

What Made Paul Sing?



In Acts 16, we're told of how God's two appointed missionaries--Paul and Silas--were thrown into a Philippian prison for proclaiming the gospel. They didn't know what awaited them in the short-term. And yet, in verse 25, we're told, "**But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.**"

What kind of a mindset did Paul have that enabled him to sing songs of praise in such a 'midnight' of testing? When we skim through his New Testament letters, we find that Paul let's us know the things that he knew--and what we can also know that will sustain us in our own dark 'midnight' of trial.

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I. PAUL BELIEVED THAT HIS TRIALS WERE DIVINELY PURPOSEFUL IN THE HAND OF GOD:

Romans 5:3-5 --

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 8:28-30 --

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Ephesians 2:10 --

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

II. PAUL LOOKED ON HIS TRIALS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR JESUS' POWER TO BE DEMONSTRATED:

2 Corinthians 4:7-11 --

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10 --

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of

God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 --

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Ephesians 3:20-21 --

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

III. PAUL BELIEVED THAT GOD WAS USING HIS TRIALS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL:

Philippians 1:12-14 --

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 --

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 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.

IV. PAUL REJOICED IN HOW GOD WAS USING HIS TRIALS TO STRENGTHENED THE FAITH OF OTHERS:

Colossians 1:24 --

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. . . .

1 Thessalonians 3:7-8 --

. . . therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

V. PAUL REMAINED CONFIDENT IN CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIM WHILE IN THE MIDST OF HIS TRIALS:

Romans 8:37-39 --

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:12 --

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

2 Timothy 4:17-18 --

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

VI. PAUL TRUSTED IN THE SPIRITUAL RESOURCES OF JESUS HIMSELF TO SUSTAIN HIM IN TRIALS:

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 --

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 --

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us . . .

Galatians 2:20 --

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Philippians 4:11-13 --

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

VII. PAUL SAW HIS TEMPORARY TRIALS IN LIGHT OF THE PROSPECT OF ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST:

Romans 8:18-19 --

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 --

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-8 --

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Philippians 1:21 --

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

2 Timothy 2:11-13 --

This is a faithful saying: . . . If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 --

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

VIII. AND SO, HE ENCOURAGED US EMBRACE THESE ATTITUDES AS OUR OWN WHILE IN TIMES OF TRIAL:

A. Affirming God's divine purpose in our trials:

1 Corinthians 15:58 --

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

B. Seeing our trials as an opportunity for God to demonstrate Christ's power in us:

Philippians 4:6-7 --

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

C. Remembering that God can use our trials to open doors for the message of the gospel:

2 Corinthians 2:14 --

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

D. Letting God use us to minister strength to others through our times of trial:

Ephesians 5:18-21 --

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Colossians 3:16 --

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

E. Keeping confident in Jesus' love in the midst of our trials:

2 Timothy 1:7 --

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Titus 2:13-14 --

... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

F. Relying on the spiritual resources of Christ to sustain us in times of trial:

Galatians 5:16, 22-24 --

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Ephesians 6:10-13 --

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

G. Seeing our trials in light of ultimate victory in Christ:

Galatians 6:9 --

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Colossians 3:1-4 --

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.