

Despised priviledges

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Innes Macrae

[0 : 0 0] we turn tonight to philippians chapter 3 and verse 1 philippians chapter 3 verse 1 finally my brethren rejoice in the lord paul is here writing to those whom he calls his brethren to the members of the christian church at philippi to the christians there in the city of philippi a peculiarly strong bond of affection binds the apostle paul to the christians there at philippi and so he uses this term of affection in addressing them by doing so he is calling attention to the fact that he and they are members of the one family they are brothers and sisters the children of the same heavenly father he has given to them the rich teaching contained in chapters 1 and 2 and now he says to them furthermore my brethren rejoice in the lord the first word the word here translated finally means in addition to proceed for the rest perhaps the word which death captures the emphasis of the apostle the word furthermore furthermore rejoicing in the lord he is giving to the christians that philippi here a definite command rejoice is a command it's expressed in the form of the command this epistle has often been called and rightly so the epistle of joy for the note of joy is founded in it again and again in chapter 1 at verse 4 he tells the philippians that every time he prays for them he does so with joy he recognizes that they are those many of them wander his own ministry there in a pagan city of philippi were brought to a saving knowledge of christ he thinks of their growth and grace of their progress in christian living he thinks of their love one for another and for himself and he says every time i pray for you i make requests with joy at verses 25 and 26 he again sounds this note of joy he says he has this confidence that he will be released and that he will return to purify for your furtherance for your progress for your christian growth and the joy of faith for your joy in the faith that your rejoicing may be more abundant in jesus christ for me and by my coming to you again then in verse 2 he also says at verse 17 that he even if he is offered as it is if he is put to death even if he is executed if he is offered upon the sacrificial service of their faith he will join he will rejoice with them all for this same cause he says also do ye join and rejoice with me giving to them the command again there in chapter 2 verse 18 you too should be rejoicing with me at verse 28 in that same chapter verse you were looking at last week we notice that he says that he is sending

a path for dike back to them that they may rejoice and he tells them that they should receive a path for dike joyfully with gladness their joy however the joy which he is commanding the rejoicing which he is commanding is rejoicing in the lord and it is upon this that their rejoicing is to be in the lord that i wish to lay the emphasis this evening the great majority of people around us desire to lead happy and joyful lives there is nothing wrong with that it is a perfectly normal desire but the great majority are certainly not looking for that joy in the lord they are seeking it in circumstances we can't have joy we can't have happiness they say unless we have good health unless we have many of this world's good unless we have a comfortable home and much material wealth we can't have joy and happiness unless we have plenty of entertainess without these they say happiness is really inconceivable the joy of which the apostle paul speaks here is entirely different it is joy in the lord long before the apostle paul speaks here is the lord long before the apostle paul time you will remember the prophet habakkuk said although the fig tree shall not blossom neither shall fruit be in the vine the labor of the olive shall fail and the field shall yield no meat the flock shall be cut off from the field and there shall be no herd in the stalls even though all these circumstances are against me he says yet will i rejoice in the lord i will joy in the god of my salvation what does it mean then to rejoice in the lord i suggest that first of all it means to rejoice in union with christ we rejoice in union with christ we rejoice in union with christ the lord the lord is jesus christ the lord jesus christ and the lord jesus christ and the only person who can truly rejoice is the person who is united to christ the person who has entered into a vital union with him through faith this is the person whose life is linked with christ by a God-given faith.

He is the person who has repented of his sins and who has believed personally upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He has entered into a personal relationship with Christ.

His life is hid with Christ in God. Paul's favourite definition of a Christian is that he is a man, a woman in Christ.

Over and over again in the New Testament, this is how he describes a Christian, a man in Christ. He is a person who has been converted to Christ.

[7 : 32] May I ask you, my friend, very directly tonight, are you a Christian? Have you entered into a personal, vital, living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Are you vitally united to him as a branch is to the vine? Have you been converted? Are you in Christ?

Why should the man in Christ rejoice? I want to suggest three reasons. He should rejoice first of all because Christ is his strength.

Christ is his strength. If he is in Christ, he is in contact with the limitless resources of the grace of God in Christ.

He stands in a realm of grace and he has access by faith into this grace wherein he stands. He draws from Christ all the resources, all the grace, all the strength that he needs as the branch draws its sustenance from the parent's death.

[8 : 45] If you are in Christ, then there is not a situation you ever face, not an emergency that you ever face in life for which you are inadequate.

That's a thrilling truth, isn't it? That should cause us to rejoice with unutterable joy. There are those who are held to the grip of evil habits and practices that they cannot break.

But in Christ is all the power they need for the breaking of these habits. He breaks the power of cancelled things. He sets the prisoner free.

In Christ we find all the resources of grace, all the resources of strength that we need for godly, holy living to the glory of God.

Let me remind you again of a text that I seem to be quoting a great deal these days. Philippians chapter 4 and verse 13. I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.

[9 : 55] There was a preacher of the last century and as was the custom with some of those preachers, he had a very dramatic way of presenting the truth.

He was preaching on this text and he held a kind of dialogue in the pulpit with the apostle Paul. He said, What did I hear you say, Paul?

I can do all things. Did you say that, Paul? And Paul answered him, Yes, yes, that is what I said. I can do all things. Oh, but wait a minute, said the preacher.

Surely you didn't mean all things. Yes, said Paul. I can do all things. Oh, but, said the preacher to him. But, Paul, that's surely boasting.

Surely you're being arrogant in saying that. And so he continued the dialogue. The dialogue went on and the preacher was quoting to the apostle Paul so many of the texts that Paul himself had written has indicated Paul's humility.

[10 : 57] I'm less than the least of all saints. I'm the chief of sinners and so on. And he was saying to the apostle, Surely this is not consistent with your usual, your normal humility.

I can do all things. Yes, said the apostle. I can do all things. I can do all things through Christ. Oh, said the preacher.

I beg your pardon, Paul. I didn't realize there were two of you. That makes all the difference. I can do all things through Christ.

The better in Christ who strengthens me. As I was saying at the New Year's Day service, there should be in a Christian's vocabulary the word can.

If you're a true believer in Christ, you can do all things in Christ to strengthen you. The believer rejoices.

[12 : 00] A man in Christ to rejoice because Christ is his strength. And secondly, because he experiences communion with Christ. He experiences communion with Christ.

He is in fellowship with Christ. He knows Christ personally. This is what being a Christian is, knowing Christ. This is life eternal, that they might know really only through God and Jesus Christ in our sense.

People may sometimes ask you, how do you know there is a God? How do you know that Christ is risen? And you give all kinds of reasons and it's right and proper that you should be able to give all

kinds of reasons.

The various reasons that there are. But in the last analogy, the real reason is this, isn't it? You know because you know him.

They may scoff at such evidence, but you know that it is valid evidence because you do know him. And the more you obey him, the greater will be your awareness of his nearness to you and of his presence with you.

[13:18] Sin destroys communion with Christ. If you are careful to obey him, if you are careful to obey him, out of love for him, then he himself will be light to draw near and to make his own presence known to you.

He will give you information of his love for you that will cause your heart to be rejoined. And these will be the most enjoyable experiences you will have in this world.

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he says, he that loveth me and he that loveth me shall be loved of my father. I will love him as and I will manifest myself to him.

I will make myself known to him. I will reveal myself to him. I will give to him the sense of my own presence. If a man loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and he will come unto him and and make our abode with him.

We will settle down with him. We will make our home there so that you know that my father and myself dwell with him. My friend, if religion is not experimental, then it is not true religion.

[14:43] The biographies of the greatest things all show to us that this was the great characteristic of them, this yearning for the sense of the Lord's own presence.

Take that from them and they were miserable. grant them such an experience and a sense of the presence of Christ with them and their hearts were overflowing with joy.

My friends, we are meant to enjoy God. I put it that way perfectly. We are meant to enjoy God.

Man's deep end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. If you know little of this sense of the nearness of Christ, of communion with Christ, then seek it.

Seek it with all your heart. Seek joy for its own sake. Seek joy alone and you'll not find it. Seek Christ and when you find him, you will find unspeakable joy.

[15:54] Communion with him transforms the dreariness of the dungeon into a royal palace. Why should this man within Christ rejoice?

He should rejoice because Christ is his strength. He should rejoice because he experiences communion with Christ. And he should rejoice because Christ is precious to him.

If a man has Christ, he has the pearl of greatest worth. The man who truly has Christ considers all the wealth of his world to be that drop compared with Christ himself.

He is the one who to him is fairer than all the children of men. He is the one who is cheapest among ten thousand.

The one who is altogether lovely. Thou, O Christ, art all I want. More than all in thee I find. What does it mean then?

[17:04] To rejoice in the Lord. It means first of all to rejoice in union with Christ. And secondly I suggest it means to rejoice in the person of Christ.

To rejoice in the person of Christ. Who is he? He is God. The Lord Jesus Christ is true God.

All that can be said of God can be said of him. He possesses all the divine attributes. For he is God. He is God the Son.

The glorious second person of the Trinity. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. In him is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

He is the radiance of the Father's glory. The outshining, the effulgence, the brightness, the shining force of the Father's glory.

[18:05] He is the express image of his very nature. The apostle James tells us. We should not hold or we should not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The glory with respect of persons. In our authorised version what it says is. Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord of glory with respect of persons. But the word the Lord of us. Not in the original. You'll find that in the palace. There in the epistle of James.

What James is saying is. Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. The glory with respect of persons. As we have noted several times recently.

The New Testament term Lord. Is the equivalent in the New Testament. Of the Old Testament term Jehovah. Christ is Jehovah. Jehovah is the name by which God made himself known.

[19 : 09] To his people Israel the distinctive name. By which he made himself known. To them as their God. The only true God. Jesus is Jehovah.

He is God. His is a name above every name. As we were noticing in a previous study. He is the pre-existent Christ. He being in the form of God.

Throughout all eternity. He was in the form of God. And he still is. At his incarnation. He laid aside none. Of the divine attributes.

Before Abraham was. He could say. I am. He is eternally God. In the beginning was the word. That is Christ. The word.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He is the creator. All things were made by him.

[20 : 08] Without him was not anything made that was made. He is Paul again. Writing to the Colossians. By him were all things created. That are in heaven. And that are in earth.

Visible and invisible. Whether they be thrones. Or dominions. Or principalities. Or powers. All things were created by him and for him. He is the creator.

He is also the sustainer of the universe. In him all things consist. In him they cohere. They hold together. Apart from him the whole universe would disintegrate.

He is the creator. He is the sustainer. Who is the creator of the world? Who is the sustainer of all things? Because it is God. Only God. What the New Testament tells us.

Christ is the creator. Christ is the sustainer. If he had been taught like that. Because he is God. Christ is God. He is the only savior.

[21 : 06] He is the one who could stand and invite men everywhere to come to him. He could issue that glorious gospel invitation. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden.

And I will give you rest. It would be fear, arrogance for any mere man. To rise and invite men throughout the world to come to him promising them rest and salvation.

That he could do it because he is God. In the Old Testament there is a similar invitation. Jehovah issues it. The great invitation that he expires in her.

In that church in Colchester. Look unto me and be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. That is Jehovah speaking. That is God speaking. It is the same God who is speaking there.

When Jesus issued the invitation. Come unto me. For he is the only savior. He is God. My friend. Do you ever meditate upon this?

[22 : 12] Do you sit and let your mind dwell upon this? Do you delight in this and rejoice in it? That the one who is your savior is the great God himself.

My brethren, say Paul. He rejoices in the Lord. The one who is God. He rejoices in his person. He is God.

But also this. He is man. He is man. Our Lord took to himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary a human nature.

He took that human nature into permanent and mysterious union with his divinely. And he was born with a human body such as you and I have.

A human nature and a human body. You see, he is true man. He lacks none of the essential characteristics of manhood.

[23 : 15] He is linked with you and with me in this in that he possesses a human body and a human nature. He grew hungry as you and I grow hungry.

There in the wilderness when he suffered stings of salt upon him. He knew the pangs of hunger when for forty days and forty nights he went without food.

He grew thirsty as you and I grow thirsty. On a hot day at midday he sat by the well of Scythus and he asked the woman of Samaria to give him a drink of water.

He grew weary as you and I grow weary. See him there in that boat crossing the lake of Galilee. He has had a tiring day teaching the people and healing the sick.

And there in that boat, although a violent storm is raging, he is sound asleep from the stern of a boat. He had an emotional life like ours.

[24 : 23] It expressed itself in human compassion and affection. One great reformed theologian, Benjamin Warfield, says that there were those to whom his affection turned in a purely human attachment.

He could rejoice with exuberant gladness, with human joy. We read in the Gospel of Luke that he, on one occasion, rejoiced in the Spirit, in the Holy Spirit.

He knew anger. He could be angry with a sinless human anger. That's when he overthrew the tables of a mountain there in the temple court and cast out those who bought and sold there.

He knew human sorrow. As we know, John, we were reading this morning. How he stood near to the grave of his friend Lazarus and he wept.

He does wept. After Trostris' verse in Scripture, it tells us that he wept tears of genuine human sympathy there near the grave of his friend.

[25 : 36] He knew what it was to be. He knew what it was to be profoundly distressed, emotionally and mentally tormented within. We were noticing last week how it said of a pastor Jesus that he was full of heaviness.

And we noticed that that is the very same word, for it is one word in the original, full of heaviness. It is the very same word that is used of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And during their unutterable anguish, he took with him Peter and James and John. He began to be so amazed and very heavy.

Very heavy. The same word that is used here of a pastor Jesus and it refers to a state of profound, inward, mental and emotional disturbance and distress.

He knew what it was to be tempted. Of course, he was sinless. Sin had no foothold in his human nature as it has in yours and mine.

[26 : 43] But nevertheless, his temptation was no less severe than ours for all that. Indeed, it was more severe, the assault that Satan made upon him.

When we are tempted, as Christian believers, God does not allow us to be tempted more than we are able, above what we are able to bear.

But he knew total temptation. And he existed totally. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew what it was to die. As man he died. We will have to face that experience one day. We were being reminded of that this morning. But when we face it, we can know this.

That it is an experience which Jesus himself faced too in his human nature. He faced that experience and came through it.

[27 : 41] He is man. My friend, you meditate upon this and rejoice in this. That your Lord Jesus Christ, your Savior, is one who knows from personal experience the difficulties, the trials, the temptations, the sufferings of our humanity.

Therefore, he has for us the sympathy of fellow people. Our Savior and our friend. Surely this is something in which we should rejoice.

But I must say this. He's God. He's man. But he's one person. He has a divine nature.

He has had it eternally. At a point in time he took to himself a human nature. But he remains the person he always was.

The same divine person he has been and he is eternal. Two distinct natures in one person forever.

[28 : 52] Rejoice, my friend, in his unipersonality. What does it mean to rejoice in a life? It means that we rejoice in union with him.

It means, secondly, that we rejoice in the person of Christ. In his person. And it means, thirdly, that we rejoice in his work.

In his work. And when I talk of his work, I use the term in a comprehensive sense. We rejoice in his death.

That is, in his atoning work. Surely, you say, surely you may say we don't rejoice in the death of anyone.

But in the atoning work of Christ. In the work that Jesus accomplished by his death. We have every cause to rejoice.

[29 : 47] God forbid, says the apostle Paul, that I could glory. That I could rejoice. That I could exult. That I could boast. God forbid that I could glory. By his death upon the cross.

He made a full atonement for sin. He answered to God for our sins. He took our place. He bore our punishment. He died in our room and dead.

By taking upon himself our condemnation. He has removed the ground of our condemnation.

Therefore, if we are believers in him.

If we are truly trusting him. And relying entirely and utterly upon him. Then we are no longer under condemnation. We are reconciled to God.

We are amongst those whom God declares righteous. And we are traveling heavenward. It is on the ground of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

[30 : 58] That God declares the believing sinner righteous. And therefore, in the blood of Christ. In the blood shedding of Christ.

In his atoning sacrifice. We make our both tonight. Jesus, thy blood and righteousness. My beauty and glory is there.

In his flaming words. In these arrayed with joy. Shall I lift up my head. We rejoice in his death.

In his atoning work. And we rejoice in his resurrection. His resurrection. Had he not been raised on the third day. Then we could not rejoice in his death.

For his death would be no atonement for sin. By raising him from the dead. God has declared emphatically. His acceptance.

[31 : 54] Of Christ's sacrifice. As an atonement for our sins. And in this we rejoice. In Christ we have risen. We have risen to newness of life.

Spiritual life. By his resurrection. Christ has taken from death its sting. He has spoiled the grave of its victory. When he rose. He rose.

The first proofs of his people. When he comes again. At the last day. His people shall rise from their grave. With bodies of glory.

Fastened after the pattern of his own. Christ's own body of glory. When we lay our loved ones. Who have died in Christ. In the grave.

Their sadness. Of course their sadness. Because of the party. But their cause for rejoicing too. For we do it. In the glad and certain hope.

[32 : 51] Of a coming resurrection morning. So we rejoice. In his resurrection. We rejoice in his death. We rejoice in his resurrection.

We rejoice in his ascension. This is an unfortunate part. It is worse. He has ascended to God's right hand. When we say that Christ is at God's right hand.

We are using figurative language. To express the truth. That in heaven. Where Jesus is now. He is in the place. Of supreme authority and power.

He must reign there. Till he has put all his enemies. Under his feet. My Christian friends. The one who wields all the power.

Of the universe tonight. Is the one who is your savior. All power is given unto me. He says. In heaven and in earth. Because he has ascended.

[33 : 51] He sends gifts to men. As you were singing in the 68th Psalm. He sends to men the gifts of repentance toward God. And the gifts of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He sends to extract the gifts of his Holy Spirit. It is expedient for you. He said that I go away. But if I don't go away. There is comforter. The paraclete.

The Holy Spirit. The one who will encourage. And help. And strengthen you. He will not come. But he has sent his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gifts of the ascended Christ.

To his church. He sends the gifts of apostles. And of prophets. And he continues to send the gifts of evangelists. And of pastors. And of teachers.

And in this we rejoice. We rejoice in his death. We rejoice in his resurrection. We rejoice in his ascension. And we rejoice too in his intercession.

[34 : 48] His intercession. He our great high priest. A task within the there. And the intercedes for us there now. What does this mean?

It means that there before his father. Christ pleased our high priest. Pleas'd his own sacrifice upon the cross.

And in pleading that sacrifice. Claims the reward promised him in the covenant of redemption. And what is that reward? It is the salvation of his people.

And it is utterly inconceivable. That the father should deny to his son. That reward. The salvation of his people.

It means this too that he prays for us. There in heaven tonight. Christ our high priest is praying for you and for me. And the one who prays for us is one touched with a feeling of our infirmity.

[35 : 52] One who was at all points tempted as we are. Yet without sin. He brings before his father the needs, our needs, needs which we pray for and needs which we neglect to pray for.

He brings before his father all our prayers. It's he who sanctified our prayers. Our prayers are imperfect. And we pray them only in the name of Christ.

We ask that God will answer for his sake. And it is for his sake only that we are heard and accepted and answered.

His intercession will rejoice in this. He rejoiced in his work then. In his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession and in his return.

He is coming again. Coming again with power and with great glory and majesty with his holy angel. When he comes, his people will be changed.

[36 : 57] Those who have died in Christ shall be away from the dead. The corruptible shall put on incorruption. His people alive when he comes will be clothed upon with their bodies of glory, fashioned after the pattern of his.

And his whole church shall be presented to him a glorious church. Not having spots or wrinkles or any such thing, holy and without blemish.

His people shall be taken to be with himself and with his father throughout the end of age. They shall inherit the new heavens and the new earth.

For there shall be a cosmic renewal. All creation that's just shall be renewed. Shall be set free from his bondage to corruption. To experience the glorious liberty of the children of God.

My friends, it's too glorious a prospect for us to understand. That it is a prospect that is glorious in the extreme.

[38 : 07] And in such a prospect we rejoice tonight. We rejoice in his work. Rejoice, my brethren, in the Lord.

In union with him. The one from whom you draw all your strength. The one with whom you enjoy communion. The one who is precious to you. Rejoice in his presence. His God, his man.

One person. Two nations. Rejoice in his work. In his atoning sacrifice for sinners. In his glorious resurrection. In his ascension to God's right hand.

In his intercession for us. And in the prospect of his glorious return. At the end of the age. I said in New Year's Day.

That it would be good if we made a New Year resolution. I will not be afraid. I suggest that here's another resolution. It would be good to make on the first Lord's Day of the New Year.

[39 : 08] I will rejoice. In the Lord. Let us pray. Our gracious God.

We give thee thanks tonight. For the reason thou hast given us. To rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee for him. We thank thee for him.

The God man. We thank thee for all his wealth. And we pray that we might be truly united to him. That we might rejoice in him.

With a joy that is unspeakable. And full of glory. May that we pray thee. A rejoicing Christian. To the glory of thy name.