

Breaking Free - Finding Joy During Life's Struggles

In this message today

I want to share with you on the subject of

- finding joy in the midst of life's hardships.

In this messages we will be looking at how we can **completely break free!!!**

- So that we can live successful and productive lives now.

Hardships are a necessity in life

- Of which we must find joy in, otherwise we will not be victorious.

James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

How many of us really take this verse seriously?

If we really desire the liberating power of God's Spirit in our lives

- We must find joy in life's hardships.
- The point is when facing pain:
- Don't pretend to be happy,
- but to have a positive outlook!!!!

There are a number of things that cause hardship in our lives

- Things such as sicknesses, family tragedies, out of work, financial difficulties, family problems, major calamities like earthquakes, floods, business failure.

These things are a given, but *Jesus says,*

- "Consider it pure joy"
- He is saying that we must learn how to find joy -
- In the midst of life's hardships!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Positive-Outlook!!!!

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- He has overcome the world!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Hardships and trials are necessary in our lives.

1. The Storms of Life Help to Keep Us on Track With God.
2. It Takes Hardship for God's Kingdom to Fully Emerge in Our Lives.
3. Struggles and Hardships Sift Out the Impurities in Our Lives.

*****HOW TO FIND JOY IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP**

With this in mind let's look at some of the kingdom principles of faith as to how we can - - -

- Successfully with JOY
- Draw water from the wells of salvation **in times of difficulty**.

Isa. 12 This chapter is a hymn of praise – another graphic description of **the people's joy** when Jesus Christ comes to reign over the earth....

Isaiah 12:2-3 - *Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."*

³ **With joy** you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Even now we need to express, Our gratitude to God....

- **Thanking him, praising him, telling others about him....**

We Must Completely Let Go Of The Past

Philippians 3:13

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind** and straining toward what is ahead!

Paul is saying here that - **His goal is to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ has in mind for him.**

- **This goal absorbs all of Paul's energy.**

Until I am really free from the past

- I will never have the joy needed to deal with today's problems & trials!

Paul recognized the weight of the past was a great hinderance to him

- So he let it go.
- We must do the same.
- We must let go of the past
- Before the joy and hope of the future can really settle in.

Paul had reason to forget what was behind –

- (As Saul) He had held the coats of those who had stoned Stephen
- The First Christian Martyr

We all have done things for which we are ashamed

- We live in the tension of what we have been
- And what we want to be.

Because our hope is in Christ

- We can let go of past guilt...
- Look forward to what God will help us become!!!!

Realize that you are FORGIVEN

- Then move on to a life of Faith and Obedience...
- A meaningful life because of your HOPE in Christ 😊

We Must Have A Vision That Is Greater Than The Struggle

Proverbs 29:18 – KJV

¹⁸ Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.

It is vision that sustains us in the midst of life's hardships

- It gives us the ability to see beyond that which is taking place in our lives momentarily.
- It enables us not to lose heart in the midst of the problem.
- What we are going through is only a momentary affliction.

2 Corin. 4:16-18 – ¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

¹⁷ *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

¹⁸ *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

- Don't forsake your eternal reward - - -
- Because of the intensity of today's pain
- Your weakness
- Allows the resurrection power of Christ - - - to strengthen you!!

Our troubles should **not diminish our Faith!!!!!!**

- Realize that **there is a purpose** in our suffering....

Problems and human limitations **have several benefits:**

1. They remind us of Christ's suffering for us
2. They keep us from pride
3. They cause us to look beyond this brief life
4. They prove our Faith to others
5. They give God the opportunity to demonstrate his Power

See your troubles as **opportunities!**

The example of Joseph – Genesis 37:5-11.

Joseph is a good example of a person who experienced his share of hardships.

- His brothers hated him because of his dreams, (Kill the dream)
- They sold him into slavery, (Bind him up)
- He was put into prison for something he didn't do and (Falsely accused)
- Yet in all of this **he was able to find joy!!!!!!**

The reason was because *he had a vision that was greater than* any of the struggles he was going through.

Genesis 39:22 – *In Egypt – The warden knew, The Lord was with Joseph!!!*

Vs 22 - So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.

Because of his **unwavering attitude of joy** in the midst of difficulty - - -

- Joseph saw his dreams come to fulfillment.
- Joseph had some choices he had to make.
- He could have taken on a **victim mentality** by feeling sorry for himself.
- He could have **gotten bitter** towards those who had done him wrong
- **Or he could find joy in the difficulty!**

Genesis 50:20 – *Speaking to his brothers after his father's death*

Vs 20 You intended to harm me, **but God intended it for good** to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

- **God** brought good from the brother's evil deeds
- **Potiphar's wife's** false accusations
- **The cupbearer's** neglect – **AND The 7 years** of famine

Joseph's experiences in life taught him - - -

- That **God** brings **good from evil** for those who trust him.

DO YOU trust God enough to wait patiently

- **For him to bring good out of bad situations?????**

You can trust him because, as Joseph learned

- **God** can overrule **people's evil intentions** - **And bring about HIS intended results!**

****We Must Focus On The Growth That God Desires To Bring Forth****

God has always desired to **use the hardships** in our lives

- To teach us to **rely on Him**
- To use them as an opportunity for **growth** and **maturity**.
- **Our growth** and maturity **comes out of the hard lessons of life**
- **NOT** the easy ones!

Romans 5:3-5

³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit**, who has been given to us.

Paul tells us that in the future **WE WILL** become

But until then **we MUST OVERCOME....**

- This means we will experience difficulties that **help us GROW!!**
- We rejoice in suffering **NOT** because **we like pain** or **deny it's tragedy**
- But because, **we know God is using life's difficulties**
- **And Satan's attacks to build our Character.. GROWTH!!!!**

The problems that we run into will develop our perseverance

- Which in turn will **strengthen our character**
- **Deepen our trust** in God
- And give us greater **confidence** about **our future**

Thank God for those opportunities to GROW

- Your patience will be tested daily at times, **Thank Him for the GROWTH!!**

Illustration: Handling the Bumps

I was driving down a bumpy country road when I saw a bag of cement beside the road. It appeared to have fallen off a truck as it hit one of the **bumps in the rough road**. Being a person who does not like to see anything wasted, I stopped to pick up the lost bag of cement. When I reached down to pick up this heavy bag, to my surprise, I discovered it was not soft and limber, as I had expected but had solidified into an immovable piece of cement.

Often our lives are like that bag of cement. They take on shapes that were not intended and become hardened in that shape. That bag of cement was meant to become a part of some beautiful structure but, because it did not reach its place of service, it became a useless rock in the form of a bag of cement. God wants to make something beautiful of your life. **Don't let this purpose be thwarted by a bump in the road of life.**

Often times, **when trouble comes**, our natural tendency is to focus on self and the problem and to turn inward which only leads to losing our joy. As a result we develop a **survival mentality** rather than an **overcoming mentality**.

The overcoming mentality is what leads to spiritual growth and maturity in the Lord as well as success in our lives. **GROWTH!!!!!!!!!!**

****We Must Trust In The Lord In All Things****

Psalms 5:11-12

¹¹ *But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.*

¹² *Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.*

Our ability to continually **trust in God**

- Is a very strong **key element** in our ability to **find joy** in the midst of life's hardships,
- Because **trust enables us to know** deep within **our heart and soul** that everything is really alright.
- **It enables us not to get anxious. Trust!!!!**

Psalms 37:3-4 –

³ **Trust in the Lord** and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

⁴ Take delight in the Lord, and he will **give you the desires of your heart.**

To commit ourselves to the Lord means – **Entrusting everything**

- Our lives, families, jobs, possessions,
- To **HIS control** and guidance....

To **commit ourselves** to the Lord means to **TRUST IN HIM**

- Believing that **he can care for us better** - Than we can ourselves!!!!
- **We need to wait patiently for him to work out what is best for us!!!!**

Philippians 4:4-7 –

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- **God's peace** is different from the world's peace
- **True peace** comes from knowing **(AND Trusting)** that God is in control.
- **Let God's peace** guard your heart **against anxiety!!!!** (a feeling of worry,)

Psalms 125:1

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

- The secret to consistency is to **trust in God.**
- Because **HE never changes**
- **He cannot be shaken** by the changes in our world
- **He endures forever....**

***CLOSE:**

*****HOW TO FIND JOY IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP**

As we conclude here this morning, I want you to know that you can have joy in the midst of life's hardships!!!!

That your joy will give you the strength to be an overcomer in all these things.

Finding Joy in the Midst Of Life's Struggles

- 1. We Must Completely Let Go Of The Past.**
- 2. We Must Have A Vision That Is Greater Than The Struggle.**
- 3. We Must Focus On The Growth That God Desires To Bring Forth.**
- 4. We Must Trust In The Lord In All Things.**