

**Joy...No Matter What**  
**Philippians 1:12-26**  
**August 15, 2010**

**Intro:** Jet Blue flight attendant Steven Slater had lost his joy! After having to deal with one too many irate, rude and thoughtless passengers, he calmly walked to the public address system, said a few choice words to the startled passenger, then calmly exited via the airplane's emergency exit chute. He had enough! He has become a folk hero for those are tired of being used and abused, but I see it has a guy who has lost his ability to find joy no matter what.

*Could it be possible to live in such a way that we were joyful no matter what happened in our life? Hard to believe but there is a way! Paul gives us the secret? How does he stay positive in prison, triumph over troubles, delight in difficulties, stay so happy, positive, joyful in spite of the fact that everything has not turned out the way he planned it. How can we be joyful, no matter what?*

**The Background:** The background of the story today is that Paul for the last four years has been miserable in circumstances. He's spent two years in prison in Caesarea for a trumped up charge. Then he's put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Nero who is not known for his "niceties" towards Christians. On the way he's shipwrecked, stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, waits the winter there, continues on to Rome, spends another two years in prison awaiting trial to be executed. During this two year period in Rome he is chained to a guard for 24 hours a day. He has absolutely no privacy. Every 6 hours he gets a new guard. Though he wanted to go to Rome to have an evangelistic crusade, God put him in prison where he would write the prison epistles. Yet in spite of all of these situations, Paul says in *Phil. 1:18* "I rejoice and I will continue to rejoice."

- I. **Look at your progress not just your circumstances**  
*<sup>12</sup>Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,*

A. Our circumstances can cause us to lose sight of what God is doing. **The quality of your life is primarily determined not by what happens to you that is by your circumstances, but by how you choose to respond to your circumstances.** The way you look at a problem is more important than the problem!

B. Our typical response to difficult circumstances...

1. **Anger:** Where is God?
2. **Pity party:** Why me God?
3. **Denial:** Where is the problem? There should be no problems. I must need more faith. I must need to do something more!

**C. Reminder: Our response to our circumstances tells us what we really believe about God!**

## II. Look at the **purpose** not just the problems

*13so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and to everyone else,*

A. He's chained to the palace guard; God puts Paul in Rome; Nero pays the bill and chains a future leader of Rome to him every 6 hours. In two years at six-hour shifts, Paul had witnessed to hundreds of guards.

B. What about you ...

1. Maybe you woke up today wishing there was something different in your life. If only this one thing or these two things or these series of events were different. I thought that by the time I reached this age in life, this position, and things would be different. What do you focus when things don't go as planned?
2. Paul had experienced a "curve ball" in his plans but God had a greater purpose. If you always ask why did this happen, you may miss what God is trying to teach you. Some things just don't make sense! **Ask what not why!** What is God teaching me?

C. Rom. 8:28...All things work together for the good. Do you believe it or just recite it?

D. **Reminder: Instead of asking why ask what!**

### III. Look at God's **provision** not my efforts

*19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,*

God is work behind the scenes working things out. How? The partnership of their prayers and God's provision

A. **Partnership of: Prayer + Provision of God = Power (deliverance)**

B. Reminder: Remember who is really in charge.

1. God is sovereign! He has the power and the prerogative to change things.
2. He do whatever he wants, when He wants, how He wants! **Let's go from so what to now what!** What do you have for me God? I am excited to join you in what you are doing in my life!
3. *Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58*

### IV. Look from a heavenly **perspective** not an earthly perspective

*21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

A. What are you living for? Is it Christ? Do you have the right priorities?

B. **What are the wrong priorities?** For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_.

The ads on television tell us what the values are in our culture. Based on advertising most Americans would fill in the blank in one of 4 ways:

1. **"For me to live is possessions."**  
Get all you can, and then get some more! Get, get, get.  
**We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like.**

2. **"For me to live is pleasure.**  
"If it feels good, do it. Anything to make me happy!  
Anything to relieve my boredom for one little moment,  
but Monday morning back at work, life is still the pits.  
Pleasure doesn't last.
3. **"For me to live is power (or position, prestige)."**  
We dress for success and we drive to impress. Image is  
everything. We angle for the right position in our  
companies and want the corner office that goes with it!
4. **"For me to live is popularity"** For many students it is  
popularity. They'll do anything they can to fit into the  
right group even if it means lowering their standards.  
You can be the most popular person on your campus,  
come back two years later and no one remembers you.  
One minute you're the hero the next minute you're the  
zero.

- C. The problem with possessions, pleasure, power and popularity is that they don't last. Not a lifetime, much less an eternity. There isn't ultimate fulfillment. Choose the right priorities ... What is your measuring tool for success? Where do you place your confidence?
- D. **Conclusion:** I am convinced that the reason there is so much unhappiness in our culture, so many discouraged and depressed people is because in our society there is a total preoccupation with self. What's best for me? What will make me happy? What is the best thing for me? When you learn to have a greater purpose in your life than just yourself, you will have joy more than you can handle. There is no such thing as problem free living. When you base your life on the kinds of values that are going to last, then problems just aren't as significant. So what that things haven't worked out as I've planned. God has a purpose that is bigger than my problems. He gives us the possibility of Joy in spite of not happiness because of. And when you have that kind of joy, there is no "chain" of circumstances that can hold you down!