

# SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



## Triumphant Joy

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 4:1-4 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Galatians 5:22-23 | Hebrews 13:5 | 1 Peter 1:3-8

### ► SUMMARY

#### How do your circumstances affect you?

When you are going through difficulties, pain, or disappointment, do these experiences change your conduct or disposition? Are you one person when life is running smoothly, but a different one when you are visited by hardship and suffering? Although trouble has the power to take away our happiness, we don't have to let it rob us of our joy in Christ.

### ► SERMON POINTS

Circumstances may change, and trouble will come, but for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, their relationship with Him will never be altered. And that fact is the foundation for joy in every situation.

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was in prison, chained to a Roman guard. Even though he wasn't sure what awaited him and was suffering the hardships of prison life, his letter was filled with joy. Toward the end of the letter, he said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

Paul had every reason in the world to be miserable and forlorn, but his focus was not on his external conditions but on his relationship with the Lord. His joy-filled experience didn't match his environment. In the midst of all the difficulties, Paul had triumphant joy that overcame his circumstances.

#### There is a difference between happiness and joy.

Happiness depends upon good circumstances, but joy depends on a relationship. Although most people desire

and pursue a happy life, Christians have the privilege of remaining joyful in every situation because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, who sustains them. Happiness could be thought of as a light-hearted, worldly feeling, but joy is a God-feeling, and that's what Paul had.

At salvation, the Holy Spirit seals us as children of God. Knowing that this relationship can never change enables us to face difficulties and walk through dark valleys with an inner confidence and overwhelming joy and contentment.

#### We should not allow our circumstances to determine our disposition.

If we let ourselves focus on our difficulties and pain rather than on Christ, we will become trapped by our circumstances. That's why some people buckle under the smallest trauma or heartache while others stay strong in much more trying circumstances. The difference is an immovable foundation of joy in Christ, and that's what the apostle Paul had.

Paul had no external reasons to rejoice. Since he was confined in a prison cell, he no longer had the freedom to travel around the Roman Empire preaching the gospel and founding new churches. Furthermore, some of his fellow workers in the gospel were adding to his suffering by making false accusations against him. Even his future was uncertain as he faced the threat of death. But through all this, he kept rejoicing in Christ and was confident that even if he died, he was destined to be in the presence of the living God.

#### Something is missing in Paul's letter.

He never mentions sorrow over being confined. Nor does he complain about his conditions or grumble that God hasn't gotten him out of jail yet because his focus is on

proclaiming Christ. Every time there was a change of guards, Paul saw an opportunity to tell another Roman soldier about the gospel.

### The source of Paul's joy was his relationship with Jesus.

We have this same privilege because Christ hasn't changed. It's not natural to rejoice when the bottom drops out, friends walk away, or there's no money left. But Christians are not natural people, because God's Spirit lives within them. Tough times are actually beneficial because that's when we grow the most. Therefore, we can rejoice even when God doesn't deliver us from trouble. As Christians, we should never think it's our job to make sure everything works out the way we want. Instead, our confidence should be that the Lord will meet our needs as He desires. Then we can rejoice in Him, letting joy become an immovable foundation that undergirds our lives.

### This kind of joy is a spiritual gift.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Joy is the overflow of the Holy Spirit in our lives no matter what kind of situations we are facing. His presence in us is not a matter of feelings but a fact. Therefore, we never have to worry that He has left us. However, sin in our lives keeps us from experiencing this joy because we're living in disobedience to the Spirit.

### Happiness is based on conditions, but joy is based on a relationship.

Conditions change every day, but our relationship with Jesus is unchanging and eternal. Paul's relationship with Christ superseded his dismal surroundings, and this is true for us as well. Just because we go through hardship and suffering doesn't mean that God has moved one inch from us. Joy can be a reality in our suffering.

### We can rejoice when we're hurting because . . .

- God walks through it with us.
- The Lord is in control of our circumstances.
- He causes those times to turn out for our good.
- There is nothing that can separate us from His love.
- We can thank God for what He is doing in us.

### To gain the right perspective of joy in the midst of pain, consider what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:3-8.

- [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- [4] to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
- [5] who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- [6] In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,
- [7] so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- [8] and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Joy isn't just a feeling; it's an awesome assurance and confidence overflowing within us because of who we are and what we have in Christ.

### ► RESPONSE

- What evidence is there in your life that you have the joy of Christ? How consistently is it expressed in your disposition in hard times?
- What are some of the reasons you can rejoice in your relationship with Jesus, even when your circumstances give you no apparent reason to do so?

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