

Everyone seems to understand the word crisis today more than ever, but to learn how to survive these uncertain times, we should look to the Bible for help.

Tonight's lesson is from the life of Paul and we will see how he was able to remain full of joy.

TONIGHT, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT THAT I BELIEVE WILL HELP US ALL TO **FIND JOY WHEN TIMES ARE DIFFICULT**.

LET US TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND CELEBRATE THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH WE SEE THAT GOD IS WORKING FOR OUR GOOD. AND LOOK AT ONE THING WE CAN ALL DO BETTER AS WE MOVE FORWARD IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES.

READ **PHILIPPIANS 1:1-6**

- **EVERY TIME I THINK OF YOU [HEAR OF YOU, SEE YOU] - I GIVE THANKS TO GOD**
- **WHENEVER I PRAY FOR YOU - I REJOICE**

PAUL WRITES TO THE PHILLIPIANS TO LET THEM KNOW THAT THEY ARE, AND HAVE BEEN, AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIM. EVEN WHILE HE SITS 4600+ MILES AWAY IN A ROMAN PRISON. HE FINDS HIMSELF UNABLE TO CONTAIN HIS JOY FOR ALL THAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR HIM, AND FOR ALL THAT GOD WAS CONTINUING TO DO FOR HIS PEOPLE.

- WHAT MOMENTS CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN GOD WAS AT WORK FOR YOUR GOOD?
- WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? BECAUSE JOY COMES FROM SEEING GOD AT WORK!
- **JAMES 1:17** 'EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT COMES FROM ABOVE...'

READ **ACTS 16:6-12**

- HOLY SPIRIT PREVENTS PAUL/SILAS FROM PREACHING IN THE PROVINCE OF ASIA
- SPIRIT DOES NOT ALLOW THEM TO TRAVEL TO THE PROVINCE OF BITHYNIA [TURKEY]
- PAUL HAS A VISION OF A MAN FROM MACEDONIA CALLING HIM FOR HELP [GREECE]  
**Q: HOW MANY TIMES HAS GOD BEEN TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION?**
- WE READ HOW PAUL ESTABLISHED THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CHURCH IN EUROPE – IN PHILLIPPI
- WE LEARN THAT GOD WILL SOMETIMES SHUT THE DOORS LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO SEE THAT GOD WANTS TO DO SOMETHING NEW – SOMETHING DIFFERENT – BETTER.

READ **ACTS 16:13-15**

- PAUL/SILAS MAINTAINED A LIFE OF PRAYER AND BEGAN TO SEEK OTHERS WHO ALSO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PRAYING.
- **Q: I WONDER HOW IMPORTANT IS PRAYER TO YOU?**
- **Q: AS A MISSIONARY – LIKE PAUL/SILAS - HOW IMPORTANT WOULD PRAYER BE?**

IF PAUL HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL FROM START TO FINISH...

**Q:** THEN HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY [IN PRAYER]?

**Q:** WHAT KIND OF HELP ARE YOU ASKING [IN PRAYER] FOR GOD TO PROVIDE?

**Q:** IS YOUR PRAYERS MORE RELATED TO YOU AND ME, OR TO HIS COMING KINGDOM?

**Q:** HOW MUCH TIME HAVE YOU SET ASIDE FOR GOD TO DIRECT YOUR THOUGHTS, YOUR BELIEFS, AND YOUR ACTIONS?

FOR PAUL AND SILAS, THEY WANTED TO GATHER WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WHO WERE WILLING TO SHARE SOME THINGS IN COMMON.

- **Q:** WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR US TO HAVE A PRAYER [LIFE] IN COMMON?
- **Q:** I WONDER - WHAT WOULD YOU ASK GOD FOR, WHAT WOULD YOU ASK HIM TO DO?
- **A:** FOR STARTERS: I WOULD PRAY THAT GOD WOULD SEND MORE WORKERS INTO THE FIELD [**MAT.9:35-38**] – BECAUSE THE HARVEST... IS PLENTY... WORKERS ARE FEW.

READ **ACTS 16:14,15**

- A WOMAN NAMED LYDIA, A MERCHANT OF FINE-CLOTH [UPPER-CLASS]

READ **ACTS 16:16-18**

- A YOUNG WOMAN, DEMON-POSSESSED SLAVE GIRL [LOWER-CLASS]

READ **ACTS 16:22-34**

- A [MIDDLE-CLASS] ROMAN JAILER

**Q:** SO HOW DID PAUL/SILAS BEGIN TO HELP THOSE AROUND THEM WHEN TIMES WERE FULL OF UNCERTAIN AND DARK MOMENTS?

- THEY STOPPED TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT THE HELP OF GOD
- THEY LET THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECT THEIR STEPS
- THEY MAINTAINED A FOUNDATION OF PRAYER AND THEN TRIED TO BUILD UPON THAT
- THEY INTERACTED WITH THE LOCALS AND RESPONDED TO THE VISIBLE NEEDS

**Q:** WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU & I CAN DO AS WE MOVE FORWARD?

MAKE JOY A GREATER PART OF EVERYONE'S STORY. BEGIN TO THINK OF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE, AND SEE THAT JOY IS AT WORK IN THEM. BEGIN TO CALL THEM OUT BY THEIR FIRST NAME AND ADD THE WORD JOY. IF YOU AND I WILL PURPOSELY ADD JOY TO EVERYONE'S LIFE, THEN WE WILL REAP JOY IN THE END. IF GOD IS DOING SOMETHING GOOD, THEN LET US JOIN HIM.