

Joy in Spite of our Circumstances Philippians 1:12-14

Introduction

It is amazing how different the Gospel is presented, a post Christian, Pagan, Americanized Culture. Much of the church has adopted a philosophy of ministry, or a philosophy of the gospel that teaches that the Goal of the Gospel is to make it all better for us. Many would say that it is the fruit of the gospel to have health, wealth, prosperity, success, and if you do not have this, it is your lack of faith in accessing the bounty that God gives and offers you in the Gospel.

It is amazing to think, that there are very few offering that message in the lower and more rural parts of the Sudan, where the houses are made of mud and cow manure, Where poverty is the norm, and suffering and pain are more common than not. Where success would be measured in how long you were able to keep your cow alive. Or keep someone from stealing your chicken.

Or none of these same proponents of this kind of Gospel are in Syria, where you can be snatched off the street, blindfolded, and taken to a remote location, beaten, raped repeatedly and eventually have your throat cut for just saying you are a Christian. The World is much fuller of Suffering in the name of Christ than Success and health in the name of Christ.

The examples of History are Saturated with examples of Men and Women who have suffered terribly for the name of Christ.

I would ask the Question.....Why..

Since God is in Control, He could change it

And since he has the power to change it and doesnt Why NOT

Is God a Kill Joy

Does He take pleasure in watching is people Suffer

Isnt it His desire to see the ravages of Sin Gone

Why allow, suffering, despair, loneliness, Isolation, torture, disease, destruction, devastation, imprisonment, slaughter, of the ones that He paid the Highest Price for with the Death of His Son

The Scripture is Full of examples of Why God would choose this route..... the route of suffering.

It is for the furtherance of the Gospel

Its not about us, Its about Him and his Glory

Here are some examples

1. *Joseph-- Thrown in a hole by his brothers and left to die
Becomes the sole means of survival of the nation Israel*
2. *Daniel--- with friends -- taken into captivity, threatened with
Death, leads to Salvation of the king of Babylon and
some of the greatest prophetic scripture in all of the
Bible*
3. *Job- Suffered the loss of all his children, possesions and
health all for the purpose of showing the Devil Gods power of
preservation. and to Show Job who God is .*

4 Peter, Paul, John and all the other apostles, endured years of persecution and rejection and all the while the Gospel makes leaps and grows the church

5 Jesus, The one who suffered the most, with the greatest results of redemption and Glory

Paul had this same understanding 2\]

I. The Advancement of the Gospel v.12-13

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ¹

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 1:12–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now the key is to, notice in verse 18 this line, "**I rejoice, yes and I will rejoice.**" Underline that in your Bible because that's what he wants them to know. He has a heart for them too. He doesn't want them needlessly worrying about him. verse 4 "My prayers even are filled with joy." Joy is the dominant attitude which he confesses.

Chapter 2:17 "I rejoice, and share my joy with you all."

Chapter 3: 1, "Rejoice in the Lord."

Chapter 4: 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice."

Don't be sad. Don't be sorrowful. Don't fret and worry. Rejoice, I am. The joy of ministry.

The joy of ministry in the life of Paul was unrelated to circumstances? If his joy was related to circumstances, he wouldn't have had any joy. If his joy was related to pleasures in this earth, he wouldn't have had any joy. If his joy was related to possessions in this world, he wouldn't have had any joy. If his joy was related to freedom in this life, he wouldn't have had any joy. If it was related to prestige, he wouldn't have any joy...to outward success, he wouldn't have any joy...to a good reputation, he wouldn't have any joy. But it was all related to something completely other than that. It was all related to the ministry and the joy in the ministry was, in the sense, absolutely indifferent to all other things.

Now immediate human perception would say, "Well, he's in a terrible situation, it's little wonder if he has no joy at all, and if his ministry is totally crippled." But that is not the case, as is eminently clear in those three verses. Let's look at them more closely.

God had a better plan than even I had. Instead of this thing shutting down the ministry, this has expanded the ministry. The good news is this has all turned out for the progress of the gospel.

The progress of the gospel was the passion for which Paul lived? Can you ask yourself that question? What's the passion for which you live? What drives you? What sucks up your energies? What dominates your time?

What dominates your thinking? What dominates your reading? What makes your life tick? What passion do you carry in your heart? Is it for the gospel? It was for Paul. It was of little consequence to him what happened to his own body, what happened to his own career, what happened to his own circumstances. The only thing that really mattered to him was the progress of the gospel. That was his passion.

."To testify solemnly of the gospel," that's all I want to do. In Romans 1 he says, "I am ready to preach the gospel." In 1 Corinthians 9 he says, verse 16, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." The man is under compulsion. He was a driven man, to use a more contemporary term. And he was driven to the progress of the gospel. He lived for that. If the gospel progressed, nothing else mattered. Boy, what a model.

Furthurance Progress (advance of, spread of, promotion of) (**proskope** from **pró** =before or forward + **kópto** = cut, strike, impel) (**proskope** 2 more times [Php 1:22](#), [1Ti 4:15](#)) refers to forward movement of something often of armies in spite of obstacles, dangers, and distractions.

4297 *prokopé* (from [4253](#) /*pró*, "in front of" and [2875](#) /*kóptō*, "cut, chop down") – properly, *advance* (progress) – literally, "advancement by *chopping down* whatever impedes progress"; furtherance.

For the believer, this means going *forward* in sanctification, cutting through obstacles *by the Lord's power*.

[This root (*prokop-*) is also used in antiquity of *pioneers* and *armies* – clearing away (chopping down) forests in order to reach their destination.]

The word "progress" ... prokope. It's an interesting word. It's not just a word that means progress in the sense that something moves along. It has inherent in it the idea that something is moving along in spite of obstacles, danger, distraction. In other words, inherent in the very word is resistance. It is moving in spite of resistance. That word is used, for example, in extra biblical usages to speak of an army or an expedition that is moving along. The verb form, prokoptain(?) means literally to cut down in advance. And it

pictures those who would go before an army cutting down trees and hacking their way through undergrowth to make a path for the army to follow. So it is progress against resistance, progress against opposition, progress against those things which would hinder the advance. So he says the gospel is advancing against obstacles. And the chief obstacle was his imprisonment. The chief obstacle was the hostility of Rome against the gospel. But far from binding the gospel and halting it, the gospel was advancing against these circumstances.

Gospel (2098) ([euaggelion \[word study\]](#) from eú = good + aggéllō = proclaim, tell) means good news, glad tidings,

I Corinthians 16 , "I'm going to stay here at Ephesus because there's an open door and there are many adversaries."

[1 Thessalonians 2:2](#) But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. ^{3 2}

2 Tim 2:9. for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ³

I think about John Bunyan. Most all of us know John Bunyan as the author of Pilgrim's Progress. Prior to the writing of Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan was known as a great preacher. His preaching was so powerful that they put him in the Bedford Jail to silence him but he preached sermons at the top of his voice which wafted over the walls and people would gather outside the jail walls to hear him preach though they couldn't see him. They finally silenced him, put him down inside the jail and they got him down there where nobody could hear him preach and that gave him the freedom in order to write Pilgrim's Progress. And so they thought they could silence the preacher but instead they gave him opportunity to write that which has preached to millions and millions and millions of people, generation after

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Th 2:2–3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Ti 2:9–10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

generation after generation after generation. And that's how it is. You can't bottle up the gospel. The servant of God may be bound, but the Word of God is never bound...never bound

When Trouble Strikes (Our Daily Bread) Dave Dravecky had pitched with remarkable success for the San Diego Padres and the San Francisco Giants baseball teams. But his pitching arm developed an unusual soreness. Medical tests identified the problem--cancer. Surgery and months of rehabilitation followed. Then, after pitching for a time in the minor leagues, Dave made a widely applauded comeback to the majors. But in Montreal, as he was delivering a pitch, his arm snapped. The cancer had not gone away. To save his life, doctors removed his arm and much of his shoulder. A committed Christian, Dave didn't wallow in self-pity. He said, "There is no struggle about feeling sorry for myself. The question is not, 'Why me, God?' The question is, 'What is Your plan for me?' " Then he said, "I see this as God giving me the opportunity to share the gospel with a lot of people."

Chains are in Christ

He was a prisoner because he preached Christ, because he believed in Christ, because he represented Christ. He told the Roman Christians that though he had done no wrong he was delivered a prisoner into the hands of the Romans, [Acts 28:17](#). He tells the Philippians repeatedly about his bonds, or chains,

Colosians 4

Philemon ,9 13

Acts 28:20

Eph 6:20

Usually the word is desmos, or desmois, plural. But in those two cases it's the word halusis. And that little word introduces us to a little more rich understanding of his condition. The halusis was a short chain. It was sort of like a little bit longer than a set of handcuffs, just a short chain. And it was placed over the wrist of a prisoner and over the wrist of the soldier. And they were in somewhat close proximity, maybe 18 inches or so. And that was the chain, the halusis, that bound him to that Roman guard 24 hours a day. Escape was impossible, privacy was impossible. And though he was allowed a private house, night and day he was linked to that soldier, over two years.

Now think about it. What is the result of that? "My imprisonment for the cause of Christ has become well known." How did it become well known? "Throughout the whole praetorian guard." Why? Because those were the guys who were chained to him. Now you have to understand it's one thing for Paul to be chained to a soldier, and it's a whole other point of view to realize that a soldier was chained to Paul. Have you ever tried to evangelize someone who wanted to get away? Imagine being chained to Paul six hours. And the Praetorian Guard were being converted

Phil 4:22 All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. ⁴

The Palace Guard

The Praetorian Guard, or the palace guard, the imperial guard of Rome had been originally instituted by Caesar Augustus. You remember, he was Caesar at the time of the birth of Christ. They were a body of about ten thousand hand-picked troops. They were the first-rate men in the Roman army. Augustus had kept them dispersed throughout the city of Rome because they were the leaders of his presence there, responsible for keeping the peace and for marshalling strength against any opposition. Tiberius had concentrated them in Rome in an especially built and fortified camp so they had high profile presence in Rome. They were a threat to any insurrection, any rebellion. And, of course, there was always the potential of a slave rebellion. Vatellius(??) had increased their number from the original nine

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 4:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

or ten thousand to sixteen thousand. By the end of their term which ran about 12 years early and ultimately 16 years, by the end of their term they were granted all the highest privileges of citizenship and also a large sum of money. They became so powerful that they ultimately became the bodyguard of the emperor himself and after that, they became so powerful that they literally became the king makers of Rome and every emperor was the choice of the Praetorian Guard. Why? Because they were the power, they were the power. They could impose their will by force on the populous or on the leadership. And so they chose all the emperors...tremendously powerful men.

When Paul then arrived as a prisoner to Rome, he was put in charge of the prefect of the Praetorian Guard. And it was under the Praetorian Guard that he was kept prisoner. And so he was chained to one after another of these elite soldiers of Rome. What an impact. What an incredible opportunity.

And I might add to you that it wasn't just the ability of Paul to articulate the gospel that impacted those men. And it wasn't just his life style of graciousness and love and mercy and gentleness and conviction. It was the fact that all of this truth and all of this character was coming out of a man in deep affliction. That was the context that made his message so viable, so believable. Because they knew what he was suffering. And they knew his life was on the line. And they knew he could lay his head on a block and have an axe chop it off his body, if Nero so decided. And he knew it too, and they knew he knew it. And they must have been in awe of the man. I mean, we know there was no argument they could give that he could not answer. We know there was no characteristic that they would have looked for that he didn't demonstrate. And all of it out of suffering, his message was so believable. And the impact was that Caesar's household was starting to fill up with saints.

F.B. Myer writes, "At times the hired room would be thronged with people to whom the Apostle spoke words of life. And after they withdrew, the sentry would sit beside him, filled with many questionings as to the meaning of the words which this strange prisoner spoke. At other times when all had gone and especially at night when the moonlight shone on the distant slopes of Siracti(?), soldier

and Apostle would be left to talk and in those dark lonely hours the Apostle would tell the soldier after soldier the story of his own proud career and early life, of his opposition to Christ and his ultimate conversion and would make it clear that he was there as a prisoner, not for any crime, not because he had raised rebellion over revolt but because he believed that He whom the Roman soldiers had crucified under Pilate was the Son of God and the Savior of man. As these tidings spread and the soldiers talked them over with one another, the whole guard would become influenced in sympathy with the meek and gentle Apostle who always showed himself so kindly to the men as they shared, however involuntarily his imprisonment." And then he writes, "How absolutely consistent the Apostle must have been. If there had been the least divergence, day or night, from the high standard which he upheld, his soldier companions would have caught at it and passed it on to others. The fact that so many became earnest Christians and that the word of Jesus was known far and wide throughout the Praetorian Guard indicates how absolutely consistent the Apostle's life was,"

You say, "Well, what does this say to me?" Do you ever think about your life? Somehow, some way you maybe say to yourself, "I can't go preach the gospel. I can't go spread...I can't be a missionary, I can't be a pastor. Maybe not even a Bible teacher. I'm stuck with my job." Humph, that's an interesting parallel, isn't it? Are you chained to a desk? Are you chained to a place on the assembly line? Are you chained to a classroom? Are you chained to a car as you move around from place to place, meeting people in a sales position? Wherever you are, look at it as a point from which you can further the gospel. Whatever it is, live in your place, live in your chained place in such a way as to make the gospel believable.

II The Courage of the Gospel v.14

¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ⁵

Most of the brethren. "Pleionos" means majority, not just many, but the majority of the brethren trusting, or a better way to translate pepoithais having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment now have far more courage.

confident

Πειθῶ, Πειθους, ἤ,

1. Peitho, proper name of a goddess, literally, Persuasion; Latin *Suada* or *Suadela*.

2. persuasive power, persuasion: [1 Corinthians 2:4](#) **ἐν πειθοι** — accusative to certain inferior authorities. (On the word, see Müller's note on Josephus, contra Apion 2, 21, 3. (Hesiod, Herodotus, others.))

Are Much More

Cognate: **4057** *perissōs* (an adjective, derived from [4012](#) /*perí*, "all-around, excess") – "extraordinarily, exceedingly" (J. Thayer); *beyond* expectation; further than the upper limit, going past what is anticipated. [See 4052](#) (*perisseuō*).

περισσῶς (**περισσός**, which see), adverb, beyond measure, extraordinarily (Euripides; equivalent to magnificently, Polybius, Athen.); equivalent to greatly, exceedingly: **ἐκπλήσσεσθαι**, [Mark 10:26](#); **κράζειν**, [Matthew 27:23](#) and G L T Tr WH in [Mark 15:14](#); **ἐμμαίνεσθαι**, [Acts 26:11](#). super abundant

Bold

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 1:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

5111 *tolmáō* (from *tolma*, "bold courage") – properly, to show daring courage necessary for a valid risk ("putting it all on the line"); courageously venture forward by putting fear behind and embracing the fruit that lies ahead for taking a *necessary risk*.

to speak

Word Origin

from *lalos* (talkative)

Definition

to talk

to speak, i. e. to use the tongue or the faculty of speech; to utter articulate sounds:

Eph 6:19 **and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. ⁶**

⁶ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Eph 6:19–20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.