

PHILIPPIANS (COUNT IT ALL JOY)
PROGRAM 2 (#912087)
WEEK 1 (#912318)
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SERIES: Philippians (Count It All Joy)

TITLE: Program 2 – Grace In Imprisonment

TUESDAY

OPEN

When Nero put Christians to death he would hear them singing and he would say, why are they singing? Why are they singing? Why do Christians sing in difficult times? Why would they sing when they're facing death? That's what you and I need to know and understand. We need that brand of Christianity that's able to have joy despite circumstances.

PART ONE

Prisons don't always have gates and bars, do they? Sometimes we're imprisoned in circumstances that are of our own doing, or we're imprisoned in circumstances that are of others doing. The question is: how do we live even if we're behind bars or if there are no bars, and yet it's imprisonment? It's a circumstance that has us chained to it. How do we live and how do we have joy in that circumstance? Well that's what we want to see as we look at this epistle of joy, as we look at the book of Philippians. Now if you'll

remember in our last program we had read the first few verses of Philippians, chapter 1, and we saw over and over that there was that word imprisonment. And we saw that it was “my imprisonment” that Paul was writing the letter. And we saw that Paul was imprisoned. Timothy wasn’t imprisoned, but Timothy apparently was there with him when he wrote this epistle, because he says **“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ to...the saints...in Philippi.”(Philippians 1:1a)** And so he’s writing to the saints in Philippi. We know that he’s in prison. Now what did I do? I marked every reference to imprisonment. And what I did is I underlined it in black, a squiggly underline and then I put like three chains together over the word imprisonment. And you see it in verse 7. Let me read it to you. **“For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.” (Philippians 1:7)** Now what does he say? There’s grace for imprisonment. There’s grace when you’re defending and, and confirming the gospel. And then he goes on to say in verse 13, **“so that my imprisonment,”** and you would mark that in a specific way as I just showed you, **“in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else.” (Philippians 1:13)** All right now when we read this and we make a list, and once you mark the author and once you mark the recipients then you want to make a list of everything that you learn about the author and everything that you learn about the recipients from marking those references. You want to mark anything that tells you who, or what, or when, or where, or why, or how. So we know from verse 13 that he’s imprisoned. And we know that **“the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else.” (Philippians 1:13b)** So the praetorian guard is a certain group of guards from the Roman army in Rome, and that’s where Paul is as he writes this. Now this does not tell us he was in Rome, but the Praetorian Guard gives us

a clue and we're going to find out how to discover more about that, because whenever you study an epistle you want to understand the historical setting of that epistle. You want to put it into its historical context. What was going on at that period of time? What was Philippi like? Where was Paul in prison? Well then you come down to verse 17. And you read **“the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.” (Philippians 1:17)** All right so you would mark imprisonment again. And what you learn from this is that there are people, who are preaching Christ, but they're doing it from a wrong motive; they're doing it “out of selfish ambition”. They're doing it thinking that as they preach Christ they're going to cause greater distress for Paul. Now we're going to see the context of all this, but I don't want to labor that point right now in this lesson. What I want us to do is I want us to go back where I left you in the last lesson, which is in Acts chapter 16, and I want us to look at Paul in Philippi because this gives us an account of the gospel coming to Philippi. So we want to go to Acts chapter 16. Now I read to you verse 11 and 12, and it talks about he's in Asia and he's planning on going and preaching the gospel in Asia on this second missionary journey, but the Holy Spirit stops him. A man from Macedonia, in a vision, says come over here and help us. So they sail across this little bit of water that's at the top of the Aegean Sea, and it would be about where present-day Istanbul is. And so “[they run] **a straight course to Samothrace, and [then] on the [following] day to Neapolis....**” (Acts 16:11b) Neapolis is this port in Macedonia, in Thrace, in Macedonia where he lands. All right then it says, **“and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony....**” (Acts 16:12a) All right now, let me just stop and say that the city of Philippi was founded by Philip, who was the father of Alexander the Great. And when we do our Greek study tours where we study Philippians in Philippi, and Thessalonians in Thessaloniki, and Acts in Berea and in Athens and then

Corinthians in Corinth and then take a three-day cruise on the Aegean Sea and then we go to Patmos and teach the book of Revelation and we go to Ephesus and study the book of Ephesians. Well when we do all this we go to the tomb of Philip. It's an incredible, incredible museum. It's just absolutely fabulous. And he's the father of Alexander the Great. And at one time Philippi had gold and silver mines in it. But by the time it becomes a Roman colony the gold and the silver is gone. Now it was also a major port city because it's not far from Neapolis. And so a lot of trade would go through this city. And as you go through this city you walk the actual Via Egnatia, the Egnatian Way, which was this highway so to speak, this road that went all the way, and you can trace it all the way down through Greece. It's an incredible, incredible highway. And you can stand on it and you can see all the surroundings of Philippi. Well when you go there then you can go to the prison. And it's just kind of a tiny little archeological dig right now, but that's the prison where they felt Paul was put there when he went to Philippi. Now remember, Paul's writing an epistle of joy and he's talking about having joy even in his imprisonment. Now if we want to understand that, we have to go back and see all right Paul teaches it, but does Paul live it? You know, God says in everything give thanks and we can say that to others, but do we give thanks when it happens to us? Do we understand that God is sovereign, that His sovereignty rules over all and that whatever comes into our life is filtered through His fingers of love because He holds us in His hand? Well when we come down to Acts chapter 16, verse 19, we find that Paul and Silas, who is traveling with him and Timothy is also there that Paul and Silas have just delivered this girl that is filled with demonic spirits. But because she's filled with demonic spirits, she's acting as a soothsayer and as a result of that, then she can't earn money anymore for the men that hold her captive. The girl has been set free under the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So they get upset and they put Paul in prison. And this is what it says in verse 22, it says and, **"The crowd rose...together against them, and the**

chief magistrates tore their robes off [of] them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.” And, “When they had [inflicted] ...many blows [upon them,] they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in stocks.”

(Acts 16:22-24) Now all they did was come to proclaim the gospel. All they did was walk in obedience to God. You know, so many times when we end up in a difficult situation we think hey, where is God and we forget that God allows difficulties because difficulties become your platform to show, hey, you live under the reign of a different master; you worship a different God than the rest of the people. You worship the One and only true and living God. And because you worship Him and because you belong to Him, because you’re His child, no matter where you are, no matter your imprisonment, no matter your circumstances, no matter your personal relationships, Beloved, you can have joy and you can rejoice in the Lord always because He is God. So here they are in the stocks in the inner prison doing what God commanded them to do and ending up in prison. I want you to know that life is not always coming up roses for a child of God because roses are just temporary thing, but you and I can move through the temporary circumstances and have joy. Watch what happens. **“But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake....”** (Acts 16:25-26b) Now look, they’ve been beaten with rods, they’re in chains, they’re fastened in chains, and what are they doing? They’re singing. And who are they singing praises to? They’re singing praises to the one and only true God. Beloved, one of the things that will bring joy into your life is to sing in the midst of trials. Keep music on your CD. Keep it on your radio but not the world’s music, but the music that causes you to look upward, to look beyond yourself. Not choruses that are just focused on you, but choruses that are focused on God. And when they

began to praise and sing an earthquake came. And you know what? Their chains were loosened, and your chains will be loosened too, when you sing. We'll be right back.

PART TWO

Welcome back, Beloved. Do you know how precious you are to me? Thank you for hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thank you for wanting to know God's Word for yourself. Well if you have downloaded the free study guide you've already looked at Acts chapter 16, so the verses that I'm skipping over you know the context. But if you haven't downloaded it, then you need to do that as soon as the program is over. Get on the computer and go to preceptsforlife.com; that's just one word preceptsforlife.com, preceptsforlife.com and download the study guide, and then you catch up with me. You go back and you go through Acts chapter 16 and you'll get the whole and the full picture. But because of time, I'm not going to take you into all the details. Well you know that when the earthquake happened and the angels of the Lord moved, then the chains of everyone were undone. And it says in verse 26, **"...immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened."** And, **"When the jailer [had been roused out of sleep] and [had seen] the prison doors opened, he drew his sword... to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped."** (Acts 16:26b-27) Now listen, if they had escaped somebody would have put him to death because that was his responsibility to keep them in prison. But you know God put Paul in prison for a purpose. This was the purpose. Watch what happens. **"But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Do [yourself no harm,] for we are all here!' And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas and after he brought them out, he said, 'Sir's what must I do to be saved?'"** (Acts 16:28-30) Beloved, this is where peace comes from. It comes from salvation. It comes from moving from darkness to light, from

the power of Satan to the kingdom of God. This is where peace comes from and if there's no peace with God there's never going to be joy in your heart. Because how can you count it all joy, when you find yourself at enmity with God? And if you have never truly, now listen. I'm talking about truly, believed on Jesus Christ. Believed that He is the Son of God, that He is the only way to the Father. Jesus said I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the light, and no man comes to the Father but by Me. (John 14:6) And if you haven't believed Him, if you have not receive Him; the Bible says as many as receive Jesus, to them, to the person that received Jesus, God gives the power or the authority to become the sons of God. You say, "Well how do I know if I've received Christ?" Because there's a change in your life, because the Holy Spirit moves in, because the Holy Spirit sets you free from slavery to sin. Oh yes, you sin but it's not longer the habit of your life because His Spirit, inside of you, bears witness with your spirit. Because His Spirit, inside of you, sheds His love abroad in your heart and you find yourself loving when you didn't love before. All of these are signs that you can know that you are saved. And I would just suggest that you get our 40-minute Bible study, How Do You Know God's Your Father? It's a 40-minute Bible study and we're going to tell you how to get it so that you can do it. But you ought to do it with several others and then you can discover whether God's your Father or not. But anyway, God wants all people to be saved. And so God takes His servant, His bondservant Paul, and His bondservant Silas, puts them in prison, and as He puts them in prison then, in the midst of those circumstances, they begin to do what they're supposed to do, rejoice in the Lord always. Paul doesn't just write it, but Paul lives it. And so he sings and so then the jailer says to him, **"...what must I do to be saved...?"** And he says, **"...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you [shall] be saved, and [your] household."** (Acts 16:30-31) And so they were saved. Now watch verse 35. **"Now when day [had come,] the chief magistrate sent their policemen, saying, 'Release [these] men.' And the jailer**

reported these words to Paul, saying, ‘The chief magistrates have sent to release you. [Now] therefore come out...and go in peace.’ But Paul said....” Catch this. He’s got a lot of chutzpah. “...They have beaten us in public without a trial, men who are Romans, and [they] have thrown us into prison; and now they’re sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.” [And] “The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates, [and] They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.” (Acts 16:35-38) You see to be a Roman citizen carried great benefits with it. And no Roman citizen could ever be beaten or put in prison without a trial. And so what you find now is you find them calling the magistrates and everybody is trembling because this Roman city has mistreated a Roman citizen. Well, this is how the gospel comes to the city of Philippi. It comes to a woman of all things. A woman by the name of Lydia, a seller of purple, a businesswoman who comes to know Jesus Christ. You know that from doing your homework. But now I must tell you, that Paul goes on a third missionary journey. And when he goes on that third missionary journey and he gets home from that third missionary journey, then Paul because of an encounter with some Jews who want to kill them, calls for his case to be tried before Caesar. As a result, now this is after his third missionary journey; this is about 11 years after his first visit to Philippi, Paul ends up in prison in Rome and I don’t want to take us beyond this lesson to the fact that he’s in prison. So what I want to do is I want to take you to Acts chapter 28. And it says that they come to Rome, verse 16, and, “**When [they] entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.**” (Acts 28:16) Now you know where the soldier was from. You know that the soldier was from the Praetorian Guard. That’s what you saw in Philippians chapter 1. And it says and it happened, [“After three days that he called those together who were leading men, and when he calls these Jews what he does is he shares the gospel of Jesus Christ with him.”] (PARAPHRASE Acts 28:17) Why?

Because as you saw in Philippians chapter 1, Paul is set for the **“defense and the confirmation of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:7b)** The gospel is on his heart. So the gospel is another key word that you see in Philippians chapter 1. And you want to mark it the same way I asked you to mark in Acts, with a megaphone, because that gospel is to be proclaimed no matter what. Well you come to Acts chapter 28 and in verse 30 this is what it says, **“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters....” (Acts 28:30a)** In other words he was not put in a prison in Rome, but he was put in rented quarters where he was chained to a praetorian guard day and night. And it says, **“...he stayed...in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, [and] unhindered.” (Acts 28:30-31)** You know what? The gospel can be preached anywhere. But where it’s heard the most clearly is in the midst of difficult circumstances, Beloved. No matter what your circumstances, you can sing. You can sing praises to God because God is over your circumstances. No matter what you’re imprisoned in, if you will take the step of obedience and you will begin to praise God. If you will begin to sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord, allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you, you will see that that prison will become a platform for the furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that’s what life is all about, the gospel of Christ.