

I Am Joyful in Tribulation

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[0 : 00] All right, so 2 Corinthians chapter 7, and we are going through again the Apostle Paul's I Am's. And last week, we were in 1 Corinthians 15 for the second time, and we saw where Paul said, I am that I am. And we studied that there was three reasons.

Number one, it was by the grace of God that he is no longer this persecutor of the church, but is rather, as he wrote, an apostle of Jesus Christ. It wasn't only by the grace of God that enabled him to minister and to put up with some trials and infirmities, but it was also the mercy of God that he's no longer a blasphemer and injurious, but now he was the chiefest of sinners, but now is building up the church that he once destroyed.

And the third thing we saw last week was that it was by the help of God. Whenever he got himself into something that he couldn't get out of, then the Lord showed up. And the help wasn't there every day, just carrying him above the clouds, but it was there when he needed it.

And so by the grace of God, he is what he is, by the mercy of God, by the help of God. And so now we're moving up to 2 Corinthians 7, just working our way. There's still, I think, a few left of these messages. We're not going to repeat some things that he says, so there are not too many left. But here in 2 Corinthians 7, verse number 4 is the verse we want to key in on, so find that and follow along as I read, where Paul says, Great is my boldness of speech toward you.

[1 : 24] Great is my glorying of you. And here's the I am. I am filled with comfort. I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. Well, the context of these words of comfort and joy is tribulation.

He's in tribulation. And yet the Apostle Paul says, I'm filled with comfort. I'm exceeding joyful. Now, we understand, and we've already covered this pretty well, that we are to follow the Apostle Paul. This is our authority. This is our leader. He's a preacher, a teacher. He gives us our doctrine. And so we believe what he teaches us, and we follow what he says. And he gives us more than just doctrine, practical truths for the Christian life and behavioral insights and just how to live this life for Jesus Christ and be separate from the world.

And one particular area that he addresses and teaches on throughout his epistles is tribulation, also known as temptation, also known as trials, also known as sufferings.

And I think the natural response to the trials or to tribulation is to want it to go away. I think that's just natural.

[2 : 40] Like you touch a hot stove and you don't just go put your hand on it. Like you want to get away from that. It hurt. And it's just natural to want to remove yourself from trouble, from hard things.

I don't know if you ever got walking out in the woods and you walk through some really thick stuff and you end up getting pricked and jagged and thorns. And all of a sudden, you don't want to keep going forward anymore.

You want to get out of that and find another way around. That's just natural is to want to avoid bad things, sorrow. Sometimes Christians isolate them. They just withdraw.

Sometimes they become very self-absorbed. Sometimes when there's trials in their life, they're just seeking everybody's pity. And that's kind of the natural thing. It's a carnal thing. There's other times, on the other hand maybe, when tribulation happens, people get angry.

And they blame God. They get frustrated with having to deal with this. And this isn't what I want in my life. And so they fuss and they cuss and they end up just quitting.

[3 : 43] They end up caving to the pressure of it or finding an excuse to give up. Because nobody likes sorrow and nobody likes suffering. To the natural man, there is no joy to suffering.

There is no joy to tribulations. To having problems in life, trouble on every side. To the natural man, the lost man, the carnal man. There is no joy in that.

What does he want? He wants the easy road. He wants good times. He wants prosperity. He wants happiness. He wants ease, peace and health and pleasure.

So when the Apostle Paul here states that he is comforted and states that he's exceeding joyful in all his tribulation, I think it would be a good idea to find out how and to find out why he could say something like that.

Because he's the one that we're supposed to follow. And on top of that, on this side of eternity, you and I are going to have these tribulations and trials that we'll face in our lives too.

[4 : 47] Now, thank God we can rest in this thought that a new day is coming for us. And trials are not the end of our life. And no matter how bad it is, there is always this, Revelation 21.4, that says, And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Now, until then, the Apostle Paul says to you and I, Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say, rejoice.

He says in 1 Thessalonians, rejoice evermore. This is the Apostle Paul's teaching. This is not an easy one for the natural man. And so I think it would be helpful for us to understand how Paul can declare such things concerning his circumstances.

Because in this passage here, I didn't read it all, but he did say tribulation in verse 4. In verse 5, he mentions that there's no rest, and he's troubled on every side, and there's fightings, and there's fears.

And amidst all of that, he claims to be exceeding joyful. Now, before we get into the passage, joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

[6 : 09] Which one is it in the list, somebody? Somebody. Joy. Galatians 5.22. What the fruit of the Spirit is?

It's number two. Yeah, she's going down the list. It's the second one. Just checking you. Just a quick test. I know that was kind of off the cuff. But joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

It's a product of walking in the new man. It's evidence that you're walking and living with Jesus Christ if you have joy. Especially in all of your tribulation.

Now, I want to point something out here before we get further in the passage. So, as Linda was quoting, the first three fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is love, joy, and peace.

And if we were to categorize those nine fruits, the first three are inner fruits. They're things that show up on the inside. You know who's on the inside? Christ is in you.

[7 : 12] Now, let me make a point here. Come back to John 15. And keep your place in 2 Corinthians. We'll come back. John chapter 15. And let's look at a little bit of Scripture here.

about what Paul later calls fruit of the Spirit, or evidence that you're walking in the Spirit and in the new man.

So, in John 15, this passage is about fruit. And it's about bearing fruit. And repeatedly, Christ says, Abide in me and I in you.

And we know that Jesus Christ is in us as we're born again. The Spirit of Christ resteth upon us, or He's within us. But we're told to abide in Christ in a few places in the passage.

It's in verse number 4. It's in verse 5. And it's in verse 7.

[8 : 12] Verse 6. If a man abide not in me. And so, definitely the context has to do with abiding in Christ. I in you. And, you know, I want to show you something here about these fruit of the Spirit.

When we abide in Christ, or as we'll call it, in the new man, the new nature, something is available. Look at verse number 9 and 10 of John 15. Christ speaking to His disciples.

He says, As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in, notice the next word, my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

So, whose love is it? It's Christ's. It's Christ's love that His apostles can abide in. And this love can be in them. This is the fruit of the Spirit.

It's Christ in you. And it's His love. It's His working coming out of you. But that wasn't the only fruit. It was also joy. And that's what we're really talking about tonight. Look at verse 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

[9 : 25] So, you noticed again, it's Christ's joy and Christ's love. Flip over to chapter 17 of John, and look at verse 13. 17, 13.

And now come I to thee. It's praying to the Father. And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

And in this passage, he's praying for them. Because the world hated him. The world's going to hate them. But he's saying, they can have my joy fulfilled inside them.

And his joy can remain in them. All right, now turn back in John to chapter 14. There's love. There's joy. And the third is peace. Those three inner fruits of the Spirit.

All right, John chapter 14, verse 27. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.

[10:25] Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid. So there's his peace being given to the believer.

Look at one more place here. Chapter 16 and verse 33. The last verse of chapter 16. Speaking of the peace of Jesus Christ being inside the believer.

Verse 33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world, look at this. In the world ye shall have tribulation.

But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. Be of good cheer. Rejoice. You're going to have tribulation.

The Lord Jesus Christ told you that. Now come back to 2 Corinthians. This is where Paul's talking about. This is the state that he's in, in all tribulation. Tribulation. And yet he's joyful. He's exceeding joyful.

[11:28] So when Christ is in you. And abiding in you. And you're abiding in Christ. Or walking in the spirit. These fruits, just to name the first three. Love, joy, and peace. Are Christ's love.

Christ's joy. And Christ's peace. That emerge. And develop. And abound. In your heart. And in your life. Now. Back in 2 Corinthians 7.

Regarding joy. The joy that Paul speaks of. You don't want to lose that. Christian. You need that. This joy is necessary. It's absolutely necessary. You can't go on without it. I might even add. You could go on a little bit. But.

But it's just going to be a robotic thing. That you do. If you don't have the joy of the Lord. Nehemiah said. Chapter 8. I think it's verse 10. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

[12:25] And if you lose the joy of the Lord. In your heart. You're losing your source of strength. Especially. When you're in tribulation. If you lose the joy.

You'll lose the strength. To continue. Especially when it gets tough. The Bible says. Endure hardness. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ. But you won't. You won't endure anything.

If you don't have joy. Inside of you. You lose your joy. You'll just be a little bit. Going through the motions. And eventually. You'll say enough of this.

And you'll quit. But now. Paul was exceeding joyful. So now we're in 2 Corinthians 7. And he was exceeding joyful. In all his tribulation. This is his I am.

I am filled with comfort. I am exceeding joyful. And if this is our pattern. And our example. And our authority to follow. Then we should find how. He was so joyful. So that we can be as joyful as he is.

[13:21] And not fall off. And not get. Just stale. And not quit. When the going gets tough. So first of all. Let's look at this passage. And I want to say. That there's some reasons.

And let's try to understand. Why he was exceeding joyful. In tribulation. The first one is. Because he is faultless. Meaning. Because he has a clear conscience. Look at verse number. 2.

In this chapter. Chapter 7. Verse 2. Paul says. Receive us. We have wronged. No man. We have corrupted. No man. We have defrauded.

No man. And Paul knows. That he is innocent. In his relationships. With others. And that the tribulation. That he's in. Is not because of his own wrongdoing.

He gets that. He understands. That I'm faultless. In this thing. And one of the reasons. He can rejoice. In tribulation. Is because he has a clear conscience. A clear conscience. As a matter of fact.

[14:16] When he writes. Look at the next verse. Verse 3. He's not attacking this church here. In what he says. But he's trying to let him know. That he loves him. He cares for him. Verse 3 says. I speak not this to condemn you.

For I've said before. That ye are in our hearts. To die and to live with you. He loves this people. And we'll get to this context. Of the chapter. In a moment. Of the letter.

That he wrote to them. That was really very rebuking. But look down a little bit later. In the chapter. At verse number 12. Paul's declaring. The things that he wrote to them.

Was in the right spirit. And with the right motive. Verse 12. Wherefore though I wrote unto you. I did it not for his cause. That done the wrong. Nor for his cause. That suffered wrong. But here's why. But that our care for you. In the sight of God. Might appear unto you. He's just saying. I did it because I care about you. That's all I want you to know. It wasn't about the one.

[15:10] Who was messing up. And it's not about the one. Who was being defrauded. Or suffering because of it. But rather it was about you. Seeing my heart. My motive. My spirit towards you.

That I care. And so as Paul writes to this church. He's got a clear conscience. And when you have a clear conscience. Even though things go wrong. And things go crazy.

And things can fall apart in your life. On the inside. You can have rest. You can have the peace that he writes about. You can have faith that God can work all things together for good.

And that it came to me of the hand of the Lord. The Lord knows what's going on. And I can trust him. And you have a clear conscience. You can have joy. But when you have a guilty conscience. The first thing you do. When something goes wrong. Is start to beat yourself up. And you start to think. You know I did it now. Or God's getting me now. Or I'm finally. Finally the ships are coming in.

[16:07] And the Lord's going to punish me. Or he's punishing me. When you have a guilty conscience. Things go wrong. You just fall. You fall into depression. You mope around. Because you're guilty.

And because you feel guilty. And you're ashamed. And then you don't want to see other people. And you don't want to be around God's people. And you stay away from church. Because you don't know how to deal with hard situations.

You feel guilty. You feel like I did this myself. And this is God's punishment. The best way to maintain joy. And to keep a. Through tribulation that is.

Is to keep a clear conscience. To keep your sins confessed. To keep your relationship with God as clean as you can. And you're going to fall. I fall. You fall. We all fall.

Let's just get that out in the open. Nobody in here is perfect. And you haven't been for the last seven days. I know that to be true. You're just as sinful and wicked inside. And we all are.

[17:00] So what do we do? We plead the blood of Christ. We keep going back to our Father. We keep going back. We don't stray. We don't keep walking away. We keep a clear conscience.

We keep the slate clear. We stay close. And as we do when things go wrong. We can maintain our joy. Having a clear conscience. Walking in the spirit.

That somebody with a guilty conscience. They'll fall. One of the greatest things. That you can have in your day to day life. Is a clear conscience. A clear conscience is a big big deal.

In verse one. Look back at verse number one of this chapter. Something that will mess you up. As I already said. Is your sin. Paul said. Having therefore these promises dearly beloved. Let us cleanse ourselves.

From all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Perfecting holiness. In the fear of God. It's your sin. If you won't get that cleansing. And get those sins confessed.

[18:01] Before God's throne. If you don't get that taken care of. It'll be right there in front of your face. Every time something goes wrong. Or you start to face a trial. And you're in a bad spot.

A clear conscience. One of the greatest things you can have in your day to day life. To keep that sin away. And keep that plague off your conscience. And keep joy in your heart. Otherwise it's just out of reach.

If you're messing around with something you shouldn't. Or messing around with somebody you shouldn't be messing around with. If you're stepping outside of God's will for your life. And stepping out where you know you don't belong.

Things go wrong. And they will. Every time. Somewhere down. They will start to go wrong. You'll have no joy inside of you to pick you up. Because the joy of the Lord is your strength.

And when your conscience isn't clear. The joy is gone. It's evaporated. And you won't get back up. You'll just fall. And stay down. And be a wreck. Until you can't stand it anymore.

[19:00] And you're so miserable. You come crawling back to God. And sometimes for some Christians. It takes years. And it's pathetic. And it's sad. So what do you need? You need to be like Paul.

Faultless. Have a clear conscience. Secondly. Something that helps us understand. Why he can be so joyful in tribulation. Is because Paul has fruit.

He's got some fruit. What he has here in this chapter. Which is evident. What he's learning of. Is he has converts that are growing. And that rejoices his heart. Because the work of God.

The work that he's been laboring in. And getting literally his back beaten. For this work of God. It's starting to show some fruit. They're starting to see.

Like there's some return. On all of his investment. And that rejoices his heart. Even amidst the tribulation. That fruit rejoices his heart. It proves that it's worth it.

[19 : 55] And the work is paying off. In the lives of others. That he's ministered to. And that means Christ is pleased. And that means that Christ is being glorified. And Paul said. For to me to live is Christ.

And when he starts seeing. These converts coming around. When he starts seeing them repent. When he sees them getting things right. When he sees them respond right. And grow. It rejoices his heart.

What's that? Well. He's rejoicing in all his tribulation. Because he has some fruit. What happened is. These Christians here in this church. Responded to a godly rebuke.

That they received. In the first epistle. That he wrote them. Now first of all. We'll learn. We'll study this out. Just a little bit. But look at verses 6 through 9 here.

And let's understand. How he writes about this now. In the moment. He says. After talking about the trouble. And the fightings. And the fears. In verse 5. He says. Nevertheless.

[20 : 49] God that comforted those. That are cast down. Comforted us. By the coming of Titus. And not by his coming only. But by the consolation. Wherewith he was comforted in you. When he told us. Your earnest desire.

Your mourning. Your fervent mind. Toward me. So that I rejoice the more. For though I made you sorry. With a letter. I did not repent. Though I did repent. For I perceive that.

This same epistle. Hath made you sorry. Though it were. But for a season. Now I rejoice. Not that you were made sorry. But that you sorrowed to repentance. For you were made sorry.

After a godly manner. That you might receive damage. By us and nothing. So. Paul wrote this letter to them. As. And we'll peek at it here. In a moment. Of the. Of the first epistle.

Of first Corinthians. We call it. And in that letter. He addressed a lot of things. And in that letter. He told them. He called it like it was. He told them what they were. And the. The attempt was to show them.

[21 : 45] That he cared. And to get things in order. And to help them. To move forward for Christ. Because they were in a mess. But what this did. Was showed him. Their response showed him. That.

They're growing. Look at verse 13 now. In this chapter. Chapter 7. Verse 13. To the end. Therefore. We were comforted. In your comfort. Yea. And exceedingly. The more joyed.

We for the joy of Titus. Because his spirit. Was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted. Anything to him of you. I am not ashamed. But as we spake. All things to you. In truth.

Even so. Our boasting. Which I made before Titus. Is found a truth. And his inward affection. Is more abundant. Toward you. Whilst he remembereth. The obedience of you all. How with fear. And trembling.

You received him. I rejoice. Therefore. That I have confidence. In you. In all things. Now I didn't read the passage. But verse 11. Is like the verse.

[22 : 38] That just is. Is Paul just. I don't know. He's just bubbling out over. And his cup runneth over. When he's talking about. How this church responded.

To the rebuke. Look at verse 11. Once. Then we'll move on. He says. For behold this self. Same thing. That ye sorrowed. After a godly sort. What carefulness. It wrought in you. Yea. What clearing. Of yourselves. Yea. What indignation. Yea. What fear. Yea. What vehement desire. Yea. What zeal. Yea. What revenge.

And all things. Ye have approved yourselves. To be clear. In this matter. So what Paul is seeing here. Is fruit. He's seeing. The converts.

The labor. These. This church is called. His work. In the Lord. That's his personal work. That he's. That he's striving toward. Now let's get an idea.

[23 : 34] Of the perspective. That he's really talking about. Come back to. The first epistle. Now. Chapter one. And I want to skim through. A few chapters. And just. Just throw out some. Pinpoint some things here.

That the apostle Paul. Referred to. And these are the things. That made them sorry. So first Corinthians. Chapter one.

And we're just going to bounce. Pretty quickly here. But look at verse 11. He says. For it hath been declared. Unto me of you. My brethren. By them which are of the house of Chloe. That there are contentions.

Among you. Now this I say. That every one of you say. That I am of Paul. I am of Paulus. And I am of Cephas. And I am of Christ. That's four distinct divisions. Within that local church.

And who they're claiming to be. Subordinates of. Or disciples of. Or followers. That's division.

Contention. That's contentions. And that's how he starts the epistle.

[24 : 29] Flip over to chapter three. And look at the first four verses. Chapter three. And I brethren. Could not speak unto you. As unto spiritual. But as unto carnal.

Even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk. And not with meat. For hitherto you were not able to bear it. Neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal. For whereas there is among you envying.

And strife. And divisions. Are ye not carnal? And walk as men? For while one saith I am of Paul.

And another I am of Cephas. Are ye not carnal? He just. Just starting to lay it on a little heavier.

Flip over to chapter four. Look at verse fifteen. He said. For though ye have ten thousand

instructors in Christ. Yet have ye not many fathers. I think he's being a little sarcastic to them.

You got ten thousand instructors. Everybody thinks they know something. And they just. Want to talk and talk. And have your ear. And have you listen to them. And yet.

[25 : 28] The apostle Paul says. I'm the one that begotten you through the. The gospel. Look at chapter four. Verse eighteen. Now some are puffed up.

Who's that? Believers in the local church. They're puffed up. Full of pride. And Paul's going to have to. Lay him down. He's going to have to pop that pin.

Or pop that head. Verse. Chapter five. Verse one. And two. It is reported commonly. Commonly.

Everybody knows this. About these believers in Jesus Christ.

It's reported commonly. That there is fornication among you. And such fornication. As is not so much as named among the Gentiles. That one should have his father's wife.

And ye are puffed up. And have not rather mourned. This is a mess. They're carnal. They're doing things in the church.

[26 : 25] Allowing things in the church. Grievous sins that the Gentiles don't even participate in. This is a shame. Chapter six. Verse one. Dare any of you having a matter go against another.

Or having a matter against another go to law before the unjust. And not before the saints. He's going to rebuke them here. As he goes through these next eight verses. And I'm just going to skim it.

He's saying. In verse five. I speak to your shame. You should have a brother judge these matters. These things that come up in between you. Not going to the lost world. To decide whether this man's right.

Or that man's right. Don't you have anybody spiritual in your midst. That can sit and discern and judge between brothers. And he says in verse seven. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you.

Because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? That's his question. Why don't you just take the wrong? And move on. Why do you not rather suffer yourselves than be defrauded?

[27 : 28] No. Because you have to win. That's how you are. Verse eight. Nay. You do wrong and defraud. And that your brethren. To the shame of them. And it's a disgrace.

And a blemish on the name of Jesus Christ. Now flip over to chapter ten. I'm just going to pop one or two more here. Chapter ten verse fourteen. Notice he says.

Wherefore my dearly beloved. Flee from idolatry. I wonder why he had to say that. Later on he discusses some things about.

Fellowship with devils. And the table of devils. In this passage in chapter ten. They're just not together. Look at chapter eleven. In verse seventeen and eighteen. Now in this that I declare unto you.

I praise you not. I praise you not. That you come together. Not for the better. But for the worse.

When you get together. Now imagine that. Could you just imagine that. When you come to church.

On Sunday.

[28 : 28] On Wednesday night. When you come. When we assemble together. It's not for the better. When we get together. It's actually for the worse. It's so bad. There's the word of God's not going forth.

It doesn't have free course. There's no. It's nothing but confusion. And one over the other. Talking over the other. These spiritual gifts.

He rebukes them on. Going forward into this book. When they get together. It's not for the better. It should be for the better. But it's not. It's not edifying anybody. It's for the worse. It's pride. It's carnality.

It's divisions. It's envying. It's strife. When they come together. In verse 18. For first of all. When you come together in the church. I hear that there to be divisions among you. And I partly believe it. And he goes on to discuss that. And their problem. Verse number 22. He said. What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink? Or despise ye the church of God?

[29 : 25] And shame them. That have not. What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. Now. There's more to say. But we'll stop there.

There's just a lot of confusion and disorder. And you get the gist. Of the burden that this church was to the apostle Paul. They're his work in the Lord. He has labored to get this church off the ground. To preach Christ to them. And to see the disorder. And the disarray. It's breaking his heart. And it sorrows him. But he had to deal with it. He had to write that letter to them. He had to give them the truth.

And then when he hears. They responded. When he hears that they had a clearing of themselves. When he hears of their vehement desire.

Of their revenge that they got in this whole thing. They're walking with Christ. And he said. I'm now confident in you in all things. Boy. Paul is rejoicing. He is.

[30 : 22] This is a victory. This is fruit. For the apostle Paul. The tribulation is not gone. He's still troubled on every side where he is at. But he's rejoicing.

He's rejoicing. Because he's witnessing the growth of his converts. And the fruit of his labor. For Jesus Christ is starting to come forth. And blossom and bud and develop. And he's seeing it come to pass.

And to him. Oh it's worth it. It's been worth it. And it comforts his spirit. From all the fears. And from the fightings. And the afflictions. And all the opposition.

And what I believe is that it gives Paul hope. In the situation that he's in. In the striving that he's under right now. When he hears. That one worked out. God got the victory in that one.

And it gives him hope. To keep fighting in this one. And it's in that hope. That Paul can rejoice. In his present tribulation. And you know what will help you Christian?

[31 : 19] You know what will help you when you're in tribulation? Christian. It's to experience some victories. It's to have a little fruit. It may not be fruit of a church. That you started and planted.

And see that they're winning souls to Christ. And blossom. It may not be the Apostle Paul's ministry. It doesn't have to be the Apostle Paul's ministry. But at the very least. I mean at the very least.

You can look into your life. And view where you used to be. To where you are by the grace of God today. And say that's a victory. I'm saved by his blood.

That's a victory. That's fruit. I have a Bible. I read. I care about. Don't you? Doesn't that. Don't you have an inner desire to know the Lord.

And the word of God. And to grow in grace and truth. And as you do. That's something. That's a victory in your life. That's not what every Christian's desire is. To grow in grace. You show up to church on Wednesday night.

[32 : 19] That's a victory. That's fruit. You're not lost tonight. You're not running with the lost tonight. You have desire in your heart for the Lord. Praise the Lord for that.

You can just focus. That ought to help you rejoice when things are tough. To see the hand of God in your life thus far. To see some fruit. To see the victories.

There's one more reason. And we kind of finished chapter 7. But this spills right into the next chapter. And so I want to say thirdly. Paul can rejoice in his tribulation.

And rather be. I am exceeding joyful. In all our tribulation. The first was because he's faultless. And the second. Because he had fruit. And the third here is because he has fellowship.

That is he has friends. That he has. He's not alone. In tribulation. And trying to fight this thing out. And get through this thing. Chapter 8 verse 1 says.

[33 : 18] Moreover brethren. We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. How that in great trial of affliction.

The abundance of their joy. Joy. Joy. The abundance of there's joy. In the churches of Macedonia. And they're under great affliction too. And it can rejoice your heart. When you're not alone. These churches are in deep poverty it says.

But they have an abundance of joy. And throughout the chapter. They're willing to minister. And they're giving of their own selves. And that will rejoice any believer's heart. When you're facing some tribulation of your own.

And you just can't seem to. But to see your own brother. Your own sister going through it. And they've got joy of the Lord. Boy that can lift you right up. When somebody gets up and testifies of some hardship.

[34 : 15] And just gives God glory. That can just. That can condition your mind. To shut your mouth about your whining. And to turn it toward Jesus Christ. And let his joy come out of the new man.

They say that misery loves company. And that's true. But so does joy. Joy loves company. Christians love company.

And they love to rejoice in Christ. The flesh likes to sulk in the misery of the affliction. But the new man. Likes to rejoice with his brothers and sisters. He doesn't want to do it alone though.

I want to compare. We're done here in this passage. But I want to compare. Two quick little glimpses of some ministers for God. Flip back to Acts 16.

Acts 16. And the other place you're going to get to compare is 1 Kings chapter 19. So Acts chapter 16 and 1 Kings 19.

[35 : 20] When you find them both. We'll begin in Acts. And consider that Paul. Could rejoice in his tribulations.

Because he has fellowship. With other believers. Friends that are going through the same battles. Just like he is. In Acts chapter 16. This is the apostle Paul.

And he's not alone. He's got Silas with him. And in verse 23. When they had laid many stripes upon them. They cast them into prison. Charging the jailer to keep them safely.

Who having received such a charge. Thrust them into the inner prison. And made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight. Paul and Silas prayed.

And sang praises unto God. And the prisoners heard them. Well if Paul was by himself. Maybe. He'd be rejoicing. If Silas was by himself.

[36 : 22] Maybe. Maybe he'd be rejoicing. But I don't know. But what I do know. Is when. They had each other. Locked up in this prison. For serving their savior.

They couldn't help but pray. And that. I think that fellowship together. That just. It sharpens. One another. It brings out the right stuff. In one another. And now they're singing.

And now the whole jail. Is hearing these guys praise God. Before you go back to first kings. I'm just thinking now. Of these other fellas. Back in chapter five. And they also got beaten.

And look at the end of chapter five. Here's some of these apostles. And in verse 41. They departed from the presence of the council. Rejoicing.

That they were counted worthy to suffer shame. For his name. And then went right back to it. I know misery loves company. But so does joy. Now flip back to first kings 19.

[37 : 22] Let's take a contrast here. To another minister of God. A very. Very famous minister. Of God. Elijah. And in chapter 19.

He. He. Previous chapter. He works this great miracle. And slays these prophets of Baal. And. The result of that. Is Jezebel announces.

He's a dead man. And by tomorrow. At this time. His head's going to be off. And so Elijah. Fears. And he runs for his life. In verse 3.

He takes off. Gets out of town. And in verse number 4. First Kings 19. 4. But he himself. Left the day's journey.

Into the wilderness. And came and sat down. Under a juniper tree. And he requested for himself. That he might die. And said. It is enough now. Oh Lord.

[38 : 17] Take away my life. I'm not better than my father's. But the Lord wasn't done with him. And he said. No. You need to eat. You've got a journey ahead of you. And he sends him. Way down to

the south.

To Mount Horeb. And. The Lord meets him there. And shows up. You know this passage. But look at verse number 10. Just. Well.

Start in 9. He came thither unto a cave. And lodged there. And behold. The word of the Lord came to him. And he said unto him. What doest thou hear Elijah? And he said. I have been very jealous. For the Lord God of hosts.

For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant. Thrown down thine altars. And slain thy prophets with the sword. And I. Even I only am left. And they seek my life to take it away. And so then the Lord does. He comes by. In the. The still small voice. In verse 12. And. By the end of verse 13. The same question. What doest thou hear Elijah?

[39 : 15] And the very same answer. In verse 14. At the very end. He says. And I. Even I. Only. Am left. And they seek my life. To take it away. So this prophet is scared.

He's sulking. He says. I'm alone. I'm all alone. All the prophets are dead. And they're trying to kill me. And he says.

God. It's enough. I'm done. There's nothing left. God. Just take away my life from me.

I. I'm not. I don't need to serve anymore. I don't need to do any more miracles. It's enough. It's enough. It's enough for me. So in his tribulations. Not exceeding joyful.

But Paul. When he had somebody with him. When Peter. When he had brothers with him. Why they could rejoice. They could be exceeding joyful. That. That comes out.

[40 : 15] When you have that fellowship. When you have those companions. One thing that helps a lot. Is to realize. That you're not alone. And knowing that brothers and sisters.

Are in the same fight. That you're in. Fighting their flesh. Fighting this world. Trying to stay right with God. Trying to give time to the scripture. Constantly being pulled away.

Trying to give time to the Lord. And prayer. Constantly having voices. Saying do this. Do that. Give us your money. Give us this attention. You are amidst a group. That's in the same boat.

And more so around the world. The same struggles. And while sometimes. Yours are worse.

Sometimes theirs are worse. But by the grace of God. We can maintain our joy.

By coming together. On a Sunday. Coming apart. On a Wednesday night. And just trying to put some of that out there. Leave it out there. And come into a sanctuary.

[41 : 17] A sanctuary. Where we can lay aside the issues. And open our mouths. And sing to the glory of God. And say. Since the Savior found me.

Pardoned all my sin. I have had the joy. And living hope within. Gone are all the shame and sorrow of the past. They are underneath the precious blood of Christ.

At last. Saved. Saved. Say. Once you start. Your mouth starts letting those words out. The problems. They didn't go away. The tribulation. And the trouble. And the fightings. And the fears.

Are still there in your life. But boy. You can get in the sanctuary. And lift your voice. And when around your brothers and sisters. Lifting their voice. You can start to shout to God.

And thank Him. Because all of a sudden. It's like. You got a clearer vision. Listen. I'm saved. I'm in Christ. And I have joy.

[42 : 12] That joy. Don't let it. Don't let it disappear. Don't let any man take it from you. Because it's your strength. And you can get with your brothers and sisters.

And pray. And recharge. And find strength to continue on. Your daily battles. That will not go away. And how important it is to know that you're not alone.

Once you feel like I'm the only. You're wrong. You're wrong. Get on the phone. Call a brother or sister. Let them minister to you.

How important it is to know that you're not alone. And that you can feast off the fellowship. That God has given us with each other.

It'd be great if we could maintain our joy. Amidst all the adversities that you'll face in life. Paul did. And we're to follow his example.

[43 : 09] And to say it one more time. The joy of the Lord is your strength. If you lose your joy. You could lose your strength to continue on. And the adversity will take you out. The affliction. It'll whip you.

If you lose your joy. You're likely to give up. So a clear conscience. Can carry you a long way. When you know you're right. And you're doing right. You can keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Trusting God. When you see fruit. Or when you're focusing on victories. That can help a lot as well. It can keep and maintain that joy. And then staying connected to your brothers and sisters. The ones that are in the fight right along your side. That'll prove invaluable to you. To maintaining your joy while experiencing the tribulations of this life.

Paul said he was comforted. And he was exceeding joyful. In all his tribulations. So that's the example that we want to follow.

[44 : 09] Let's pray. And we'll be dismissed. Father. Lord. We need stuff like this. No question. We need to be reminded. Because every one of us has things in our hearts.

And whether they're evident to others. And whether they're physical. Or financial. Or spiritual. Or they're real to us. And so Lord. Please minister this message.

And your word to your people tonight. God. Please help us to keep and maintain our joy. Help us to keep it in us. Help us to be strong.

In the Lord. Lord. If anybody here is struggling. And if they're on the edge. And if their heart is just complacent.

And bored in their Christian life. And Lord. Please rekindle that joy. And rekindle that fire in them. By your spirit. Remind them that they belong in hell. Remind them of your love.

[45 : 05] And of your mercy at Calvary. And may that be all it takes. To stir our hearts back to joy and love. And so Lord. Please use this message.

And grow us in Christ. Please bless the rest of our week. Help us to do something for you. And to walk with you. And to love one another. In Christ Jesus name we ask. Amen. Amen.

You are dismissed.