

# Rejoice

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev K.W.R.Cameron

[ 0 : 00 ] Philippians 4, 4, where we have the words, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

Now among the many good things that Paul was hearing from Ecclaphroditus about the state of affairs in the church in Philippi, he heard of two women who were at odds one with the other, and seemed to be causing quite a bit of stir in the church.

And it is the opinion of many that the whole approach of Paul in this letter has been to arrive carefully and diplomatically at the second verse of this chapter, when he may, on a basis of the things he has said already, give a gentle but firm Christian admonition, to these two ladies who had fallen out.

I beseech thee, Eudius, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. Well now, if Paul had reached, has indeed reached the subject of his letter, in that verse, in verse 2, when he comes to verse 4, he certainly is expressing the theme of the letter.

For if ever there is a letter that is full of joy and rejoicing, and the idea of joy, Christian joy, it is this one. Eleven times he says to the Philippians that they should rejoice.

[ 1 : 42 ] And five times he speaks of joy. Joy, someone has said, is the courageous cheerfulness of the Christian soul.

Joy. And this was something that was very characteristic of the apostle himself. Joy seemed to mark all of his living, since he came to know and love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he would have it be, that this would be the mark also, of the lives of the Christians in Philippi. And so, this glad letter rings with this theme, joy and rejoicing.

And when he comes to this verse, that theme is crystallized into a simple command that is stated clearly and emphatically, and laid before them, and laid before all other Christians, who look to the sacred page for instruction in righteousness.

I would like us to look at it tonight as a theme for our Thanksgiving service at the end of this communion season that we have shared in together.

[ 3 : 03 ] To look at it and see what it can be saying to us today and tonight. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say unto you.

And again I say rejoice. Rejoice. I would like to look at it quite simply and consider just first of all what this command is. And then, to look and see when this command is to be obeyed.

And thirdly, to notice how the command is emphasized. Just these three simple things. Rejoice in the Lord always.

And again I say rejoice. Rejoice. Well, what is the command? It is rejoice in the Lord.

And here he is speaking to them, I would say, about the expression of Christian gladness. He is writing to people who are not without problems.

[ 4 : 12 ] In chapter 1 and verse 28, he talks about many who are in doubt and in fear. And in chapter 2 and verse 15, he reminds them that they are in, living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

And that they have a responsibility there to be witnesses to Jesus Christ, shining as light in the world.

They are people who themselves have sometimes dark shadows crossing their minds of doubt and fear. And all around there is the darkness of a hostile and heathen world.

And yet for all that, he calls on them to rejoice. To rejoice in the Lord. Now, joy, this expression of joy, joy, is one of the graces that ought to mark the life of a Christian.

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In the last verse, the last two verses, he is reminding them of the need of love within the Christian fellowship.

[ 5 : 44 ] That Iodias and Syntyche be of the same mind in the Lord. And here, he is speaking of joy. A little further down, we find that he is speaking of peace.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep your minds and hearts through the Lord Jesus, through Jesus Christ.

And you find also in the next verse, he says, let your moderation be known unto all men. The word moderation really means consideration, long-suffering, patience with other people.

And so, what he is speaking of here are the characteristics that should be seen in the life of the person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, who has in their heart and life the earnest of the Holy Spirit, and in whose life the fruit of that relationship and the saving grace of God is being seen. let the world know, he says, the gladness that Christianity has brought to you.

[ 6 : 59 ] Let people round about see the effect that the gospel has had on your soul in the long-suffering that there is in your life.

in your life. Let your faith be seen in your prayerfulness. And let it be evident, too, that the peace of God rests in your heart and life.

You see, if the subject of the book is the subject of his letter is the matter of the problem with Iodias and Syntyche and the theme of the book is Christian joy, we might say the key to the book is in chapter 2 where he says, work out your own salvation for it is God who works in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

And over and over again you find that there is an emphasis on the Christian working out that grace that God is working in. And here it is again.

That is what he is meaning by rejoicing in the Lord. If the joy of the Lord is being worked in your heart and soul by the Holy Spirit then you work it out.

[ 8 : 14 ] Bring it out. Let it be seen in the practical application of your Christian experience. Now, he is saying let the world then know the gladness that Christianity has brought to your soul.

And we should note here that he is talking of something better and something a lot higher than just happiness. All the world is seeking for happiness. This is how life is so often defined.

It is the quest for happiness. And happiness is something that is elusive. and makes it so necessary to be a quest.

But joy is not happiness. Joy is something that does not depend on the heart. Now, the dictionary tells us that the heart means the lack sorry, the dictionary means luck or the chance happening. So that if you are hapless it means that you are unlucky. That the unlucky thing has happened. Hence, you are unhappy.

[ 9 : 32 ] But joy is something that is not related to chance. It is, as I said, the courageous cheerfulness of the Christian soul.

This joy, Christian joy, is a delightful thing that bubbles up in the soul of the believer. And as he knows the Lord and lives with the Lord, he is drawing, as he draws water out of the wells of salvation, he is doing it with joy.

Therefore, with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation. The heart that is full of the gladness of Christ speaks of the joy of the Lord.

A joy that has been put there by his pardoning grace is saving power. And what a good thing it is to meet it. What a wonderful thing it is when we come across a Christian who is radiant with the joy of the Lord.

How sad it is that Christians are so often characterized by sadness and by gloom and by what appears to be misery. You all know the story of the man who was the elder who was sent to the station to meet the minister who was coming to preach for the weekend and he didn't see anybody that looked like a minister dressed like a minister coming off the train but he saw a man that he thought must be the minister and he went up to him and said are you the minister?

[ 11 : 03 ] And the man said no I'm not the minister it's just my officer it makes me look like this. And if it weren't so true it would really be quite funny but it's tragic but that is how the world looks at Christians and perhaps in particular thinks of ministers.

But it is a tonic to meet someone whose joy is evident and how contagious a thing it is and how it lifts our spirit. I often think that Barnabas must have been a man so full of the joy of the Lord.

A man who was given the title the son of consolation the son of encouragement and how when he went away down there to F2 Antioch to find out what was going on in the church there it seemed that some strange things were happening and when he saw that it was God that was working we

read that when he saw the grace of God he was glad and he encouraged them with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.

A man with the joy of the Lord. Think of Nehemiah and those great things that he achieved in the building of the wall of Jerusalem with those who were against his purpose threatening him on every side and we read that the joy of the Lord was their strength.

The thrill of being engaged in the work of the Lord brought about the triumph and the success the successful completion of their mission. Well now here is a command of something that Christians should be doing rejoicing in the Lord.

[12:40] What is inside should come out. They should work out what God is working in them. Now we sometimes think of the commandments as being burdensome or as being taxing or demanding but surely here is something lightsome something delightful something that we will enjoy and be glad to engage in rejoicing in the Lord.

The expression of Christian gladness but also we are reminded here of the secret of Christian gladness. They are to rejoice in the Lord.

You see this is the secret Christian joy is not a put-on show. Just behaving in a certain way to pretend that all is well and that we are feeling fine in spite of what's going on round about but it is something that comes out from within.

It rises from the believer's relationship with Jesus Christ. It is connected with his standing as a Christian in the Lord. How often Paul says of the Christian's life that it is lived in the Lord.

He says children obey your parents in the Lord. He speaks of marrying in the Lord and every aspect of our life and our relationships and our behavior.

[14:09] we must remember that it is in the Lord that we live if we truly we are Christians. This is where the Christian lives where he stands where he operates.

He is a man who has come to the end of himself and he has committed himself to Jesus Christ for salvation. No longer is he his own. He has been bought with a price.

he has been redeemed without money with the precious blood of the lamb and he is the Lord and he lives by the grace of God and his goal is to live for the glory of God and to occupy his time in the service of the Lord in the closest of relationships with the Lord and in this he rejoices.

The Lord is the one who has saved him and he rejoices in this. The Lord is guaranteed that he will never lose those who are his sheep.

I know my sheep and none shall pluck them out of my hand and my father is greater than I and none shall pluck them out of my father hand and he rejoices in that.

[15:26] The Lord is the one who is in control of all things and makes all things work together for good to them who love him who are called according to his purpose and he rejoices in this and as his Lord on whom he relies provides him with daily strength assurance of pardon and peace with God he rejoices in that and when Satan accuses him he admits that Satan is right in what he is saying but he comes again to the cleansing of the blood of the Lamb and he rejoices in the power and the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ for God in every situation and in every facet of his life he rejoices in the Lord many wonderful things happened to the seventy whom

Jesus sent out and when they came back they said you know even the devils were subject unto us and Jesus said to them rejoice rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven rejoice in the Lord because their names are only written in heaven because of their relationship with Jesus it is only through him that they have security and hope of heaven he is his people's joy he is their portion their crown their gold their all in all ye righteous in the Lord rejoice it comely is unright that upright men with thankful voice should praise the Lord of might this is the command rejoice in the Lord and then he goes on to say when they should rejoice in the Lord when is the command to be obeyed he says rejoice in the Lord always always in every situation in every circumstance on every occasion and now we say well now this may be a light some command but it is a very demanding one because at once we see how comprehensive this command is and we say well can

I rejoice today I don't feel like rejoicing I'm feeling very low I'm feeling very ashamed of my sin my grief is great my spirit is bowed my guilt weighs heavy on me my burden is quite oppressive my problem is like a mountain surely I'm not expected to rejoice today but the holy scripture says always that is the command I must rejoice in the Lord oh you say it's easy I can rejoice when I'm elated when I'm on the crest of the wave I cannot do anything else but rejoice there are times when I'm bubbling over there are times when by the grace of

God I see that my little bit of service for him is used for his glory and it thrills me to the core Paul says in every situation the Christian is to rejoice and the Christian can rejoice I wonder if you ever read the book of Pollyanna it's a delightful story about a little girl whose parents were missionaries in the south seas and she had been sent home to New England I think to live with an aunt for the sake of her education and her aunt was one who was very burdened with the problems of business and so on and the world weighed very heavily on her shoulders and Pollyanna couldn't understand why there wasn't a smile and a gladness about and she told her aunt how out in the mission field she learned to play the glad game and the glad game was simply that no matter how difficult they would think and they would find something in it to be glad about and the story goes on and tells of how this little girl and her game not only affected her gloomy aunt and her friends that came about but the whole of the town she transformed the whole place with her precocious spirit and with her glad game and then one day she was climbing in an upstairs window from the branch of a tree by which she used to escape on occasions to grow about her own cloy and she fell and broke her back many days she was in bed until they heard of a specialist some place far away and it was decided that she would go there so that she would be able to walk again and the whole town turned out to say goodbye and wish

Pollyanna well and hung it on the notice at the railway station I think it was Brookville and below it they hung this notice the glad time this little girl had affected the whole of the town and lifted a shadow from its brow with her glad game now that is that was just a game but this is not just a game this is the glad life this is not something you have to play and have to contrive but it is something that is there in the Christian experience it is not just rhetoric that Paul is using when he says rejoice in the Lord he is speaking of reality rejoice that God has made known the gospel to us that it is not hid rejoice that we have been spared to respond to the truth rejoice in the [ 21 : 52 ] Lord and in his patience with us how many times we have resisted and refused rejoice that he is still calling us if we are not already his rejoice if we are his that he hadn't turned away before we responded but he had refused to strive with our souls rejoice in his love toward us his death for us his life in us rejoice in the Lord when we have nothing else to rejoice in but the Lord himself rejoice like Habakkuk who says although the fig tree shall not blossom neither shall there be fruit in the vines the labor of the olive shall fail and the field shall yield no meat the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls yet will

I rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation I remember hearing Professor McIntosh tell a story of the covenanting days and somewhere in Galilee the dragoons arrived at a hill farm house and the husband and wife and the boys the teenage boys were brought out to the end of the house and the men folk were shot in cold blood and the thatch and the stack yard were set on fire before the dragoons turned to gallop away and as they were going away the poor woman was standing looking at her dead and the swirling smoke and gathering her shawl around her as the snow wind licked around the house and fanned the blaze and one of the soldiers looked down at her and said our poor woman and she looked up with defiance in her canemotni pool rejoice in the Lord when we have nothing to rejoice in but the Lord himself rejoice in the Lord when we have many things to rejoice in him remembering that how shall he not with Christ also freely give us all things if he is your shepherd then like the psalmist you can say I shall not want rejoice when things are lavish when his gifts are full and free and forget not as he said to the children of Israel coming into the land of promise when thou hast eaten and art full then shalt thou bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping these commandments and judgments and statutes which I command thee this day rejoice in the Lord beware that thou forget not the Lord yes it is a comprehensive command rejoice in the Lord always there is joy to be joy in every situation because you see this joy is related to him and not to our circumstances you see how comprehensive the command is but on the other hand you see how comforting this command is when he says rejoice in the Lord always you see it tells me that I can rejoice in the Lord always it tells me that he changes not my lot may change my friends may change my material circumstances may change my health may change but my Savior will never change he will be sufficient for every situation my grace is sufficient for thee he said to Paul and Paul says I know how to be abased and I know how to be abound everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry both to abound and to suffer need I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me his grace is sufficient I can only rejoice always if it is in him I am rejoicing for he is the only constant factor in my life and in this changing

time he is the eternal son eternally committed to his people's good eternally supplying their needed grace and I can count on him all way and all the days so then I can rejoice in him all the way he never fails there are some hard things put out for us somebody said to me just the other day he has had a peculiarly hard and bitter lot in life there are some hard things put out for us but the [ 27 : 29 ] Lord is the same in his grace and he gives more grace as the burdens grow greater in the world he says to his disciples you will have tribulation you can count on that but in me you will have peace these things have I spoken unto you he goes on to say that your joy may be full and that my joy might remain in you remember when he was speaking he was speaking on the night in which he was betrayed he was speaking with the shadow of calvary hanging over him with the cup of gethsemane the chastisement of gabatha the cross of golgotha before him but for the joy that was set before him we read he endured the cross despising the shame and is now set down on the majesty on high and it is his victory that makes his people's joy a reality the joy in him joy and makes their lot one of joy and rejoicing and rejoicing always for he is the unchanging eternal lord and the last thing I want us to notice here is how the command is emphasized what the command is rejoice in the lord when the command is to be obeyed always and how the command is emphasized and again

I say rejoice let's just think first of all of the point of the repetition why does he say it twice surely it is to emphasize what he is saying and to show to underline just how important it is it is not merely a passing remark cheer up be happy that's not what he's saying he is saying something that is a distinct Christian duty and he will not have them think that it is just a passing remark that has tripped off his lips or off the end of his pen as the letter has been written down but is to show that the joy and the life of the Christian is to be evident and is to be expressed and that gladness rather than gloom is to be seen for gladness betrays the presence of Christian experience while gloom gives the lie to a profession of Christian grace he's repeating it because there are difficulties of which he is aware there are things which make us sad and will come our way there are things which will make constant joyfulness lapse when the way is tough and the treatment is trying but he is saying that in the teeth of all these things we must live in that continued relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that makes it possible for us to rejoice to make no mistake though it may seem immensely difficult he is saying it is gloriously possible again I say rejoice so long as our rejoicing is indeed in the Lord and so there is a determination there with Paul to encourage them rejoice always he says and again I say rejoice you have your problems yes we have ours fighting without fears within nevertheless God comforted me and so often we hear words like that from Paul himself lay hold of Christ in all circumstances and the rejoicing will flow in the midst of pain and dismay the point of the repetition made then just notice in finishing the person who is writing these things rejoice in the

Lord all way he said and again I say to you rejoice you see some people might say well it's all very well for somebody else to say rejoice you don't know what it's like to live down our street you don't know what it's like to work in my world you don't know what it's like to be in this heathen town of Philippi but this wasn't just anybody saying to them rejoice in the Lord always he's saying again I say to you rejoice they had problems as we have mentioned so had Paul he's writing this letter in a prison cell very likely chained to a soldier at that moment not knowing what his future is as he indicates earlier on but he doesn't know in what way he's going to be called on to glorify God whether by life or by death but he's saying I am saying to you in all situations rejoice but that's not all he says to them

I know the problems you're involved in because he says in chapter 1 and verse 30 that the same conflict that is in you I'm having the same conflict which you saw in me and now here to be in me we're up against it just as you're up against it but still I'm saying rejoice in the Lord but there's something more that would dramatically remind them of the reasonableness of him saying to them rejoice in the Lord always because they would remember this man and how he came to Philippi with the gospel of Jesus Christ and how he was taken and publicly ignominiously flogged unjustly in Philippi in Philippi when he was a Roman citizen to whom such treatment should never be meted out and how then he was thrust with his friend into the inner prison and there and there made fast in the stocks with the wheels on their backs still red and raw and at midnight they sang praises to God and remember what it says and the prisoners heard them and that has always intrigued me and the prisoners heard them how did

[ 34 : 43 ] Luke know about this singing at midnight was it that some of those prisoners now were Christians in the church in Philippi and they spoke of the effect of the joyful witnessing and singing of these men in the night in the face of all things being against them that he made brought them to know this savior for themselves who could sing praises in such circumstances at midnight and in such a situation could only do it in the Lord for he is the only one that can really give a song in the night and so the one who is saying to them rejoice in the Lord always is not just pouring out empty talk he's not saying whistle and it'll keep your courage up but he is one who has learned and who has demonstrated and has proved the triumph of the grace of God in the heart over all circumstances Paul's joy then that he experienced in his soul and that he extolled and that he exhausted them to engage in must be seen as joy from two sides first of all it was joy in spite of it was joy in spite of flogging at

Philippi it was joy in spite of fetters for there he was in chains and it was joy in spite of friendlessness because in second Timothy chapter 4 and verse 16 he says at my first defense no one took my part but all deserted me and here he was at his first defense alone fettered in Rome writing to the people who knew that he was the man who sang when he was flogged and he's saying in spite of it all rejoice in the Lord but more than that it was rejoicing because of you see nothing it was not the things that the world looked for that made him rejoice prosperity or popularity or pleasure but the personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the Lord we're right back to where we were on

Saturday night it's the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord that fills his soul with rejoicing that is the deep deep well of salvation from which he is constantly drawing up water with joy and gladness now then as we come just to the end of our communion season how is it with you how is it with me in our life are we up and down as at the vagaries of the half the luck and the chance dominated by our circumstances and the changes that come upon us in our life or are we people that know the constant bubbling up joy of the Lord because we are geared to him one of the things that I did and I can almost get to the stage where I can begin to boast about it because all my friends who have gone to

North America have flown and I'm one of the last people who actually sailed there and back and we were two very stormy crossings but amazingly the ship never rocked from side to side it only went up and down like that you can get seaside going like that too so but they told us when they took us on a tour of the ship that the ship was stabilized and and if we looked over the side at certain places we could actually see down below the surface of the water there were fins that stick out the side of the ship and they explained to us that deep down in the bowels of the ship there were gyroscopes that were constantly spinning that were not tuned to the surface of the water that heaved up and down but were tuned to the true vertical and so that when the ship tended to tip off the vertical an adjustment was made in these fins that kept the ship on the upright and so the ship went on straight and upright although the winds may have been blowing right across our bowels all the time there is a wonderful picture of the secret of the

Christian's joy you see the Christian does become he is in the world but he's of the world he belongs to Jesus Christ he lives in Christ and no longer is he tuned to the vagaries of the sea of circumstances but he's tuned to the true vertical of the eternal God who made him and for whom he was made and for whom he was designed to glorify in his life this is the secret of the Christian's peace and the Christian's joy he who has Christ need not worry about what the world may do for he is safe and he is secure he has the pearl of great price and he is in tune with the eternal God who has washed him in the blood of the lamb and who has made him a child of

[ 40 : 34 ] God rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice let us pray our gracious and loving God we bless thee for thy word to us and we thank thee for this simple and forthright command that comes from a man of such deep and rich Christian experience a man who could speak from the practical reality of a life that rejoiced in the face of every circumstance a life that was able to do it because he was able to say that he is bound up with Jesus Christ I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I Christ liveth in me and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me we bless thee Lord God for the reality of Christian joy and we pray that we may take these words to heart and that we may see that this is not counseling us to do something that is alien to us if we belong to

Jesus but rather something joy to the Savior whose dying love we have remembered in these last days we pray Lord God that thou would grant that those who know him not may seek to know him

that they too may know the Lord and the joy of the Lord and that the joy of the Lord may be their strength go with us now and accept our thanks for all thy kindness and love to us in we ask it in his name amen