

ESF, Lord's day service message  
8/26/2018

## **Rejoice in the Lord Always**

Philip. 4:4-7

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! [5] Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. [6] Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7] And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

There are three major factors in our lives which rob us of joy. They are circumstances, people, and anxiety (worry). Paul teaches us how we can overcome depression and troubles in our heart caused by those three factors and live a joyful life always.

### **Rejoice in the Lord in all circumstances**

When our hearts are troubled by harsh and difficult circumstances we can't rejoice. So, to be able to rejoice always in all circumstances, we need to find a joy which is not controlled by circumstances.

When Paul encouraged believers to rejoice always, he knew how to overcome depression caused by circumstances. When Paul was encouraging the believers in Philippi to rejoice always, he was in prison. Paul was a very active person. But in prison, he didn't have freedom to move around as he wanted or needed to. Also he didn't know when he would be released from prison.

While Paul was in prison, some people, who had been jealous of Paul, were trying hard to reach out to more people and make their ministry larger than Paul's ministry. By doing so they were trying to diminish Paul's influence on the church and to increase their own influence.

In these circumstances, Paul had no reason to rejoice. But Paul was not discouraged or depressed by such circumstance. Paul revealed that he could still rejoice in spite of his harsh circumstance. How in the world could he rejoice in this circumstance? He shared his secret: *But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice* (Philippians 1:18).

He confessed that as long as Christ was preached, he could rejoice in spite of harsh circumstances. Paul always set his mind on Christ. And Christ gave him joy.

What we put at the center of our hearts controls our emotions. When we put Christ at the center of our hearts, joy fills our hearts regardless of the circumstances we may be in. Why? In Christ, there is forgiveness of all sins. In Christ we are set free from the dark power of the Devil. In Christ, we receive freedom from the law and judgment. In Christ, we have the right to be children of God. In Christ we receive the power of the resurrection. In Christ, we receive the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ our souls are fed with spiritual food and water that completely satisfy our souls. In Christ, we have eternal life and we have no fear of death.

To live a joyful life regardless of our circumstances, we must put Christ at the center of our hearts. Except Christ, there is nothing else that can give permanent joy. We cannot find constant joy in money, in pleasure, in power, or in any other source or circumstance in this world.

Jay Gould, an American millionaire, had plenty of money. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent and said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

As Paul did, if we have Christ at the center of our hearts, Christ will always make us joyful regardless of our circumstances. If you can't rejoice because of harsh circumstances in your life, set your mind on Christ, on who Christ is, and on the marvelous blessings which Christ has given and is giving to you.

### **Let your gentleness be evident to all people**

Another secret of Paul's rejoicing always is that he constantly treated and respected others with gentleness. And he encourages us to follow his attitude. *"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."*

What does Paul mean by the word "gentleness?"

#### a). Gentleness means forbearance

Another word for gentleness is forbearance. It means to choose not to do something even though you could do it. It is to refrain from doing or saying something in consideration of others, even though you have a right to say it or do it.

There is a good example in the Bible (Genesis chapter 9) about forbearance in this sense. One day Noah became drunk, and lay uncovered inside his tent. And one of his sons, Ham saw his father's nakedness and told it to his two brothers. But the other two sons, Shem and Japheth took a garment, walked in backward, and covered their father's nakedness. At that time, Ham was cursed because he exposed the fault of his father but God blessed Shem and Japheth for their thoughtful consideration of their father. God loves those who forbear other's faults without exposing them. Apostle Peter encourages us to love each other with forbearance in 1 Peter 4:8 *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

#### b). Gentleness means moderation

Moderation is to treat others with mercy as God treats sinners with mercy. It is the opposite of applying strict requirements of laws to

others. To treat others moderately we need to receive and remember God's mercy. In Titus 3:2, Paul asked Titus to remind people not to slander anyone but to be peaceful and considerate and to show humility toward all men. And in verse 5, Paul mentioned the reason to do so; "*he (Christ) saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy.*"

No one can stand before God without His mercy. Psalm 130:2-3 says, "*Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?*" If we stand before God we are all the same sinners regardless of who we are, or what we have done. As others need God's mercy, so you need God's mercy.

When you treat others with the mercy of God, you can be tolerant toward people who offend you, whose attitude you don't agree with. And you can rejoice in spite of the offensive or disagreeable attitude of other people.

c). Gentleness means self-control

Gentleness means that instead of trying to control or change other people's attitude toward you, you change your attitude toward others.

It is almost impossible for you to change other people's attitude toward you. If you try to control other people's attitude toward you, you will constantly have trouble in your heart. Because usually other people do not and cannot change their attitude as you would want them to change. While you are trying to change other people's attitude, you will get frustrated and bitter.

But it is possible for you to control your own attitude. Gentleness in the form of self-control creates great capacity of tolerance for others. Gentleness in self-control enables you to tolerate all kinds of offenses other people do to you. If you constantly control your attitude toward

others, you can tolerate other people's unkind, rude or even harsh attitude gracefully. If you treat people with gentleness by controlling yourself, their attitude will not cause trouble in your heart anymore.

To cultivate gentleness by self-control we must imitate Jesus' attitude. In Philippians 2: 5-8 Paul says, *"<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!"*

When we remember how humbly and gently Christ treated all people even the people who were very difficult to deal with, and imitate His attitude, He helps us to be in self-control. When your heart is troubled by other people, always try to imitate Christ's gentle attitude.

### **Present your requests to God with thanksgiving**

When our hearts are troubled by anxieties and worries, we can't rejoice. Anxieties and worries rob us of our joy. So, to rejoice always, we must find a way to overcome anxieties and worries. When Paul encouraged believers to rejoice always, he shared the secret of how to overcome anxieties and worries.

#### **First, we must stop anxiety with faith.**

There was a study about anxiety. An average person's anxiety is focused on:

- 40% -- things that will never happen
- 30% -- things about the past that can't be changed
- 12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue
- 10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress
- 8% -- about real problems that will be faced

So, Paul encourages: “Do not be anxious about anything.” Another translation expresses, “Stop being anxious!” The meaning of “stop” can be compared with stopping a car. When you see a red light on a cross street, you step on the break to stop your car. Anxiety and worry is a red light warning you to stop. You have to stop! The breaking system to stop worrying is faith in God’s care!

So, “*do not be anxious about anything*” means to stop your anxiety with faith. George Muller said that the beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety. Anxiety and worry are on the opposite side of faith. If we have faith that God takes care of us, we can use the faith to stop anxiety. What a wonderful breaking system we have!

Have faith in the Lord who surely takes care of your life with His power and grace. Jesus says in Matthews 6:31-32 “*So do not worry—for the pagans run after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*” Always remember that your faith in the Lord is not a small matter. It is a great breaking system to stop your anxiety.

Secondly, we must pray in thanksgiving.

Let’s look at verses 6 and 7. *...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

A key to prayer through which we receive joy is thanksgiving. When Paul prayed with thanksgiving in all circumstances, the peace of God guarded Paul’ heart against all anxieties.

In the phrase “the peace of God will guard your heart” the word “guard” is a military term. It signifies the duty of a soldier who is standing at a military post to prevent a hostile invasion. When we pray to God with

thanksgiving, God's peace will stand guard over our spirit and thoughts to prevent a hostile invasion of worry.

Thanksgiving in prayer is the best way to receive God's peace. A peace that drives out all anxieties from our hearts.

So, Paul encourages us to "*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" (Thessalonians 5:18), and "*Devote yourselves to prayer; being watchful and thankful*" (Colossians 4:2).

Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. And he always testified of God's peace through his life. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, "Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this." Much to his surprise, however, the minister began by praying, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

God fills your heart with peace when you pray to Him with thanksgiving. And God sets you free from all anxieties so that you can rejoice always. Even if you face trials that are impossible for you to overcome today, pray to God with thanksgiving.