

## “Rejoicing in God's Glory”

Philippians 4:4-7

7/25/10

Rejoice in the Lord...on Sunday mornings between 9 and 10! Rejoice in the Lord...when He gives you what you want! Rejoice in the Lord...when life is perfect and you have no problems!

Okay, we get it. Rejoice in the Lord *always*. Always? Again I will say, Rejoice.

But God, I'm not feeling too joyful right now. You know, there really is a lot that can steal our joy.

Maybe it's Anxiety over something in your life—fear. Jesus knows we get anxious. He told us not to worry about our lives, because He knows we do. And, as He said, many times it is about our stuff—how much money we have, what kind of clothing is on our backs, is the car going to last the winter, are we going to be able to make the payments on all our bills?

You see, because Jesus said if that is where your treasure is, if that is what you treasure most in life, then your heart will be right there with all that stuff. And we know how our hearts can beat pretty fast sometimes when we get thinking about all that.

Anxiety. Fear. Worry. Joy killers.

Sometimes we just get Feeling overwhelmed by circumstances—control (lack of). Sometimes life seems to press in all around you. Things don't go as we planned.

Circumstances change. You realize that you do not have control, and that can wear you down and steal your joy.

A joy killer can be Struggles in a relationship—strife. That might possibly be the biggest for us. If you have ever had tense moments with someone else—arguments, bad feelings, hurts—you know how quickly that can bring you down. It affects everyone involved.

University of Michigan psychologist Christopher Peterson says forgiveness is the trait most strongly linked to happiness. Peterson said, “It's the queen of all virtues, and probably the hardest to come by.”

*(Marilyn Elias, "Psychologists now know what makes people happy," USA Today (12-9-02); submitted by David Slagle, Lawre)*

Augustine once said, “Indeed, we wish to be happy even when we so live as to make happiness impossible.”

**So what do we do?** Is it all up to me, or is there something more? We do have a role to play, but

### **Joy begins with God.**

God will make you rejoice. It is inexplicable. Irrational. Our joy does not make sense to others. Circumstances being whatever they are, we can still have joy in our lives. Because God is greater than anything we can imagine. God gives us new life—salvation yes—but a new life, new outlook, new everything when we give our lives to Him in Christ. The old dies and the new is born.

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*

“That's easy to say. But much different when things are tough,” you might think. Anyone can write those words when life is good.

Ah, but where did Paul write these words?

Well, he said it in Philippians 1:13, “*I am in chains for Christ.*”

Paul spent roughly one-quarter of his missionary career in prisons. John McRay wrote in *Christian History*:

“Roman imprisonment was preceded by being stripped and then flogged—a humiliating and painful ordeal. The bleeding wounds went untreated as prisoners sat in painful leg or wrist chains. Mutilated, bloodstained clothing was not replaced, even in the cold of winter.

“Most cells were dark, especially the inner cells of a prison, like the one Paul and Silas inhabited in Philippi. Unbearable cold, lack of water, cramped quarters, and sickening stench from few toilets made sleeping difficult and waking hours miserable. Because of the miserable conditions, many prisoners begged for a speedy death. Others simply took their own lives.

“In settings like this, Paul wrote encouraging, even joyful, letters and continued to speak of Jesus.”

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*

In the darkness, in whatever we know within the world around us, we have this encouragement, that we are God’s people, holy and dearly loved, empowered by Him that His light will never be darkened within us.

God will make you rejoice. He will guard your heart and your mind. His peace transcends all understanding. He is near. His power is awesome. Our joy, like our faith, is a gift from God that cannot be found in any earthly thing, or stolen by any earthly thing.

But, we do have our role in all this.

**We do have a choice in every situation.**

It always intrigues me how, given any situation, two people will see a reality differently. One will see the negative, one will see the positive. One will sing praise, one will be cynical. One trusts, one doubts.

Same reality. Same work to do, same challenges, same obstacles they may face, but two different ways of dealing with it. And I don’t know how many times I have been told that “it is not cynicism, Pete, but just seeing reality.” “I’m not being cynical, just facing reality.” Me being positive is just putting my head in the sand and living too idealistic.

No, I face the same reality as anyone else, but choose to look at it with praise to God. Jesus faced the same needs as anyone else in the world—He had to eat, sleep, deal with hurtful people, but He told us not to worry. Jesus faced the reality of death on a cross, but told His disciples not to worry.

Because you see, we are reminded in *Philippians 4:8-9* that we do have a role in our lives when it comes to rejoicing. It says here, immediately following Paul’s words to rejoice always, *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or heard or received from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

Think about praiseworthy things. Put it into practice. We have a role in this. We have our part to fulfill. It is a choice.

**Dedicate yourself to God.**

Give Him control. Make your life His. Stop right now and make that decision, that choice, to stop trying to control your life yourself and allow God to take over. It is recognizing that you are not your own, but God's who made you. Make every decision one that glorifies God.

**Celebrate God's goodness regularly.**

That's what we do here in worship every week. Just think about worship, what a privilege it is to be able to be here every week. No matter what is happening in your life, no matter what is happening in the church, no matter what is happening in the world, we can come together to worship. We always have reason to worship, because God is always good, present, and will cause us to rejoice when we lift ourselves to Him.

I just heard this week that if you attend church four Sundays out of the month, you will live two years longer. So there you have it! Celebrate God's goodness.

**Honor God with your life.**

Think about and do what is true, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy. Because you see, all these things combined, dedicating our lives to God, celebrating His goodness daily, honoring Him with our lives, will all work together to keep us open to His presence. When we do those things we are allowing God to work within us.

Life will still be difficult sometimes. Paul still faced horrible conditions in prison. No fun. But he was still able to rejoice. Because nothing can take away, nor is there anything more important than, the foundation we have in Christ our Lord. And just as we gather to worship Him this day, there is power, great power in that.

**Surround all things with praise to God.**

Surround all things with praise to God. When something gets you down, surround it with praise to God. When you are feeling overwhelmed, rise above those depths with praise to God. When someone has hurt you or you are in some conflict, surround that person with praise to God.

It sounds funny maybe, but there is power when we praise God, worship Him, rejoice in His glory. Because it comes back to Jesus telling us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and everything else will be added unto you.

It's worship. And it truly begins to transform your perspective.

**[“Perspective” Video]**