

# Rejoice in the Lord

Intro:

Last week I spoke of “burning oneself out” for the sake of the gospel. I obviously didn’t do a good job explaining what that does and doesn’t mean, and so apologize to you for the confusion. Let me briefly summarize. Burning out for the gospel is a burnout of joyful praise. It is a giving of everything that we are, our lives, our reputations, our wealth, with great joy and gladness in God. It doesn’t matter, particularly, if you’re a student, a cross-cultural missionary, a housewife, or an author of a thousand best-selling books. Does my joy derive and find its goal in the beauty and enjoyment of Jesus or in the false beauty and enjoyment of something else? Biblical burnout that honors God is not the kind of burnout that is simply due to overwork, exhaustion, or chasing after one’s idols and not being able to grasp them or keep them. That kind of burnout is a wake-up call from the Lord to find our joy in Him alone. No, Biblical burnout is fruitful with joy in the Lord and is not despised when we lose reputation or health, money or glory. Burning oneself out without joy is useless and unfruitful, and we should run from this type of burnout with everything that we are. Mere duty is not what the Lord desires, but rather a deep joyful response of worship to Him and celebration in Him. We were created for joy in Him, but sin has broken us so that we erroneously expect to find joy through things which can never deliver it. When the Galatian churches forgot the gospel and started to work out of duty, Paul asked them, “What has happened to your sense of joy?” His question echoes often in my own struggling soul.

According to 2004 sales records 3 of the top 10 money-making medicines in the US were depression related drugs. These three drugs totaled over 10 billion dollars worth of sales. As if common sense and some simple observation weren’t enough, these numbers should make it obvious that as Americans we have a problem with joylessness. And even with an ever-increasing set of psychiatric tools and potions we are not getting better, but the numbers are growing of those who are diagnosed and treated for depression. While medicine is useful to help us balance the symptoms of depression, it is important that we deal with the underlying beliefs associated with joylessness and hopelessness. This is why the third chapter of Philippians is so vital to our souls. It begins with joy and it ends with hope. As we look at this brief admonition by Paul, let us question our deepest desires: “What do I practically believe about God when I lose my joy? What does the gospel of Jesus reveal to me about God?”

## 1. Joy is Important

- a. This is typically a closing remark in the book
  - i. However, Paul doesn’t close the letter here, but begins a doctrinal defense of the gospel
  - ii. I believe that Paul intended to end the letter here, but something spurred him on to include chapters 3 and 4
    1. What spurred him on?
    2. Most likely some interaction recollection (maybe Epaphroditus reminded him) of the Judaizing false teachers who twisted the gospel and their threat to the Philippians faith in Christ alone
    3. Something was stealing the Philippians’ joy and was leading them to trust in the flesh, something other than Christ, thus what follows (very similar to the Galatian concern)
- b. in addition to all that he has written, Paul thinks that the following is *very important* to add
  - i. The necessity of rejoicing in the Lord is what he is emphasizing
  - ii. Treasuring Jesus, through faith and according to hope, is the foundation of joy
- c. "my brothers"
  - i. indicative, again, of affection
  - ii. Christian brotherhood
  - iii. interesting that he doesn't issue an apostolic authority here
    1. brother to brother
    2. appeal and reminder as one of you

## 2. Be Delighted in God!

- a. Joy is the supernatural delight in God and in His sovereign goodness and supreme worth.
  - i. Different than "happy"
  - ii. "Happy" comes from Middle English word "hap" (luck) which is a translation of the Latin word, *fortuna*, or "fortune"
    1. We are happy when things "happen" as we expect and desire, when we are "lucky"
    2. But, what about when things don't happen as we expected or desire?
    3. This is where joy differentiates itself, because it is not tied to happenings or circumstance, but instead to unshakeable and never-changing worth and value of God
      - a. So, Christians can rejoice in suffering, sing in imprisonments, dance with cancer, and face death with unbending hope.
- b. joy, or gladness, is not tied to circumstance, but to our direct responses to circumstances:
  - i. Fear: no joy
    1. Fear has no expectation of goodness, i.e. no hope
    2. It carries only the expectation of punishment (1 Jn 4:18)
    3. We fear because of unbelief in the goodness, sovereignty, or supreme worth of God in the light of our circumstance
      - a. We believe that God is somehow against us in our circumstances to punish us for something that we have or haven't done
        - i. We doubt God's goodness
        - ii. "believing God is 100% for us is the key to indomitable joy" - John Piper tweet
      - b. We believe that God is powerless to effectively change our circumstance
        - i. We place our will, or the choices of man, over His ability or power over our circumstances
        - ii. We idolize man's will
          1. This stems from the foolishness of believing that our circumstances will bring us the most joy and that God would give us these things if He could
          2. Health, job, relationship, food, ease, etc.
          3. But maybe God is choosing not to change our circumstances so that we will see how weak these things really are so that we will turn to Him as the supreme joy and find the fullness of life in Him?
      - c. We believe that something is more important to our soul's joy than Christ and we don't have it or are about to lose it
        - i. Health? Job? Relationship with another? Food? Etc.?
        - ii. When we trust in these things for our joy, we find that we can lose them easily and so are joyless in our loss of them or even in our fear of losing them (though we haven't even lost them, yet)
        - iii. These things never love us, nor do they forgive us when we fail them
        - iv. But Christ is supremely valuable, so much more than these temporary and shallow (in comparison) pleasures
      - d. So we live in fear because we doubt the sovereignty, goodness, and supreme worth of God
    - ii. Faith: joy
      1. The key to overcoming joyless fear is not merely to say "God loves us, but isn't in control" or "God's in control, but doesn't care about us", but rather the opposite:

“God loves you, He is in control, and He is for your good in this circumstance. You can trust Him”

2. Joy is the response of the human heart that trusts in the goodness, sovereignty, and supreme worth of God
  - a. When we believe that God is good, that is that He is 100% for our best, then we can trust that this circumstance and loss is going to benefit me
    - i. It will benefit me by prying my hands off of that which may pull my heart from him
    - ii. He smashes idols. He doesn't give them to us.
  - b. When we believe that God is sovereign, then we know that our circumstance is not the final word, which would lead to hopelessness (if God can't change it, it's up to me and I've screwed things up...again)
    - i. **Isaiah 45:7** I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.
    - ii. Because God's arm is never too short, and because He is the one who brings both blessing and calamity AND HE IS GOOD, then we can trust that when He brings calamity it is for our good
      1. Nothing gives peace and rest in the midst of suffering than this truth
      2. Trust in this truth of God's character is what gives faith-filled sufferers joyful hearts of praise in prisons, loneliness, the clenched jaw of pain from cancer, the horror of the grief-stricken parent who has lost a child, etc.
  - c. The greatest joy comes from treasuring and finding our heart's desire in the greatest and most valuable thing: God
    - i. We rejoice when we have the things that we deem the most valuable to us and they are surely ours
      1. Super Bowl vs. Commercials
      2. Children's successes, or children's kisses
    - ii. First, God can never be taken away from us, no matter our circumstance. We cannot lose Him because He is the most powerful being and nothing can separate from His love which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-39).
    - iii. Secondly, unlike idols, God forgives us when we fail Him. He will not leave those whom He has covenanted with (Heb 13:5).
    - iv. Lastly, we were created to enjoy God. Worship, “worth-ship”, the quality of worthiness. God is worthy of our praise, love, adoration, honor, etc. because He is the most valuable object (I use that carefully) that exists
      1. He is the most beautiful, the most glaringly perfect person
        - a. Holy – perfectly unique
        - b. The pinnacle of beauty, value, power, glory
      2. He is the goal of our living, fighting, dying...all of it!
      3. In the end, Heaven is not merely the blessings of God, but Heaven is God Himself
        - a. Revelation 21-22

### 3. Our Delight is in Jesus!!

- a. This gladness comes "in the Lord"
- b. it is Christ and the Christ-event that reveals to us the goodness, sovereignty, and supreme worth of God
- c. it is the gospel that brings such great news of Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and rule that gives us ample reasons to rejoice and be glad

- i. it is not our faith that brings gladness, but rather His faithfulness and promises
- ii. There is a danger of emphasizing "our faith" today that actually places the weight of our gladness/salvation upon ourselves rather than upon Christ
  - 1. "Let me share my faith with you" vs. "May I share the great news about Jesus with you"
  - 2. The gospel is not faith, it is historical content that is to be believed
  - 3. Evangelism is not a sharing of our faith, but a recalling and telling of a true historical event and all that it means (its biblical interpretation)
- d. So, we rejoice and are glad not because of our faithfulness, but because of the objective, true, real, genuine work of God within history through His Son, Jesus Christ
  - i. This good news (read all about it!), the report of such a cosmic event, brings sinners great joy because of redemption and salvation and reconciliation with God and man (peace)
  - ii. We were dead in sin, obviously pursuing lesser and enslaving gods who filled us with fear and the sure expectation of judgment, settling for far less in pleasure and in joy
  - iii. Jesus reconciles God to Man through His blood and gives us the hope of walking in the presence of God forever through His resurrection from the dead.

### Psalm 43:

<sup>1</sup>Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

<sup>2</sup> For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

<sup>3</sup> Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

<sup>4</sup> Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

*It is no trouble for me to remind your souls again of the same things...it is safe for you.*