

Joyful Stress

[Philippians 1:18-30 HCSB](#) What does it matter? Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice [19](#) because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. [20](#) My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. [21](#) For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. [22](#) Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. [23](#) I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ--which is far better-- [24](#) but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. [25](#) Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith, [26](#) so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. [27](#) Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith of the gospel, [28](#) not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is evidence of their destruction, but of your deliverance--and this is from God. [29](#) For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him, [30](#) having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear about me.

Introduction: On January 24, 2002, *USA Today* published a survey in which respondents were asked, "How often do you experience stress in your daily life?" The answers: Frequently—42 percent; Sometimes—38 percent; Rarely—18 percent; Never—2 percent. Ninety-eight percent of Americans are dealing with stress in their lives. If you're among that number, I have a question for you: Can our stress result in joy? Can we have joy amidst stress? Are the two mutually exclusive? Philippians is the "Epistle of Joy." Paul uses the words "joy" and "rejoice" 16 times in these four chapters, though he himself was in a stressful environment, in jail in Rome. He refused to let circumstances dictate his responses. With the help of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of his friends (v. 19), he was able to turn stress into joy. We can, too, if we can pick up on his secrets in this passage.

- [Philippians 1:19 HCSB](#) because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

1. **Stay Focused** (v. 19). Though in chains and though opposed by those who were preaching Christ out of "envy and rivalry" (v. 15), Paul refused to feel overwhelmed. He said, "For I know . . ." (v. 19). The Greek indicates watching something intently without being distracted. Some translations say, "For I eagerly expect, I anticipate." Instead of basing his faith on feelings, he remained joyful because he stayed focused. He was confident his present circumstances would result in his deliverance. If we're going to model Christ effectively to others, the time to be joyful is when we experience stress. To do this, we must remain focused on the goal Christ has set before us and on the promises He has given to us.

- [Philippians 1:19 HCSB](#) because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.
- [Philippians 1:15 HCSB](#) Some, to be sure, preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others out of good will.

2. **Remain Faithful** (v. 20). Paul discovered that by staying focused he could remain faithful, and that Christ would be magnified in his body whether by life or by death. He was certain his faith in Christ would enable him to be bold in the midst of a hostile environment. In stressful times we often allow our emotions to take over. We easily confuse what is truth and what is false. Then instead of faithfully trusting in God's strength, we allow our problems to dominate our minds. Paul refused to give in. With joyful expectation and great courage Paul pressed on. We can too.

- **Philippians 1:20 HCSB** My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

3. Be Fruitful (vv. 21–26). His focus enabled him to be faithful, and his faithfulness produced fruitful labor (v. 22). In spite of all he was going through, Paul overflowed with the joy of knowing that his situation, though stressful, was full of ministry potential. He saw pressure not as an obstacle but as an opportunity to advance the cause of Christ. Paul knew that whether he lived or died it was all gain. If he died he would be with Christ. If he lived he would be used to bear fruit and win others to Christ. Too often when we are “stressed out” we shut down and become unproductive. This is not God’s design. We can choose to be productive. This was Paul’s decision. He was fruitful because he turned stress into motivating, life-changing joy.

- **Philippians 1:21-26 HCSB** **21** For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. **22** Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. **23** I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ--which is far better-- **24** but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. **25** Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith, **26** so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.
- **Philippians 1:22 HCSB** Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose.

4. Stand Firm (vv. 27–30). With his own example as exhibit one, Paul now told the Philippians to stand firm and to rejoice. No one else can be responsible for our happiness. Others may add to my happiness, but my joy is ultimately my decision. This is the approach Paul took with the Philippians. Regardless of what happened to Paul, the Philippians were to conduct their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel. Four words sum up Paul’s instruction to the church at Philippi: “Stand firm! Be joyful!” Many Americans suffer the affects of stress, but sometimes the wounds are self-inflicted. Paul tells us that we will suffer for Christ. We are to agonize together, but our pain must bring us closer to one another and serve to testify to our commitment in Christ. Then whatever stress arises, we will be followers full of joy!

- **Philippians 1:27-30 HCSB** Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith of the gospel, **28** not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is evidence of their destruction, but of your deliverance--and this is from God. **29** For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him, **30** having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear about me.

Conclusion: Will there always be stress? Yes! The key is not how to avoid it, but how to channel it effectively as a witness for God in a world full of stress. Joy makes all the difference.