

PRAISE THE LORD ANYHOW!

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18

Ongoing debate: between pessimists/optimists among us!

We have ½ glass of water => Glass ½-full or ½-empty?

Old fable: 2 frogs fall into pail of milk,

One realizes futility of trying to get out & gives up.

He drowns & dies.

Other, unwilling to surrender, keeps swimming,

hoping to escape. He just keeps churning, with hope!

Milk eventually becomes butter; & the frog hops out

Mayo Clinic study: difference between optimists & pessimists:

Conclusion: difference = about 12 yrs of life!

When we focus on God, and His *good* purpose for our life, when we don't lose our perspective, we are able to trust God in the dark, rest secure, and experience true joy, even in the hard times.

Phil. have become pessimists—***everything's going wrong!***

Paul wants us to see what God is doing,

in the midst of difficult circumstances/hard times.

There's still much to praise God for!

Philippians = in many ways, the IDEAL church!

Endure suffering Doctrinally sound Generous

But this "ideal church" faces discouragement.

Times are hard. They're suffering. Leader's in jail.

Send representative: he gets sick & almost dies!

Everything seems to be going wrong!

Paul writes **To encourage us** in the hard times

=> focuses on the cause for joy

[in the midst of the hard times!]

1:12-26 Report concerning his imprisonment

Paul's approach to hard times is counter-cultural.

This ISN'T how we normally respond to hard times!

Paul sends report concerning situation *in prison*.

What's discouraging them, is not discouraging him!

They're mourning because he's in jail.

...because his ministry is curtailed.

Paul wants us to focus on what God is doing!

God is using the prison for His glory; to spread gospel

Gospel's advancing

through Paul's imprisonment 12-14

God's at work in this! => Encouragement

NOT what you'd expect from prison !!!!

His testimony inside prison 1:12-13

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. ¹³As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard & to everyone else that I'm in chains for Christ."

Guards realize...

Paul is *not* in prison for a crime.

He's in prison because of *Jesus*.

They're witnesses: this guy's *different!*

He has privilege of preaching to forced audience

They're chained to him for 4-hour shifts.

They listen in on every conversation.

What do you suppose Paul talks about?

They discover: Paul's life revolves around *Jesus!*

How else could he get chance to talk about Jesus to this hardened group of elite soldiers?!!

He'd *never* have access to the elite Praetorian Guard as a free man!

GOD opened this **opportunity to proclaim gospel**

Results: => **4:22** *“All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.”*

Therefore, ***REJOICE!*** => Be encouraged!

WE need that kind of revised perspective!

However difficult our circumstances may be–

They may *appear* to confine & restrict us.

How could God EVER use THESE circumstances?

Fanny Crosby – Became ill within two months of birth

The family doctor was away; another man– pretending to be a doctor–treated her by prescribing hot mustard packs to be applied to her eyes.

The treatment left her blind. ***–how terrible!–***

At 8, she wrote: *“Oh, what a happy soul I am, although I cannot see!*

I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.

How many blessings I enjoy That other people don't,

To weep & sigh because I'm blind I cannot, & I won't!

She **saw** more of God’s work than most of us ever **see**

=> Wrote 100s of gospel songs that inspire **us** to worship.

Paul reveals the secret: see hard times as

God-given opportunities to advance the gospel.

We learn to celebrate what God **is** doing,

rather than **complain** about what God **doesn't** do!

[But Paul's *ministry* inside the prison is only part of story, more significantly, his ministry has actually **expanded!**]

1:14 Paul presents additional cause for celebrating:

Testimony of other people outside prison

“Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously & fearlessly.”

Because of his imprisonment...

Others gained courage to talk about Jesus.

=> His ministry *multiplies!*

Opposition's attempt to hinder his ministry actually results in growth of ministry.

It opens opportunities—in ways he never imagined!

=> God uses our difficult circumstances to glorify Himself!

“Yeah. But Paul, don't you realize they're only preaching to spite you!” He responds in...

15-18 Gospel's advancing through divisive preachers

People are proclaiming Christ **–for the wrong reasons!**

Aren't *just* “divisive;” they're ornery, mean-spirited

They want to make Paul *suffer*, because they can do what *he* wishes **he** could do, but can't

Some are preaching for wrong reasons

Paul responds, “I don't care how bad *their* motive is, **people are hearing about Jesus! That's good!**”

While they have bad attitude, that isn't cause for discouragement
Gospel is proclaimed to lost people! => REJOICE!

His words are often misused – notice...

2 things Paul *doesn't* say:

1. He **DOESN'T** say – **“Any message will do!”**

He doesn't praise God because people are preaching some interesting religious message about living better!

–drawing big crowds to listen to them!

It is the gospel they're preaching!

Cp. Gal. 1: [same Paul:] If anyone proclaims ***another*** [different] **message**, *let him be accursed!*

[He applies that to people who talk about Jesus, but who mix works with the gospel,

to get people to try to please God by our efforts!]

That message won't produce a cause for praise!

It isn't true! & It doesn't work! It's NOT good news!

2. Paul **DOESN'T** say:

“Praise God for their rotten attitude!”

Doesn't let them off the hook for bad attitude.

It DOES matter what our attitude is!

BUT, GOSPEL IS being spread—even if wrongly-motivated

Their attitude 15-17 *“It's true that some preach Christ out of envy & rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶The latter do so in love, knowing that I'm put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I'm in chains.”*

If they're preaching to spite Paul that's their problem.

Paul won't play their game!

He doesn't let them drag him down to their level!

Though they want to hurt him, he doesn't fight back!
 He goes on doing what God wants him to do,
 & praises God that the Gospel is being preached!

Their bad attitude isn't cause to mourn!

God's advancing the gospel in spite of their attitude

=> **Paul's attitude 1:18** *"What does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, **Christ is preached. & because of this I rejoice.**"*

Paul rejoices because people are hearing gospel.

=> **God even uses divisive circumstances to glorify Himself!** => Encouragement

SO, WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR US?

We see hard times from neg. perspective.

"Why does God let bad things happen to good people –like us–?"

We should focus on what God's doing, & praise Him.

End of the Spear –follow-up on death of 5 missionaries killed in jungle in Ecuador, taking gospel to Aucas [2005]

–who would have imagined 65 yrs ago how that event would be used by God to advance the gospel?

What a tragedy!!! But consider what God has done!

Progress of gospel among the Aucas/Waodani

Publication of their story has drawn *many* to Christ

How many people have been motivated to commit their lives to proclaim gospel as a result of their story? [US!]

Ongoing ministries of families of those 5 men

– Elizabeth Elliot, Marge Saint, & their children!

Their story serves as a reminder to world of people committed to live for God whatever it might cost them.

Story goes on: God turns tragedy into blessing

–*FOR HIS GLORY!*

God is able to turn OUR tragedies into blessing too!

We may not face such *spectacular* tragedies:

Like Paul in jail; or 5 missionaries killed in the jungle

But we ALL go through conflicts, pressures of life

–when things don't work out the way we planned.

Some of us will face hard times this week!

For some, obstacles may be bigger than for others.

–but they're just as real!

Whatever the source of the pressure in OUR life,

we need to learn to **see what GOD is doing.**

God uses our circumstances

–even the hard times– to glorify himself!

Therefore, rather than mourn OVER our affliction we can celebrate–praise God, even when we don't understand what He is doing!

It's in hard times that people see God at work in us!
It's in the hard times that God is glorified through us!

=> **REJOICE!**

I'll say it again: REJOICE!"