

Rejoicing in Sorrow

“Yes, and I will continue to rejoice...”

Philippians 1:18 (NIV)

Paul is in a very difficult situation when he writes our verse for today. He is in prison because of his preaching ministry. He had a great desire to be free to roam the world and continue to speak of Jesus to anyone who would listen. His chief joy in life was to publish the Good News of salvation in Jesus.

Now he was unable to spread the word of life in Christ with the world as his audience. This would be equivalent to a preacher today who was confined to home without even a computer to reach out with the message of Christ.

Yet, for all of his limitations, Paul could see reasons for being happy. We marvel at such a joyful spirit in the context of having his plans for missionary work removed. As we look at the context of our verse today we pick up on several things that caused the great missionary of the early church to be happy.

First, we realise that the apostle was able to send out correspondence from his

prison. We believe that he wrote 4 letters at the time of this imprisonment. He wrote Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon during this time of confinement. Being able to encourage people he could no longer see gave him cause to rejoice. When he could not preach to these people he could write.

Paul is able to remember his spiritual children from prison and call to mind how they continue to serve the Lord in ways he no longer can. This brings joy to his heart (Philippians 1:3-5).

I often reminded a wonderful Christian minister I used to visit of the many who came to faith in Jesus through his long and prosperous ministry. I also reminded him that there is a host of people who were strengthened in their Christian walk through his sermons and visits. So I suggested to him that his work goes on in the lives of those people.

Then Paul speaks of how he is able to preach in prison to the guards and other staff of

the prison. He realises that this would be impossible had he not been confined. His audience has changed but he still tells the wonderful Good News of Jesus.

Can you be creative in your time of loss and seek the spiritual good of those you come into contact with? Are you able to be faithful to the house of God and go there to sing His praise regularly? Or possibly you are house bound and all you see of believers is when they visit. Well, you may still demonstrate the amazing grace of God by continuing to speak of His goodness in difficult circumstances. Whatever your situation, you may be a blessing to others by your gentle submission to God's will for your life. Go on rejoicing in your sorrow and the Father and the Son shall make their home with you (John 14:23).

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