

## The Benefits of JOY

Today we conclude our **4 Part Series** through the Book of **Philippians** with the main theme of this series being **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 highlighted the 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. In **Week 2** we talked about the importance of having the MIND of CHRIST if we want JOYOUS living to take root in our lives. And then **last week**, we addressed what it really looks like to REJOICE IN THE LORD by pointing out that REJOICING IN THE LORD is really about the pursuit of Christ.

And that brings us to today and **Chapter 4** where we are going to conclude our study by looking at **FIVE benefits of REJOICING IN THE LORD**. Let's PRAY as we prepare our heart to receive what God has for us today.

**Philippians 4:1 (NIV)** Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! Notice once again that Paul's joy is not about him. His joy is in what God has done in the lives of the believers in Philippi. We mentioned this when we were looking at Chapter 2. Paul's joy is not about him and what he receives or doesn't receive! His joy is found in what they experience and receive. As Paul brings his letter to a close he is urging them to stand firm in the teachings of the first 3 Chapters (Be thankful, remember that no matter what we win, adopt the mind of Christ, pursue Christ above all else) All of these teachings are absolutely key to us having JOY no matter what life brings our way. And here's why we should stand firm in these teachings. Because they make a difference and they truly pay huge dividends when we live them out!! From here Paul is going to list the benefits of REJOICING IN THE LORD.

The first benefit of Rejoicing in the Lord is **it helps RESOLVE CONFLICT**

**Philippians 4:2-3 (NIV)** **2** I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. It is believed that the Philippian church had become divided and the two opposing factions were each being led by Euodia and Syntyche. These were two women who were at one time instrumental in helping Paul establish the church there in Philippi but somewhere along the way they had a falling out and were now divided by conflict. Paul is pleading with the church and these two women to get back to pursuing the Mind of Christ and abiding in His JOY because that is the only thing that can resolve this issue of division. Selfishness and having our own way only heightens conflicts. But the Mind of Christ is a complete remedy! We all have our opinions and ideas about how things should work but it is

only the Mind of Christ that can help us take our mind off of ourselves and refocus our heart on the mission of loving others. It is only when our JOY is found in what God is doing in our lives that we can take our focus off of ourselves and lay down our concerns about what we are or are not getting. Paul is basically encouraging them all to stand firm in the teachings that lead to JOY and let God resolve this conflict. **Rejoicing in the Lord helps RESOLVE CONFLICT**

The second benefit of Rejoicing in the Lord is **it leads to PEACE unlike any other**

**Philippians 4:4-9 (NIV)** **4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Paul isn't commanding us to feel feelings here. He is commanding us to celebrate in the Lord. To rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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.

**8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Last week we talked about “Rejoicing in the Lord” being about pursuing Christ! One of the incredible and glorious benefits of pursuing Jesus is the PEACE and SECURITY of a close and personal relationship to Him. Look at the description Paul gives us in verses 4 through 9. He first starts by saying, THE LORD IS NEAR. The Lord first draws near to us. He initiates the process by making it known that He desires to be near to us. He has removed the sin barrier. He has done all that is necessary to make a way for us. We now need to take advantage of the opportunity and draw near to Him.

Therefore, when we feel life pressing in and the storm clouds beginning to overwhelm us it is time for us to press into Him by taking the energy we would expend in worry and anxiety and utilize it in the pursuit of Christ. What does that pursuit look like?

It looks like PRAYER filled with PETITION (requests regarding our concern) and THANKSGIVING (praise and thanksgiving regarding the fact that we can come to Him with our concern and that He will work it for His glory and our good). In exchange for our offering of prayer and desire to seek His face He will give us a peace unlike anything else and that peace will be associated with His presence and His promises. His presence and promises will stand guard protecting our heart from further anxiety and fear. But we don't stop there!!

We must THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS (The “things” being HIS WORD! All of the things listed in verse 8 describe God's WORD, His promises, His very character) In other words, meditate on God's word. We can't have the mind of Christ without it. These are the teachings Paul has taught. Therefore he says, PUT IT INTO PRACTICE. The promise being that God's peace will always be with you. **Rejoicing in the Lord leads to PEACE unlike any other**

The third benefit of Rejoicing in the Lord is **it leads to a SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH**

**Philippians 4:10-13 (NIV)** **10** I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. **12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Verse 13 is a verse that is most often taken out of context. It becomes a warm fuzzy feeling when NOT used in the right context. It's not saying you are superman or that Jesus is your magic wish giver. The point Paul is making here given the context is that when we put our confidence and trust in Jesus He will give us the strength necessary to overcome whatever situation we find ourselves in.

The Lord can only be your strength if you are pursuing Him and learning how to be fully reliant on Him. Because God is faithful He will always give you what you need no matter what your situation. Paul found that his contentment with the circumstances of life was always proportional to his reliance on God. Conversely, our discontent with life is usually associated with our reliance on ourselves or other people. When we rely on Jesus we have access to strength and His strength is second to none. **Rejoicing in the Lord leads to a SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH**

The fourth benefit of Rejoicing in the Lord is **it frees us up to find JOY in others and their blessings**

**Philippians 4:14-17 (NIV)** **14** Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. **15** Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; **16** for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. **17** Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

What a perspective Paul had! Again he is less focused on himself and more focused on them. His JOY was not in what they gave him and on what he benefited from. His JOY was in how their generosity was gaining eternal interest for them in heaven. When our JOY is supplied by Christ we don't have to worry about what we are getting or not getting. We can be free to watch fruit grow on other people's trees. We can rejoice for the good things they receive without being jealous. We can genuinely find blessing when others are blessed. Can you celebrate when others receive what you are praying for? Notice what Paul says!

**Philippians 4:18-20 (NIV)** **18** I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. **19** And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

**20** To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. **Rejoicing in the Lord frees us up to find JOY in others and their blessings**

But there is a fifth and final benefit of Rejoicing in the Lord that we need to take note of, and it is found in verse 22.

**Philippians 4:21-23 (NIV) 21** Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. **22** All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

**23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Do you see it? Rejoicing in the Lord **leads people to salvation in Christ!!** How did people in Caesar's household (the very household that was having PAUL imprisoned) come to faith in Christ? We don't know for sure but I am willing to bet you it had something to do with a guy, who no matter what the situation he was in, was always rejoicing in the Lord! This was not the first time Paul was imprisoned. In fact, the Book Acts tells us of a time when he was placed in a Philippian jail of all places. While preaching in the city of Philippi during one of his visits to the city Paul had cast out a demon from a woman who was a fortune teller and when her master found out he could no longer make money from her for fortune telling he took Paul and Silas before the authorities and accused them of teaching strange customs and causing chaos in the city. As a result of this accusation both Paul and Silas were arrested and placed in a Philippian jail.

**Acts 16:25-30 (NIV) 25** About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Notice what they are doing in the midst of their difficulty? They were rejoicing in the Lord! **26** Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. **27** The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. **28** But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" **29** The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. **30** He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their rejoicing coupled with their circumstances gave them the opportunity to declare Jesus and bring a taste of heaven close to those who were unbelievers. If this was true in the Philippian jail, what do you think God did while he was imprisoned in Rome? You know God used his Roman imprisonment to do the same thing. Maybe God is allowing the difficulties and inconveniences you are going through in order to reach more people for Jesus and to bring Him glory? Or maybe to grow you in Christ? AFTER ALL, Pressure creates diamonds.

We know that while Paul was in Rome he had the opportunity to preach even though he was under house arrest during his first imprisonment. He continued to rejoice in the Lord no matter what he was facing. He is doing that in this letter to the Philippians. It is very reasonable to believe that his testimony had a huge impact upon all of those who heard him or saw him face trying times yet maintaining the ability to REJOICE IN THE LORD. I don't think it is by accident that Paul mentions especially those who belong to Caesar's household. This is a reminder that when you and I REJOICE IN THE LORD it shakes the foundations of hell and it creates opportunities for people to encounter the presence of God and receive His salvation.

Have you learned to REJOICE IN THE LORD no matter what? There are some incredible benefits to be had if we will!

**Invitation:**

**Are you trying to do things in Christ or out of Christ?**

**Are you exhausting yourself trying to meet needs that only God can provide**

**Our CONTENTMENT is proportional to our RELIANCE on God!**