



The Strength Of A Servant **upliftforservants.com/the-strength-of-a-servant**

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It is an honor to be here and quite humbling to speak to missionaries-servants of God that have sacrificed so much than me. I have a text today from Phil. 1:12-21.

I would like to talk about the strength of a servant. In the ministry we talk a lot about the sacrifices we make, the trials and difficulties we face. But, I think we de-emphasize the strength that God gives us.

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; Phil. 1:12

I always think of Paul as the doctrinal guy. He wrote so many epistles, was used of God, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. He wrote the epistles to the churches. He gives us a New Testament flare to what we are doing centered in Christ. But, what we sometimes deemphasize with Paul is his strength. He was probably one the strongest guys you could ever meet. He faced things that most of us will not face in our lifetimes. Paul did it with a degree of strength and a degree of grace.

God gives us the ability to see past every hindrance.

That is what Paul was saying. He was in prison and suffering. He had troubles. But he was not considering the strength of the Roman government or the authority of Caesar, but what he was thinking about was what he was going through was devotion to Jesus Christ. In the end, that is all that mattered. He looked past the hindrances, not so that he could say, "I have intestinal fortitude or that I have always been a strong guy." Instead Paul was able to say, "The reason I endured is because I serve Jesus and the cause of Christ has advanced as a result of what I have gone through. I am not going to stare at my problems or enemies or look at what I am going through, but I am going to keep my eyes on Jesus.

I think a lot of times we miss out on this. We think about how someone we love is sick, the difficulty of making our mortgage or payments or of how we think we need a new car. We think of those things and do not look past them. We do not look past and say, I'm where God wants me to be. I am serving God and am in the will of God. Consequently, if I am serving the will of God, what happens to me falls within the will of God. I am going to endure it, move past it, get the gospel out and honor Christ, regardless of the hindrances and serve Christ. My goal is Jesus not my wellbeing.

God gives us the ability to rejoice in every circumstance.

We have to understand something. It is not a matter of saying I am going to put up with all of this horrible stuff happening to me. It is a matter of joy being in the Lord rather than circumstance. Faith makes me be happy in Jesus rather than looking for something to make me happy in this world.

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Phil. 1:13-18

Paul was saying, "It's not Caesar, Rome, or the guy in charge of the prison." The thing that keep him moving is that God was doing something no matter what was happening in his life. Even in those that hate me, Jesus is working in the lives of people. Jesus is being promoted. This was Paul's center thought: Jesus must be promoted. Not the fact that he was in prison and mistreated for the cause of Christ. In the end, he knew Christ was promoted, and so he was a happy guy.

Sometimes we face a lot of garbage in the ministry. I do not have a fancier term for it. There will be people that despise you and hate you, just because they want church done in a different way, or where you put the piano, or how the Bible is spoken of. There is a lot that happens that you do not speak of from the pulpit, but it is just non-sense.

However, in the end, life is not about the non-sense. If you look pass the non-sense by faith, you realize there is a reason to not just say, I am putting up with the nonsense. I do not care for just existing. Existing stinks. I want to live and be happy. I want to honor Christ, know that He loves me and is watching over me. Existing means you just look passed the stuff. Point one. Rejoicing, point two, means you look at what Christ is doing and that He is being promoted. God gives us the strength and ability to look passed the hindrances and to have joy in every circumstance.

God gives us the ability to anticipate great blessings.

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1:20-21

It is more than just being a happy person. Paul was not talking about eternal salvation, but deliverance of all the things he was going through.

About 9 years ago, we went through the great recession in America. We had to close our Christian school ministry. It took us several votes and years. We were left with \$150,000 in debt. This was all for

a church of about 30-40 people on a Sunday morning. We had that enormous debt with no way to pay it. It seemed impossible. We went from having a staff and hearing children all across the property. I worked there Monday through Friday. I was sitting in my office one day wondering how God would deliver us. He was going to get us through. I did not ask God to help me not embarrass him in the trial. But I asked God that when we got out of the mess that he would help me not embarrass him. Life is not just about the trials and the good things. Life is about honoring God regardless of the circumstances. I stood in greater danger of embarrassing God when everything was ok again than in the mess. In March, we got completely out of debt. We have no debt, no mortgage. I have been trying to honor God throughout. I know prosperity is more danger than me. We have to be careful to have the strength of God within our lives as servants. That strength helps us look pass the hindrances, rejoice in every circumstance and to anticipate great blessings. Great blessings are always there, but Christ always becomes more important than it all.