



DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

A Joy-filled Life in troubled Times ... By Gareth

READ: PHILIPPIANS 1: 1-30

- The apostle Paul had every right to complain, Paul was imprisoned, which resulted in isolation and loneliness. So how could he be filled with joy v4? Paul was living John 15 v 11 and Philipians 4 vs 13
- **1. Focus on Christ (stay connected to the vine) :** V6 He who has begun a good work will bring it to completion
- God has created good works for you to do. That's a great reason to be joyful, that God has a work specifically for you and me to do. That work may include allowing the Lord to change your heart/attitude during this time of lockdown? It's an opportunity that we should grasp with both hands. We all long for a return to the good old days where no restrictions were in place however that may not come as quick as we would like?
- V7: Paul longed for the company/fellowship of the saints. His heart was longing for fellowship with the saints. However he didn't allow circumstances to take centre stage but continued to focus on Christ. The grace that touched his life is the same grace that's available for our lives.
- Paul didn't need to get involved with self pity. The poor me syndrome that often takes centre stage in our world today. He had so much he could have complained about. But his focus was always on others and the spreading of the gospel. Don't get me wrong some believers are going through very touch times but some have lost the focus during this time of lockdown.
- V9 Looking out for others and praying that they may grow in knowledge and in discernment. Look out beyond yourself. Today's world looks inwardly all the time. My mental health, my situation, etc. Paul could have been looking inwardly and been overcome with self pity. He probably suffered more than any other human being apart from Christ.
- It's not wrong to think or have feelings like poor me. However such feelings should be like an alarm which should cause us to turn to Christ and begin to praise Him for His grace, praise Him for what He has done and praise Him for what He is yet going to do in and through us.
- It's very natural and indeed normal to focus on our circumstances, but if we allow the cloud of self to dim His joy then we won't reap a harvest of joy. Your joy and my joy is a choice and it should not be based on our circumstances. The Word of God has a totally different view point to that of the world. If we're busy praying for others then we're taking our focus away from ourselves and our problems.
- Choose to bless others, choose to live the fruits of the spirit choose righteousness choose to live in victory over temptation, don't allow your mind and heart to be tempted by those things that takes our focus and robs us of our joy. We should never live by our feelings. Yes our feelings/emotions have been created by God but not for us to be bound by them but rather that they should like every other part be submitted to the Lord.
- **2. Furtherance of the Gospel:** V12 Paul was encouraging the saints by the way he lived before them. Because he expressed joy in the troubled times it encouraged the young saints to do likewise. Don't get me wrong I know that lockdown has been tough, many believers have lost income, job security and even family members.
- Paul was an example in the troubled times to such an extent that the gospel increased. V12
 - Habakkuk 3 vs 17-19 A time of difficulty yet a time of joy.
 - Paul wasn't just a prisoner in Rome, He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
 - We're not prisoners of the coronavirus we're first and foremost prisoners of Jesus Christ.
 - You and I cannot show joy in troubled times unless we have experienced troubled times.

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WEEKLY EVENTS/NOTICES

Week 23

- This is not the message that many preach today. Many preach come to Jesus and you will be prosperous, blessed and that you will be healthy etc. I can say now such a message will only fail. Many have and will come to Christ when that message is preached but when the inevitable happens and things don't turn out the way you wanted you will be discouraged and in many cases turn away from Jesus.
- The Lord desires to shape us into His likeness and image. This work of being on the Potters wheel can be a difficult work not for the potter but for the clay. Such a work can include hardship, rejection and even possible sickness.
- Self focus always breeds unhappiness. Modern therapies teach self focus, self worth, self forgiveness, self esteem, etc. You become a victim of self, When we live this way we're not living the way God intended. The devil twists things around to have us and everyone else focus on ourselves.
- The bible teaches the opposite. Love your neighbour as yourself. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Focusing on Jesus, Focus on others.
- **3. Fulfilment of faith**
- Stand fast in one spirit with one mind v27. Christians across the world are suffering. So if you're suffering today you are not alone. Furthermore Jesus identifies with our infirmities as he was tempted and suffered like no other.
- You don't have to worry because Christ is with us. Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. Ps55 v22. **We are on the winning side. We may be in the minority. But He's already won the battle. Christ has finished His work.**
- Today we are not suffering for our faith in Christ because of the Coronavirus (assuming that no one has the virus that's listening to this message). We're not suffering for our faith in Christ because the economy has crashed. These things have impacted everyone to one degree or another. Not just the follower of Christ. Yes we were suffering because we were all in this situation together saved and unsaved.
- What should our response be? The Christian's focus should be to use the opportunity to share the Gospel. We glorify Christ in the midst of this. Why because I'm saved, what's the worst thing that can happen even if I die? I'm going to heaven. That was Paul's reasoning in vs 21-24
- Think how privileged we are to suffer for Christ and yet be joyful. Maybe your not a very joyful person right now. Have you chosen joy? It might be the time for you right now to let go of the me circumstances Are you having a pity party?
- The bad news is you're focusing on yourself. The good news is that your only one step away from allowing your life to show forth the glory of the Lord. Choose joy, it's free, available in abundance for everyone of us. Lord I'm going to take your promise from your Word.
- Ask yourself am I self focused. I'm unhappy life isn't going my way. Are you choosing a joy filled life? God has made it available but the ball is firmly in our court.
- Think of it this way. When God created man he said help yourself to everything in the garden except the one tree the one fruit. Sometimes we're like Adam instead of seeing all the beauty and availability of the entire garden, love joy peace etc, we choose that which isn't good for us. Living in the self only brings a snare. Adam and Eve chose to live for themselves and looked what happened. They took from the one tree that they were instructed not to touch.
- In conclusion focus on Christ the joy giver. Such a lifestyle will attract others to Christ and encourage new or younger believers to continue in the faith. ■