

How to Get Off the Emotional Roller Coaster

✖ We are emotional beings. God gave us emotions—and God Himself has emotions. Our emotions can be a great motivator at times and a great enemy at other times.

Think about it for a minute. Sometimes we feel joyful; sometimes we grieve. Sometimes we feel bold; sometimes intimidated. Sometimes we feel triumphant; sometimes completely and utterly physically and emotionally exhausted.

Is it possible that we could avoid the extreme highs and lows of the **emotional roller coaster** if we maintained **God's perspective**? What if we could wait on the Lord, mount up with wings as eagles and take a **prophetic perspective** of our lives—then rejoice in the Lord for the victory?

Paul the apostle had a **Holy Ghost** knack for putting things into perspective, which I believe gave him stability in his calling despite natural emotions that could have derailed him—and all too often derail others, if only for a few hours. When we see Paul react emotionally in Scripture, it is usually from concern for others (save perhaps his frustration over John Mark that caused his split from Barnabas early in his ministry).

Paul wasn't "in his feelings" for himself. But he wasn't emotionless, either. The emotions he displayed were rather selfless. If he was grieved, it was because someone was hurting. If he was weeping, it was because souls were being lost.

Yes, Paul displayed a righteous indignation for sin. Yes, he exposed some by name who needed to be exposed. But his motive was always to advance and protect the **kingdom of God** despite any personal cost and without any personal agenda. When we can

take that perspective, we can do great things for God—and indeed will do great things for God.

Here's a perfect example of how Paul put things into perspective: After Paul was imprisoned, he discerned that not all **gospel** preachers have pure motives. In fact, some of them were preaching Christ as a personal jab to the apostle, who sat in chains in writing to the Philippians. In Paul's own words:

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:15-18).

Paul Didn't Get in a Tizzy

I've been living in the book of Philippians lately, and those verses continue to strike me. Paul could have put himself in a tizzy, calling out **false apostles** who were motivated by selfish ambition and who were actively working to breed strife. He could have allowed deep frustration to set in as he continued to hear about these impure preachers freely roaming the streets while he was standing waist-deep in sewage in **defense of the gospel**. But Paul took a different perspective—and that perspective kept him emotionally stable.

Paul had his mind set on things above, not on the things of this earth. He thought on things that were true, noble, pure, lovely, of a good report, things with virtue and praiseworthiness. He told us to do it because he knew from personal experience how powerful it was. Instead of grumbling and complaining about false apostles he could do nothing about, Paul found something even then to rejoice about: Bad motives or not, every time one of those **false apostles** opened

their mouths Christ's name was proclaimed. Paul's motive was so pure indeed that the only thing that ultimately mattered to him was that Christ's name was preached, whether he was doing it or his enemies were doing it. And he rejoiced.

There were also times when Paul was grieved. When Epaphroditus, his brother and fellow soldier, almost died working with him in the ministry, Paul grieved (Phil 2:25-30). And we know that Paul wept over those who set themselves up as enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things (Phil. 3:17-19). Yet Paul had a different perspective. Paul ultimately maintained a posture of rejoicing.

The Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings

Paul experienced the fellowship of Christ's sufferings more than most of us ever will. But he was stable in his calling despite the emotions that surely tried to invade his soul. We talk about our tests and trials. Well, three times Paul was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, and a night and a day he spent in the deep.

We talk about how the devil is attacking us. On Paul's journeys, he was in danger from rivers and robbers, as well as Jews and gentiles. He was in danger in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea and among false believers.

We talk about our burnout for the kingdom. Paul labored hard, had many sleepless nights, was often without food and exposed to cold weather. All the while, he was carrying the burden of the church (2 Cor. 11). I realize all of our problems are relative, but Paul faced much worse than most of us ever will—and he nevertheless rejoiced. The good news is, so can we! It's a decision.

To be sure, I believe the key to Paul's **emotional stability** was rejoicing in the Lord. No matter which way Paul's emotions

were trying to sway him, he remained constant and fearless in the face of his enemies. Paul refused to give in to ungodly emotions that would lead him away from his purpose—even for a few hours. Paul consistently rejoiced, in the good and in the bad.

The concept of rejoicing or joy appears 16 times in Paul's letter to the Philippians, which, again, was written from a jail cell. Paul discussed joy in suffering, joy in serving, joy in believing and joy in giving. The **joy of the Lord is our strength**, friends.

What if we adopted a lifestyle of rejoicing? Not rejoicing for the trial, but rejoicing in it? What if we rejoiced with those who rejoiced rather than being a jealous killjoy? What if we decided by our will that no matter which way our emotions wanted to take us, that we could do like Paul did, and find something in the situation to rejoice about? What if? ...

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