

# SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

## *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians*

### **Philippians 1:12-21 – “Joy In Spite of Circumstances”**

Philippians 1:12, *“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me (circumstances) have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”*

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Paul the apostle is experiencing very difficult circumstances yet his heart overflowed with joy and rejoicing (vs. 18b)

Point – this passage understood by emotions as well as the mind.

How? He saw the obstacles as opportunities and his disappointments as divine appointments.

Notice Paul’s expectations in verse 20, *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”*

He knew that, *“... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

God had turned Paul’s prison not only into a place of prayer but also into a pulpit for the furtherance of the gospel (vs. 12)

Philippians 1:12, *“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”*

1. The Philippians were discouraged over Paul’s circumstances.
2. Paul says, “I want you to understand”. It helped to further the gospel, it didn’t hinder it.

J.A. Motyer – What ... happened began in Acts 21:17 when the apostle set foot in Jerusalem, forewarned by the Holy Spirit that bonds and imprisonment awaited him.... An entirely false accusation was leveled at him by his own people (21:28); he was nearly lynched by a religious mob, and ended up in the Roman prison, having escaped a flogging only by pleading citizenship (22:22ff.). His whole case was beset by a mockery

of justice, for, though all right was on his side, he could not secure a hearing. He made the subject of unjust and unprovoked insult and shame (23:2), malicious misrepresentation (24:5; 25:6f.), and deadly plot (23:12 ff.; 25:1ff.). He kept imprisoned owing to official craving for popularity (24:37), or for money (24:26), or because of an over-punctilious façade of legalism (26:32)....

Even then his sufferings were not over. There came the prolonged trial of the storm at sea (Acts 27) where his life hung, as it seemed, by a thread, both because of the elements (verse 20) and because of petty officiousness (verse 42). Eventually, when he reached Rome it was far from the ambassadorial entry that he had doubtless looked for (19:21). He came in the company of the condemned, bound by a chain, and destined to drag out at least two years under arrest awaiting the uncertain decision of an earthly king. Nevertheless, still imprisoned, still chained, still unheard, still uncertain, he looks back and avers, (cried), "what... happened to me has really served to advance the gospel."

3. Notice "...the things which happened..."

What things?

a. Lesson: Yet Paul was not bitter

Every circumstance of life is a platform on which the transforming grace of God can be manifested in the life of the believer.

b. Lesson: The righteous do suffer but God can use it for our good and His glory.

Illustration: Joseph – Genesis 50:20, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*"

**Oh! The Places You'll Go**

Dr. Seuss

Random House, 1990

You'll be on your way up! You'll be  
seeing great sights! You'll join the high fliers  
who soar to high heights.

You won't lag behind, because you'll  
have the speed. You'll pass the whole gang  
and you'll soon take the lead.

*"Wherever you fly, you'll be  
best of the best. Wherever you go,  
you will top all the rest."*

Except when you *don't*.  
Because, sometimes, you *won't*.

*"I'm sorry to say so but, sadly,  
it's true that Bang-ups and Hang-  
ups can happen to you."*

You can get all hung up in a prickly-ly  
perch. And your gang will fly on.  
You'll be left in a Lurch.

You'll come down from the Lurch with an unpleasant bump.  
And the chances are, then, that you'll be in a Slump.  
And when you're in a Slump, you're not in for much fun.  
Un-slumping yourself is not easily done.

Billy Graham, *Till Armageddon* – Comfort and prosperity have never enriched the world as adversity had done. Out of pain and problems have come the sweetest songs, the most poignant poems, the most gripping stories. Out of suffering and tears have come the greatest spirits and the most blessed lives."

Paul did not find his joy in ideal circumstances; he found his joy in winning others to Christ; if his circumstances helped to further the gospel that was all that mattered.

The word 'furtherance' means pioneer advance.

Notice how the gospel first came to Philippi.

God used three tools to further the gospel.

#### I. Paul's Chains – imposed restrictions (vs. 13-14)

*Philippians 1:13-14, "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."*

The same God who used Moses rod, Gideon's pitcher, David's sling and Balams donkey, used Paul's chains.

Paul could have complained about his chains but instead, he consecrated himself and his chains to God, and asked God to use them for the pioneer advance of the gospel (vs. 13 – *bonds in Christ*)

*2 Timothy 2:9, "...I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."*

How did God use Paul's chains?

1. His chains gave him contact with sinners (vs. 13a)

“*the palace*” is the Praetorian prison – he was chained to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day. The shifts changed every six hours so Paul could witness to at least four each day [in two years he could have reached 3,000 soldiers].

Acts 28:30-31, “*And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*”

“*and in all other places*” like what?

Philippians 4:21-22, “*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.*”

Even in prison Paul’s powerful preaching, pen and prayers.

Lesson: How about you? Perhaps you are chained in some way and so unable to be used by God – tied to job, in the house, sick in bed.

The key is the single mind

Notice Paul’s expectation in verse 20, “*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*”

## 2. His chains gave courage to the saved (vs. 14)

How? They saw his example

Ephesians 6:19-20, “*And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*”

If Paul can in prison, so can I

What if Paul criticized or complained?

We need to be an example

2 Timothy 1:7, “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*”

Without fear!

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

## II. Paul's Critics (vs. 15-18)

Philippians 1:15-18, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

The many or most in verse 14 was divided into two groups, indicated by the double usage of 'some' (vs. 15). Both preached the same message, but each group had different motives.

1. The Preachers with wrong motives
  - a. *envy* – it's the work of the flesh – it's jealousy
  - b. *strife* – or wrangling or contention – envy is the inward emotion, whereas strife is the outward expression.
  - c. *contension* – to canvass for office – to get peoples support – Paul's was to glorify Jesus Christ
  - d. *not sincerely* – not pure
  - e. they intended to aggravate Paul "– ...supposing to add affliction to my bonds"
2. The Preachers with right motives
  - a. goodwill – Literally: that which seems good
  - b. out of *love* – for Paul, the lost, the Lord
  - c. *truth* – both the context and motivation of their message was true.

Notice Paul's attitude in verse 18, "I rejoice!"

How? Because Christ was preached – many today don't

The motive was wrong yet the context was right.

Paul had the single mind – no envy in his heart.

It is a matter of historic record that the two great English evangelists, John Wesley and George Whitefield, disagreed on doctrinal matters. Both of them were very successful, preaching to thousands of people and seeing multitudes come to Christ. It is reported that somebody asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitefield in heaven, and the evangelist replied, "No, I do not."

"Then you do think Whitefield is a converted man?"

"Of course he is a converted man!" Wesley said.

“But I do not expect to see him in heaven – because he will be so close to the throne of God and I so far away that I will not be able to see him!” Though he differed with his brother in some matters, Wesley did not have any envy in his heart, nor did he seek to oppose Whitefield’s ministry.

How about us?

### III. Paul’s Crisis (vs. 19-21)

*Philippians 1:19-21, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Because of Paul’s chains – Christ was known

Because of Paul’s chains – Christ was preached

Because of Paul’s chains – Christ was magnified

Paul learned that the sufferings he had gone through allowed him to see that Jesus Christ is the one thing worthwhile in life.

How about you?

The things that happen unto me  
Are not by chance I know –

But because my Father’s wisdom  
Has willed to have it so.

For the “furtherance of the gospel”  
As a part of His great plan,

God can use our disappointments  
And the weaknesses of man.

Mrs. J. S. King