Based on advertising I'd say most Americans would fill in the blank in one of three ways:
1. "For me to live is possessions." Get all you can. Get, get, get. We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have, to impress people we don't even like? Doesn't that sound dumb? I've got to work to keep up with the Jones' and just about the time I catch up with them they refinance and I'm in trouble again.
 2. "For me to live is pleasure." If it feels good, do it. Anything to make me pleasurable. Anything to relieve my boredom for one little moment but Monday morning back at work, life is still the pits. Pleasure doesn't last.
 3. "For me to live is power, position, prestige, popularity." We dress for success and we drive to impress. We pay for our power lunch with our power card. Image is everything.
- The problem with possessions, pleasure and power is that they don't last. Not a lifetime, much less an eternity. There isn't ultimate fulfillment.
- D. Why does God leave you on earth after you become a Christian? Once you are his child why does he leave you here? For the benefit of other people. To tell those who don't know the Lord the good news and encourage each other. Paul says those are two things I've seen in my own life.
- E. Lesson: The secret of joy – Jesus first, Others second, Yourself third.**
1. Total preoccupation with self, the ME generation, is the reason there is so much unhappiness in our culture. When you learn to have a greater purpose in your life than just yourself, you will have joy more than you can handle.
- F. God has a purpose bigger than my problems.

I believe God wants you to enjoy the rest of your life. But it starts with the foundational values we've been talking about this morning.

PRAYER