

Rejoice in The LORD

Today we are in **Part 3** of our **4 Part Series** through the Book of **Philippians**. Philippians, which is located in the NT, is a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church that met in the Greek city of Philippi while he was under house arrest in Rome. Paul was imprisoned as part of the persecution he was facing for continuing to preach the Gospel despite attempts by the Jewish religious leaders to shut him down. The main theme of Paul's letter was one of **JOY** motivated by an attitude that **No matter what we face in life, we shouldn't let our circumstances keep us from the pursuit of Christlikeness .**

In **Week 1**, we examined **Chapter 1** and we highlighted two important perspectives we need to have if we are going to experience JOY in spite of trying circumstances. We talked about the importance of always being THANKFUL for what God so graciously gives us and of always understanding that because of what we have in Christ Jesus we cannot lose because through Christ we always WIN and are victorious. **Last week** we looked at **Chapter 2** where Paul builds on what he said in the first chapter by showing us that if we really want JOYOUS living to take root in our lives we need to have the MIND of CHRIST shaping our attitudes. The MIND of CHRIST simply being the mindset where we use our position in life, whatever that may be, to help better the lives of others while leaving our promotion in the hands of the FATHER. This is the example Jesus gave us and when you think about it there really is no joy to be compared to that which we experience when we allow God to use our lives to help others discover an eternal relationship with Jesus. And that brings us to today and **Chapter 3** where Paul is going to solidify what it really looks like to REJOICE IN THE LORD! So, let's **PRAY** for the Holy Spirit to take what we have learned so far and solidify that in our hearts and to help us to KNOW intimately where our true JOY is really found!

Paul begins Chapter 3 with a call to all believers everywhere to make sure that no matter what we are dealing with or going through that we learn to REJOICE IN THE LORD. **Philippians 3 (NIV) 1 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!** Here Paul solidifies all that he has been saying in Chapters 1-2 and just in case there was any question he re-emphasizes it once more by making sure that we find joy, not in the events and circumstances of life, but we find JOY in the LORD. The point being that our JOY exists regardless of our circumstances because our JOY is related to the undeniable and unchanging relationship we have to the eternal and sovereign LORD. Therefore Paul calls us to REJOICE IN THE LORD! But what does that really look like? Well to help us understand what this looks like Paul is going to begin with what Rejoicing in the Lord is not!

“Rejoicing in the LORD” is not religious activity

1 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. It isn't a problem for him to repeat himself because what he is about to say to them as he moves toward the close of his letter is to protect

them from false teachers who want to lead them astray. **2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.** Here Paul is warning them about the Jewish religious leaders who are trying to do all they can to get the Philippian believers to think that their salvation is based on certain religious activity (such as circumcision). Circumcision goes all the way back to the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 17. Circumcision was a symbol that they belonged to God and agreed to the covenantal relationship with Him and so Abraham and all of his descendants were circumcised as part of their commitment. **Paul is pointing out here that religious activity does not save us and it cannot add to our joy either!** Only faith in Jesus and His work saves us and only in Jesus can we find true JOY! Paul's point is that circumcision without Christ was nothing more than physical mutilation of the body. Religious activity without Jesus is just an attempt to mutilate our flesh without the life transformation power of forgiveness and salvation that can only be experienced in relationship with Jesus. If we are not careful we will substitute religious activity for our relationship with Jesus. How many people have walked away from the faith because they thought if they could be just a little more religious they would find joy? If I would just go to church more I would have more joy. If I would just try baptism maybe I could find some joy. If I would just try being more religious by reading the Bible more, praying more, maybe volunteering more, etc. Only to press into these things and miss Jesus and then wonder why you don't have any joy in them? These things aren't bad but they are void of Joy if Jesus isn't at the center.

Paul continues. **3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—** Those who are truly the people of God are those who have allowed God to circumcise their hearts. In other words, they have allowed God to remove the fleshly desires that hinder us from living for God and allowing His Holy Spirit to live in and through our lives. These, according to Paul, are the true circumcision because their circumcision makes a real difference in the way that they love God and love others. Notice the emphasis is on what we accomplish THROUGH Jesus! It is by his Spirit we serve. It is in CHRIST we boast, not of ourselves. In fact, we have no confidence in what we can do at all!

Paul goes on to point out that if it was just about religious activity and rituals regarding salvation then there was no need for Jesus and he was the perfect religious example! **4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel,** A good Jewish boy was to be circumcised on the 8th day following birth according to the law of Moses. **of the tribe of Benjamin,** Paul was a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the second son of Rachel and one of the elite tribes of Israel that had stayed loyal to the Davidic dynasty and the southern kingdom following the time when Israel split into two kingdoms. If you remember the northern kingdom went rogue by worshiping the gods of their neighbors separating themselves and establishing another line of kings separate from the line of David. **a Hebrew of Hebrews;** Paul was born to two Hebrew parents making him 100% Jewish and his family even maintained the Hebrew language which was the language of Israel despite being born in a Roman province **in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.** Paul was the poster boy for what a legalistic and fundamental Jew who took the Law of God seriously looked like. He lived it out in

his daily life with great zeal. In the religious sense Paul was without fault based on the belief that religious activities and rituals could save you from your sin and make you right with God.

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What Jesus has done for us and based on what Jesus grants us through His forgiveness is so much better. Why would we want to cling to a religious system that depends on what we can accomplish and yet falls way short of what God requires when it comes to cleansing us of all of our sin and making us acceptable to God? The terms Paul uses here for GAIN and LOSS are the same kind of terms an accountant would use to describe the value of a business transaction. Paul is basically saying that those things he used to think ADDED to his stature with God and made him more valuable, he now counts them as a LOSS (he considers them to take away his value and making him unacceptable to God) because the only thing that truly matters to him and that can really help him is what JESUS has done on his behalf. You see, **Our JOY isn't found in RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY!!** So, where is it to be found?

Rejoicing in the LORD is in the PURSUIT of JESUS

8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, Not based on MY work or MY effort **but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.** The willingness to TRUST that it is Jesus and His effort that provides for my righteousness **10** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Notice the intimacy that Paul describes here in verses 8-11. He wants to KNOW Christ. This is a term that speaks of Intimate knowledge that transcends just an intellectual understanding but also includes an experiential component. Paul says I want to experience “**the power of resurrection**”. We cannot know the power of resurrection unless something dies first! He says I want to “**participate in His sufferings**”. Nothing draws us closer and makes us more dependent on God than suffering. In fact, the joy of victory is never more heightened than when it is realized out of the ashes of defeat. He says, “**I want to become like him in his death**” so he can experience the death of the old man with all of his fleshly desires in order that he may experience the resurrection of the new man “**attaining to the resurrection**”. He says that Jesus is MY LORD which emphasizes a deep personal connection to Him in relationship. This connection also leads to a oneness or sense of belonging to Christ because his ultimate desire is to be found IN HIM.

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. There is always room to grow. First, of all because He is inexhaustible! You will never get to the end of all that He is. Secondly, there are limitations of our flesh that we must continue to deal with and address that are hindering us but don't stop pursuing and don't stop growing in your intimacy with Jesus. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. There is some stuff in our lives we need

to label as garbage and then take it outside to the trash can and roll it out to the road. We need to forget what is behind us (the old life with all of its desires, pain, failures and missed opportunities because in the end these things just are not sustainable) and press on to the GOAL. **What is the GOAL? IT IS CHRISTLIKENESS!** It is to have the MIND OF CHRIST that we talked about last week in Chapter 2. To achieve it we have to KNOW JESUS! Spend time with Him. Experience His presence! Let His Spirit loose in our lives. We have to REJOICE in the LORD! Find our JOY in Him! In His salvation! In what He wants to do in and through us in the lives of others. Paul doesn't make it complicated; he simply calls the Philippians to follow his example. It is encouraging to know that God can take an imperfect person and still bring about Christlikeness. We need those examples and the Bible is filled with them. **Our JOY is found in the pursuit of CHRIST! And that is a joy worth pursuing!!**

In consideration of what IS and ISN'T JOY, Paul issues a challenge!

15 All of us, then, who are mature Here, Paul is referring to those who are spiritually mature or are maturing in their understanding of where true JOY is found **15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.** If you have matured in your understanding then let it shape your attitude and how you live your life **15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.** Even if you think differently on a few points or don't fully understand difficulties and challenges and how God wants to use them in your life, if you are honestly pursuing Jesus God will eventually make things clear and transform your thinking **16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.** The idea being that no matter where you are in your thinking, stay the course and keep pursuing spiritual growth and the same principles that have brought you this far will bring you the rest of the way. **17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.** There are times where we may question the process and may even question what we are going through. We may even want to give up or quit. That's when we need to look to those who have gone before us and follow their example because if it worked for them it will work for us also. We may just need a little encouragement to keep striving onward. Just continue to do what they did. After all, there are only two ways to live! Which will you choose?

We can live as an enemy of the CROSS

18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. These are people who live in opposition to how Jesus lived. They trust in human wisdom. They follow their fleshly appetites. They boast in their self-effort and in their accomplishments to their own shame. Their mind is on earthly matters.

Or **We can live as a citizen of HEAVEN**

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will

transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Heaven is our real home. We are simply visiting earth temporarily. (Like when you go on vacation or go somewhere to visit. You don't put a lot of time and investment into an Airbnb) We are to be preparing ourselves for the King's return and eagerly awaiting His return with JOY. We should be investing in our eternal home.

Invitation:

What are you grounded in? (Ship analogy: Being on a cruise ship sitting at a table. When the seas are rough the plates and everything not anchored down would move and be tossed about. But not that which was bolted to the ship. Are you anchored in Christ and the joy of a relationship with Him?)

Are you living as an enemy of the cross or as a citizen of Heaven?

Philippians 3:10-11 (NIV) I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

What do you need to press into regarding your relationship with Jesus? What next step is He asking you to do in order to walk closer with HIM?

- **Salvation/Baptism**
- **God's word/Prayer**
- **Covenant Partnership**
- **Serving**

Not doing these things just as religious activity but in response to the pursuit of a closer walk with Jesus and as a way to REJOICE IN THE LORD!