

The Exchanger

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THE NEWSLETTER
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FELLOWSHIP
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The Mission of
FBCWR:
*Connecting People to
God's Life-Changing
Power*

*We've Got
Connections!*

I can do all things
through Him who
strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

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Imprisoned by Joy

Recently it dawned on me *how much* I long for adversity-free living. Maybe it's just a human thing to prefer smooth sailing, but I too often catch myself stuck on "if only". *If only* this traffic jam would open up. *If only* everyone would cooperate better with me. *If only* someone hadn't jacked up my son's car and stolen all four wheels! Yes, that happened last week - our welcome back to reality at the end of our family vacation. The insurance guy thinks it was someone we know. Lovely. Hey, wait a minute—you don't have a wheel business on the side, do you? Anyway I felt like shaking down the entire neighborhood. I wanted to case every used tire shop in the area. Maybe, I should set a trap for the guys to steal something else and nab them. They'll be sorry they messed with me. After several hours I calmed down and wrote it all off to big city life. The fantasy of difficulty-free existence was shattered once more.

Slow on the Uptake

You would think by now I'd have gotten the message. The other day I initially resisted a quote but my reaction revealed my flawed expectations. The quote—"We may think adversity is an exception, but it is the norm." Paul put it another way in the book of Acts, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Luke tells us in the previous verse why Paul said this - "to strengthen the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith."

So naïve expectations of ease can set us up for paralyzing discouragement. If we are mentally prepared to encounter trouble, we won't be so thrown by it. Around every bend obstacles await— so let's get use to it!

Then are we left with some sort of Christian stoicism where we just grin and bear it until heaven? Can we only look forward to dark clouds hovering overhead?

Mastering Disappointments

I am excited to begin a series of messages on the book of Philippians on Sunday mornings at FBCWR. Paul, its imprisoned author, mastered the typical emotional responses to difficulties. How did he sing the night away in his jail cell after being unjustly imprisoned? How did he go days without food and still be content? How did he keep a good attitude towards people who plotted his death? 1) He embraced, not resisted, suffering for Christ. 2) He chose joy—it is a choice you know. 3) He relocated his troubles onto the Lord. 4) He experienced the personal support of the living Jesus, enabling him to conquer his emotions, circumstances and certainly boneheaded people. Jesus offers this same support to us as we offer our services to Him. So let's not be chained to circumstance. We have been set free so we may as well enjoy it. If only I had believed this sooner!

-Joe Fornear

