

Read: Philippians 1:12-18

Rejoicing Always

Philippians 1:18

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The apostle Paul had a *lot* of bad things happen to him. People had lied about him, said bad things about him, and put him in jail—all because he wanted to preach about Jesus to other people. Now that he was in jail in the city of Rome he couldn't go out and share Jesus with others! As if that wasn't hard enough, there were also some people who were preaching about Jesus for the wrong reasons. Instead of sharing Jesus out of love, they wanted to get rich or famous by preaching.

After all those bad things what would Paul say? Would he be really angry? Would he be mad at all those people and say mean things about them? Would he be angry at God for letting all those things happen? No! Not all! Actually, after writing about those bad things, the very next thing Paul says is the verse for consideration today, "Yes and I will continue to rejoice."

Why would Paul rejoice and be happy after all that? First of all, he humbly trusted in God's plans. Even though he was in jail, Paul talked to some of the guards about Jesus—and they became believers, too! Also, Paul noticed that when he went to jail, other Christians became bold and preached about Jesus more. And what about those selfish preachers? Paul was happy that even though they were selfish, at least Jesus was being shared with other people—and that was a good thing. You see, Paul trusted that God was working all things in his life for good. That gave him reason to rejoice ... all the time.

This is what our gracious God does. He worked all things in history so that at just the right time he sent his Son Jesus. He worked through all the evil people who hated Jesus and crucified him so that Jesus would pay for our sins on the cross. He worked through Jesus' death so that he would rise again and give us the gift of life in heaven. Even when things don't seem to be going well, God is able to work amazing blessings because of his power, wisdom, and love.

You can probably think of some things that aren't going very well in your life. Maybe you are having trouble at school or with some friends. Maybe someone has been sick in your family. Perhaps someone you know has recently died. Even when these bad things in happen in our lives, we can be like Paul and put our trust in God. If God loved us enough to keep his promise and send his Son to save us, surely God loves us enough to keep his promise to work all things

for our good. That means that no matter what happens, we can also be like Paul and continue to rejoice ... all the time! Thanks be to God!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What does it mean to *rejoice*?
- What are times in life when people find it difficult to rejoice?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain why Christians can rejoice in every situation, no matter what happens.
- Why should we believe God when he says he will work all things for our good? What proof do we have that he will keep this promise?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Can you give an example from the Bible of people who experienced very bad things, but God was able to work it out for blessing and for good?
- Discuss with your family times when God may have used difficult times and troubles and worked them for good and for blessings.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for working all things for our good. In your power and wisdom you are able to work even bad things for our good. Help us to trust your loving plans and to rejoice in every situation. Amen.

Hymn: CW 462:1,4 – Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways
To keep his statutes still!
Oh, that my God would grant me grace
To know and do his will!

Make me to walk in your commands—
'Tis a delightful road—
Nor let my head or heart or hands
Offend against my God.