

Praise Is God's 'Reset' Button

Are you trapped in a prison of despair, doubt or anxiety? Learn to release the power of praise.

The apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians is one of the Bible's most unique books. Some scholars call it "the epistle of joy" because the word "joy" or "rejoice" appear in it 16 times. Yet what is amazing is that this letter about Christian joy was written from a prison cell!

While Paul was under the watchful eye of Roman guards, bound in chains, he wrote some of the most uplifting spiritual words ever penned. In the letter's four short chapters the author continually exhorts us to praise God no matter how dark our circumstances are. He writes: "I will rejoice" (1:18, NASB), "I rejoice and share my joy with you all" (2:17), "I urge you, rejoice in the same way" (2:18), "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (3:1) and "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (4:4).

"Paul always looked for the hidden blessing in every trial. Have you been complaining about your situation? Grumbling short-circuits faith, but joy revives it."

Like a broken record, Paul hammers the same theme over and over and over. REJOICE! The word "rejoice" actually means "to re-joy." It's like a reset button on a computer. When any type of electronic equipment goes out of whack, a reset button will get it back online. That is what happens when we rejoice: The joy we've lost is restored and our feeble faith rises again.

Perhaps Paul wrote this message to the Philippians because he remembered his first visit there. It was in Philippi that Paul

and Silas were arrested and thrown into jail by the city's magistrates. Yet while the two men sat with their feet fastened in stocks, they began to pray and sing hymns. Long before the invention of subwoofers, this Holy Ghost jam session triggered an earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and shattered everyone's chains (see Acts 16:25-26).

Do you feel bound by your circumstances? I know I do. Sometimes I feel literally trapped in a tiny prison of limitation and delay. And because of today's weak economy, many people who have enjoyed a carefree life in the past are facing job loss, financial uncertainty, debt and a dismal lack of opportunity. Yet when I pray about my own situation I always am led back to the ancient words of Paul to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord!"

Perhaps right now, in this difficult season, you need to put Paul's message on your iPod and play it over and over. The supernatural joy that is released in praise will do many things:

Praise shatters despair. You think your situation is hopeless? Paul was under house arrest, and he couldn't leave his cell to preach the gospel. Yet he wrote: "Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that [my imprisonment] will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:18b-19). Know that God is working behind the scenes. The clouds over your head may be dark, but praise will lift you above them so you can see the sun again.

Praise shatters negativity. Have you been complaining about your situation? Stop talking trash. Remember that Paul was in chains when he wrote: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing" (Phil. 2:14). He knew the children of Israel were barred from the Promised Land because they grumbled against the Lord (1 Cor. 10:10). Grumbling short-circuits faith, but joy revives it. Paul always looked for the hidden blessing in

every trial, to the point that he thanked God even in the midst of shipwrecks, beatings, riots, death threats and starvation.

Praise shatters doubt. When you stop praising, you get stuck in the muck and mire of your own problems. All you can see is the here and now. But something supernatural happens when you rejoice in the Lord. You are lifted out of the prison of impossibility and translated into a realm where you can do “all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). When you praise, you go into a phone booth looking like Clark Kent and you come out looking like Superman!

Praise shatters anxiety. Paul said that when we hit the “rejoice” button and replace worry with joy-filled prayer, “the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). Joy will calm your anxious heart and allow you to receive the promises of God.

Way back in 1970 a military chaplain named Merlin Carothers wrote a small book called *Prison to Praise*. Today it has sold more than 17 million copies in 53 languages. It challenges readers to thank and praise God in the midst of difficulties—and it’s full of testimonies of everyday people who experienced miraculous breakthroughs when they obeyed this simple principle.

What Carothers wrote 40 years ago is still relevant today: “The very act of praise releases the power of God into a set of circumstances and enables God to change them. Miracles, power and victory will all be a part of what God does in our lives when we learn to rejoice in all things.”

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