

Rejoice in All Circumstances

Key Verse: *“I would
ye should
understand,
brethren, that the
things which
happened unto me
have fallen out
rather unto the
furtherance of
the gospel.”*
—*Philippians 1:12*

Selected Scripture:
Philippians 1:12-21

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.”—Phil. 1:1-4

A deep bond of affection existed between the brethren at Philippi and Paul. He exhorted them to abound in love and sincerity, and to be filled with the fruits of righteousness as they continued to abide in Christ.—Phil. 1:7-11; John 15:4,5

In our Key Verse, Paul affirms that the Heavenly Father was blessing him abundantly despite his imprisonment, as the gospel continued to prosper. An important lesson to be appreciated and internalized by the people of God

WHILE AWAITING HIS appearance before Caesar, Paul spent two productive years under house arrest in Rome meeting with believers. He also used this time to write letters of loving encouragement to the brethren, including his epistle to the brethren at Philippi.—Acts 28:30,31

His letter begins: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

is that receiving his favor does not exempt us from problems in this sinful world.

Sometimes, as we experience distress, it is difficult for our flesh to accept it as something overruled by the Lord for our highest spiritual welfare. (Rom. 8:28) In fact, the believer is promised adversity in the flesh, because being in the world, tribulations will come. Yet, in Christ we are promised inner peace in times of difficulty and trial. (John 16:33) Perhaps all too often we may equate peace with the absence of trouble and, therefore, deem difficulties as totally undesirable.

The whole tenor of Paul's message contained in our lesson can be harmonized with scriptural teaching. His life was totally consumed in serving Christ. Yet, if he were to die, it would have been a personal gain for him to have rested from all the rigors associated with being spent while carrying out his sacrificial course. However, having yielded himself to God's will, he had no personal preference as to what should be his portion. Instead, he rejoiced to continue to serve the brethren until such time as he would enter the sleep of death and await Christ's return, when he would be resurrected and rewarded.—Phil. 1:21-24; II Tim. 4:8

Our own sufferings should evoke a sense of gratitude in our hearts that we might be permitted to endure hardship for the cause of Christ. Our mind reflects upon the fact that Paul and Silas, having received a beating of many stripes and being put into stocks in a jail in Philippi, were able to sing praises unto God. (Acts 16:19-25) What an inspiring example this is for us, and a reminder that the desire to praise our Creator under all circumstances must certainly merit God's approval.

The Scriptures assert that experiencing the presence of God brings fullness of joy. (Ps. 16:11) This should be a present reality in our lives despite adverse conditions and trials which we encounter in striving to do the Heavenly Father's will. May we ever live the admonition to rejoice in the Lord always.—Phil. 3:1; 4:4 ■