

## REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 1

### Two reasons to rejoice

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Philippians 1:1-11
Subject:	Why Paul is filled with joy and thanksgiving as he writes to the Philippian believers
Complement:	because he is confident that God will finish the good work that He has started in their lives. we should wait with joyful expectation
Exegetical idea:	Paul is filled with joy and thanksgiving as he writes to the Philippian believers because he is confident that God will finish the good work that He has started in their lives.
Homiletical idea:	<b>God who started the good work in your life will bring it to completion!</b>
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers with the wonderful assurance that God will finish the good work which He has started in their lives.

#### Introduction

(Enter from the back of the church, singing). “I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” Grace and peace to you, my brother. Grace and peace to you, my sister. Grace and peace to all of you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I did not expect to meet you on the Via Appia. I am Epaphroditus, from Macedonia. I make my home in the city of Philippi. In fact, I am on my journey home right now!

You may wonder why I’m dressed like a Roman if I come from Macedonia. Well, I’ve been in Rome for some time, visiting our spiritual father, the apostle Paul. The Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi sent me here to Rome when they heard that the apostle Paul had been put under house arrest. They knew that he would need provisions and someone to care for him. That’s one reason why I’m dressed like a Roman.

But I am also dressed like a Roman because I’m a citizen of Rome. You see, Philippi is a

Roman colony. Let me tell you a little about my city. Philippi is strategically positioned on the great East-West trade route across Macedonia. The city was founded almost 700 years ago. It was originally called “Small Fountains” because of the springs of water that flow out of the base of the hill on which the city was built. Philippi was fortified by King Philip of Macedonia almost 400 years ago. That’s where our city gets its new name: Philippi. Modest King Philip named the city after himself! For the past 200 years, Philippi has been a Roman colony. It’s more of a military outpost than a trading center. There are two parts to the city. The upper part, on the side of a hill, overlooking the fertile river valley of the Gangites river. On the upper part of the city is where the theater is located, and the Acropolis. In the lower part of the city, you’ll find the Forum and the market place. And right between the upper and lower city runs the Via Egnatia, the East-West trade route. Philippi is only about 2 hours walk from the coast. You just take the Via Egnatia east to Neapolis. Well, as you can see, I’m very proud of my city.

As you can tell from my name, Epaphroditus, I was not born into a family that worshiped the God of heaven, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some people have told me that my name Epaphroditus means lovely or handsome, but I’ve discovered that it’s actually in honor of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. Epi means on or before. So Epaphroditus means one who is before the goddess of love. Devoted to Aphrodite. I’ve often wished that I had been born into a family that worshiped the God of heaven and been given a name like Timotheos, honored by God, or Theophilus, loved by God. I even thought about giving myself a new name. But even if I don’t have a new name, I do have a new heart! I have become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. That’s what the apostle Paul said in his letter to the believers in Corinth! A new creation. And I am rejoicing in the Lord!

I first heard the good news about Jesus Christ when the apostle Paulos came to my city, Philippi. That was more than 10 years ago now. Perhaps twelve or thirteen years. Time passes so quickly! It was quite an eventful visit. A few days after Paul and his companion Silas arrived in Philippi, they went down to the River Gangites, just south of the city. There they met several women who were gathered for prayer, including a devout woman named Lydia. She is quite an influential person in Philippi. She is a trader in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira. Lydia and her family received the message about Jesus Christ with an open heart, and she and her family were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, right there in the river! She even invited Paul and Silas to stay at her home!

As they continued their ministry in Philippi, Paul and Silas met a slave girl. I don't remember her name. She was controlled by an evil spirit, but she made a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This slave girl kept following Paul and Silas wherever they went, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.." That sounded good at first. After all, it was true. But the slave girl just kept shouting over and over again. People couldn't hear what Paul was saying about Jesus. Finally, Paul got very upset. Not with the slave girl, you understand, but with the evil spirit. Paul rebuked the spirit that was controlling her and commanded it to leave in the name of Jesus Christ.

That's when the trouble started. The "owners" of the slave girl had been making a lot of money through her fortune-telling. And they were angry that their business had ended so abruptly. They didn't care about the slave girl. Just about themselves. So they stirred up the crowd and had Paulos and Silas arrested, publically beaten, and thrown in jail.

What happened next was truly amazing. Paul and Silas were thrown in the inner dungeon

and their feet were fastened in the stocks. It was dark. Damp. It smelled like a sewer! All around them were the sounds of cursing prisoners. But instead of complaining, Paul and Silas started singing. Because even though it was dark in the prison, the light of Jesus was in their hearts. Hallelujah! That's a Hebrew word, you know. I don't know much Hebrew, but I like that word! Hallelujah! It means "Praise the Lord!"

And that's exactly what Paul and Silas were doing. They were praising the Lord. And then at midnight, the God of heaven worked a mighty miracle. He shook the foundations of the prison with a great earthquake. But it was no ordinary earthquake. The prison didn't collapse and kill them all. No. This was a special kind of earthquake from the God of heaven. All of the doors of the prison popped open and all of the prisoners' chains fell off.

That earthquake not only shook up the prison. It shook up the jailer too. He was so distressed, he was about to fall on his sword. After all, if you lose a prison, you pay with your own life. So the jailer was about to fall on his sword when he heard a voice cry out in the darkness. "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!" Well, the jailer knew that something supernatural was going on. There were no lights. How could anyone see what he was about to do. The jailer called for a light, ran in to the inner dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And the apostle Paul told the jailer about Jesus Christ. He told the jailer that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He told the jailer that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. He told the jailer that, just as the prophet Isaiah had predicted, Jesus was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our transgressions. The punishment that brought

us peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.

Well, the jailer and his family received the good news about Jesus with gladness, and they also became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized that very night.

The apostle Paul came to visit us again several years later and encouraged us in the faith. We could tell that he loved us as his own children, and we loved him too. So when our church family in Philippi heard that Paul had been taken to Rome to stand trial, and that he was under house arrest, they decided to send me to Rome to bring provisions and offer support.

But instead of being a help, I became a problem. You see, I became very sick. I'm not as young as I used to be. And I think that the long journey was too much for me. I became very sick. In fact, I almost died. When my church family back in Philippi heard about my sickness, they were very concerned about me. This may sound strange to some people, especially unbelievers. But I actually feel closer to my church family than to my own family. My church family loves me and cares for me as my fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters!

And, as I said, they were very concerned about me. So Paul decided that I should return to my home city of Philippi. He wanted to send a letter to the church family, and he knew that they would be happy to see me and to know that I have recovered from my sickness. So he asked me to deliver his letter to them. And here it is. Now one very important rule that a courier must follow is this: you must never read the contents of the document that you are carrying. But the apostle Paul gave me permission to read this letter, because he said that it is also addressed to me! So I get to read it before everyone else!

The letter starts out like this. Why don't you follow along. I understand that someone

made a copy for you too. Here's what the letter says. "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi.... I had to smile when I read that! Because I'm one of those "saints." That's right. Me! Epaphroditos of Philippi. In Christ Jesus, I'm considered a saint, a holy one.

Those words remind me of the letter that the apostle Paul recently sent to the believers in Ephesus. In that letter, he wrote:

**"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ." Eph 1:3**

In that same letter to the believers in Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote these words: Eph 2:8-10. **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."**

Isn't that good news? Praise the name of the Lord! We are saved by God's grace. We are saints in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's read on. Phil 1:2-6. **"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.**

Isn't it wonderful that the apostle Paul includes us all? We are all saints in Christ Jesus, whether we're young or whether we're old. Whether we're rich or whether we're poor. Whether we're free or whether we're a slave. Whether we live in the upper part of town or whether we live in the lower part of town. We are all saints in Christ Jesus, and the apostle Paul gives thanks

to God for all of us! And that includes you too. Isn't that good news? God has saved us by His grace. He has done a good work in each of our lives. He has called us saints in Christ Jesus. Isn't that a reason to rejoice?

But if you are at all like me, you have times when you don't feel or act like a "saint." If you're like me, you have times when you fall flat on your face. Sometimes you might even feel like giving up, like it's no use trying. Well, there some good news for you in this letter from the apostle Paul. It's good news for me too. It's a second reason to rejoice. Let's read the words of the apostle Paul together. Let's start reading at the end of line two. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this.....here it is!.....that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Hallelujah! There's that Hebrew word again! Praise the Lord! There's a second reason to rejoice. Not only has God done a good work in our lives, saving us by His grace and calling us saints, holy ones, in Christ Jesus.....but He also will finish the good work which He has started, in your life and in my life! Isn't that good news? Isn't that something to rejoice about? God will finish the good work that He has started in your life. No wonder we can rejoice in the Lord always! That's good news. God saved us by His grace. He calls us to be saints by His grace. And God who started the good work in your life will bring it to completion.

Let's read on, because the apostle Paul tells us what will happen as God continues the good work which He has started.. Let's start reading at the end of line four. "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or

defending the confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God."

That's what God wants to do in each of our lives! He wants to finish the good work which He has started. Isn't that a reason to rejoice! Praise the name of the Lord! I think I'm going to change my name to Makarios, which means happy!

Well, I have to continue on my journey south on the Via Appia. I have a boat to board at the port of Puteoli. And from there to Neapolis, and on to Philippi. But I want to appeal to your hearts before I leave. The apostle Paul taught me, as one of the elders at Philippi, that I should never speak about the Lord Jesus Christ without inviting people to be saved by trusting Jesus as their Savior. So I want to appeal to you today. Is there anyone here today who wants to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord? Let me see your hand. Is there anyone who would like to be baptized in the name of Jesus? Let me see your hand. Is there anyone here who is happy that God will finish the good work that He has started in your life? Let me see your hands.

I'm convicted that the message of this letter will change the lives of the brothers and sisters back in Philippi. And I believe that God can use this message to change your life too. Will you make a promise today to read it? Read it carefully. Read it to your children. It only takes about the amount of time to walk from the city gate in Philippi to the banks of the river Gangites. If you make a commitment to read this letter prayerfully and carefully, I know that you will be blessed. And you will find many reasons to rejoice in the Lord.

We've discovered two reasons to rejoice this morning. God has done a good work in your life. And He will bring that work to completion. Praise His holy name.

We'll, I must be on my way. I'm making my way south on the Via Appia to the port of Puteoli. From there, I'll board a ship bound for Neapolis. And then to Philippi! Don't forget to read the letter. May the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

(Exit through the back door of the church, singing). "I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High!"

## REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 2

### Rejoicing in the midst of adversity

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Philippians 1:12-21
Subject:	Why Paul rejoices in the midst of his adversity
Complement:	because God is working good for the furtherance of the gospel in his own life and in the lives of others.
Exegetical idea:	Paul rejoices in the midst of adversity because God is working good for the furtherance of the gospel in his own life and in the lives of others.
Homiletical idea:	<b>Rejoice because God can work good even in the midst of a bad situation.</b>
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to rejoice because God can work good even in the midst of bad situations.

#### Introduction

It's easy to rejoice in the Lord when things are going well. Isn't it? I was rejoicing two Sabbaths ago when 400 people showed up for the agape communion! And what a sweet time of worship and fellowship we shared together. I'm still rejoicing in the Lord about that! I'm rejoicing in the Lord that more and more of you are coming to the various prayer services of the church, on Wednesday morning and Wednesday evening, and early Sabbath morning. I'm rejoicing in the Lord because a praying church is a church that is experiencing revival and renewal! And I believe that the winds of revival are already blowing! So I'm rejoicing in the Lord!

And it's easy to rejoice in the Lord when things are going well. You're enjoying good health. Your relationships with others are flourishing. You just won a competition or made an A on a test. You got a big promotion at work. When things are going well, it's easy to rejoice. But we're going to discover this morning as we continue our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, that we can rejoice even in the midst of adversity. We can rejoice even in hard times because we

know that God can work good in the midst of bad situations. Let me say that again. We will discover this morning that we can rejoice even in the midst of adversity because we know that God can work good in the midst of bad situations.

Paul's epistle to the Philippians was written around AD 62. And where was Paul when he wrote the letter? In Rome. And what was he doing in Rome? Was he on vacation? No. He was under house arrest. Dr. Luke records the story at the end of the book of Acts. Acts 28:16 "....." Actually, the Roman soldier, who was part of the Praetorian Guard, did more than just guard Paul. What does Dr. Luke tell us at the end of Acts 28:20? "I am bound with this chain." The Roman soldier and the apostle Paul were actually chained together. And how long did this house arrest last? Look at Acts 28:30-31 "....."

It is during this 2 years of house arrest in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier, that the apostle Paul wrote several letters under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, including the letter to the Philippians. And in this letter, Paul shares with the Philippian believers, and also with us, that he rejoices even in the midst of adversity because God is working good in the midst of a bad situation.

Paul begins, in Phil 1, beginning with verse 12, by sharing that God is working good in the lives of those around him, even in the midst of his adversity. Let's read the text together from our Philippian scrolls. (Line #9 in handout) "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." Is that good news? Amen! God is working good even in the midst of adversity. How is good coming out of this bad situation? Let's read on. (Line # 10) Phil 1:13 "As a result, it has become apparent through the whole palace guard, a better translation would be 'the whole Praetorian Guard,' and to everyone else

that I am in chains for Christ.” God is working good in the midst of a bad situation in the lives of those around Paul, including the whole Praetorian Guard.

The Praetorian guard was a regiment of 10,000 elite soldiers organized by Augustus Caesar. Is there any record that the apostle Paul ever spoke to the whole Praetorian Guard at one time? Did the captain call a meeting and give Paul the opportunity to preach to them? No. At least we have no record of such a meeting. How then did Paul speak to them about Christ? One soldier at a time. Remember, he was under house arrest for how long? Two years. And he was constantly chained to.....a Roman soldier. Talk about a captive audience. The Roman soldier thought that Paul was the captive, but God turned that upside down. Now the Roman soldier is the captive audience, and one at a time, those Roman soldiers heard the good news about Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord! Depending on the length of each soldier’s shift, the apostle Paul would have interacted with hundreds, maybe even thousands of soldiers from the Praetorian Guard, one soldier at a time! And if the Roman soldier began to doze off, all Paul had to do was yank on the chain and wake him up! And those Roman soldiers went back to share the good news with their fellow soldiers. Isn’t it amazing how God can work good in the midst of bad situations? No wonder Paul is rejoicing!

Not only did soldiers in the Praetorian Guard hear the good news about Jesus. But they also shared that good news with members of Caesar’s household. You see, this elite group of soldiers was also responsible for protecting the Caesar and his family. That good news about Jesus Christ made a difference in the lives of some of the members of Caesar’s own household. How do we know that? Look with me at Phil 4:22. “.....” Isn’t that a reason to rejoice?! God is working good even in the midst of a bad situation.

But the soldiers in the Praetorian Guard, and the members of Caesar's household are not the only individuals who are blessed as a result of the adversity that the apostle Paul is experiencing. Look with me at Phil 1:14. (End of line # 10) "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." Paul says, Because of my imprisonment, because of my adversity, or at least in the midst of it, other believers have found courage to be more bold in sharing the good news about Jesus.

Why do you think that other believers found the courage to testify with greater boldness? After all, look what had happened to the apostle Paul. He was under house arrest. He was chained day and night to a Roman soldier. Why was his imprisonment a motivation for other believers to testify with greater boldness about Jesus Christ? Any ideas?

Sometimes when God calls us to do a work for Him, it's easy to make excuses. A common excuse is this: "But Lord, there's someone else who can do that so much better than I can. Why, look at .....and you can add a name. She would do a much better job than I could ever do." Have you ever heard that excuse, or perhaps even used it? I'm sure that the apostle Paul heard that excuse all of the time. "Oh, just let the apostle Paul tell them. He could do a much better job than any of us." But now, the apostle Paul is in chains. He can witness to the soldiers, one at a time. He can receive occasional visitors. But he can't speak to large crowds. And there are some people that he will never reach. And God is able to work good for the furtherance of the gospel in the midst of this bad situation. God is able to bring conviction to those other believers who have been sitting in the shadows. And they stand up with a holy boldness and courage and begin to testify about Jesus Christ. Isn't that good news? And when

Paul hears that news, he rejoices. He rejoices in the midst of his adversity because God is working good even in this bad situation.

But God is not only working good in the midst of a bad situation for those individuals who surround Paul. God is also working good in the midst of a bad situation in Paul's own life. Paul has faced hardships before in his life. Some of you may remember his testimony, written 5 or 6 years earlier to the believers in Corinth. We can read his testimony in 2 Cor 11:24-27. "....." Yes, the apostle Paul understood what it meant to suffer. He had also suffered from a physical malady. And three times he had pled with the Lord that it might be removed, taken away. Notice his testimony, in 2 Cor 12:8-10. "....."

And the apostle Paul is learning this lesson again in the midst of his adversity in Rome. God is working good in the midst of a bad situation not only for those individuals around Paul, but also for Paul himself. Paul is learning to trust the Lord completely and absolutely.

That complete and absolute trust is manifested in several ways. Look with me again at Paul's letter to the Philippians, 1, beginning with verse 15. (End of line 11) "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains." And there would have probably been times in Paul's past when this situation would have made him upset, angry, defensive. But Paul is learning to trust completely and absolutely in the Lord. And so instead of getting upset, angry, defensive, because some are preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry, how does Paul respond? Phil 1:18. (line # 14) Paul says, "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.” That, my friends, is amazing! The apostle Paul is at peace, trusting completely and absolutely in the Lord. God is working good even in a bad situation for the apostle Paul himself.

And that complete and absolute trust in the Lord is manifested once again in Paul’s confession, found in Phil 1:19-21. Let’s read it together. (Line #15) “For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

That, my brothers and sisters, is complete and absolute trust in the Lord! Would you agree? Even though Paul doesn’t enjoy his house arrest, even though he doesn’t look forward to waking up every morning chained to a Roman soldier, Paul rejoices because God is working good in the midst of a bad situation. God is working good in the lives of those around him and God is working good in his own life.

That was a lesson that the apostle Paul learned while under house arrest in Rome. We can rejoice even in adversity because we know that God can work good even in the midst of bad situations. Perhaps Paul was reminded of a time almost 30 years earlier when he stood beside a pile of cloaks outside Jerusalem. A follower of Jesus Christ was being stoned to death. His name was .....? Stephen. And Paul, then called Saul of Tarsus, was consenting to his death. Saul was an enemy of Christians. He took delight in persecuting them. We can hear his own testimony in Acts 26:10-11. “.....” And yet in this bad situation, as Stephen was being stoned to death, God was able to work good, both for Stephen himself and also for those

who were witnessing his death. What good was God able to work for Stephen in the midst of this bad situation? Luke records in Acts 7:55-56. “.....” God was also able to fill Stephen’s heart with a spirit of forgiveness for his enemies. Listen to his words in Acts 7:60. “.....”

But God was not only able to work good in this bad situation for Stephen. God was also able to work good for at least one of those individuals who witnessed Stephen’s hardship. His name? Saul of Tarsus. Stephen’s conduct during this terrible ordeal, the radiance of his countenance, the peace in his soul, was a compelling witness to Saul of Tarsus. It was a living testimony that he could not forget. Some time later, when Saul was apprehended by the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, the Lord said to him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads, against the pricks.” Saul was under conviction. And one testimony that God was using to bring conviction to Saul of Tarsus was the testimony of Stephen the deacon. Saul’s conversion and his subsequent life of missionary service as the apostle Paul was another example of God working good out of a bad situation. On that great resurrection morning, don’t you think that Stephen the deacon will rejoice to learn that one of his persecutors was converted and became of powerful preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Yes, my friends, he will rejoice, along with the apostle Paul, and all of us, that God can work good out of bad situations!

And God can still do the same today. God can still work good in the midst of bad situations. Frank was just a teenager when he saw God work good in the midst of a bad situation. Frank was living in Hong Kong. The year was 1942. Just a few months earlier, in December of 1941, the Japanese had invaded Hong Kong. Times were hard. The Japanese

soldiers were taking Chinese children off the streets and transporting them to Lantau island to “donate” blood for the Japanese casualties in the South Pacific. I asked Frank how much blood the children were expected to “donate.” He told me that the children never came back. These were hard times for a Chinese teenager in Hong Kong.

After several months of living in constant danger, it was decided that Frank should be smuggled out by boat to free China. It was only an overnight trip, but it would be the most dangerous trip of his life. His family paid some Chinese pirates, who were planning to transport about 35-40 individuals in two of their junks. They left early one morning. The boats had to zigzag to catch the breeze, back and forth between the island and the mainland. At one point, they came close to a bay on the mainland, and they saw some other junks, with guns pointed toward them. They were forced to come to shore. When they landed on the beach, Frank and the other passengers were all locked in a small hut. Through the cracks in the walls, some of them could see these other pirates ransacking their luggage, taking all the valuables. About midnight, they heard gunfire outside of the hut. They were in the midst of a battle! Finally all was still, and they found the courage to go outside. Their “friendly pirates” had returned and chased the hostile pirates away! After such a terrifying experience, some of the refugees decided to return to Hong Kong, but Frank and many others decided to continue their flight into mainland China.

I should tell you that Frank had been born in Australia, and had a nominal Christian background. But he had never trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. On his flight into free China, he met a Seventh-day Adventist missionary named Elder Longway. Frank had heard of Seventh-day Adventists from his older sister who had become a Seventh-day Adventist

some years earlier in Australia.. Frank ended up at a Seventh-day Adventist mission school in Chung King. When he was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade he gave his heart to Jesus Christ and was baptized! After the war, he got on an American transport plane, ended up in San Francisco, with no idea where to go from there. He found his way to PUC, studied there for 2 years, completed his undergraduate studies at Walla Walla College, went to medical school at Loma Linda, did a residency in OB/GYN at Yale, and has served the Lord Jesus Christ his whole life as a Christian physician and lay leader in his church. Was God able to work good out of a bad situation for Frank? Absolutely. And I know that the story is true because Frank is my wife's uncle. He told me the story himself! And Frank is still rejoicing, because he too has learned that God can work even good in bad situations.

Some of you may be in the midst of a bad situation right now. I want to invite you to take hold of this promise this morning. The One who will be faithful to complete the good work that He has started in your life, that same God is able to work good even in the midst of bad situations. God will work good for you and good for those around you who witness the hardship that you are experiencing. Some of you may not feel hardship free right now. But your time of hardship will come. The Word of God tells us, "When you walk through the fire, I will be with you, " not IF you walk through the fire... Your time of hardship will surely come. And when it happens, remember what we've learned this morning from Paul's letter to the Philippians. You can rejoice, even in the time of hardship, because God can work good in the midst of bad situations. So rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, Rejoice!

I want to challenge you to apply the message of this sermon in a very practical way this morning. In the past year, we've faced some major challenges as a church family. There are also individuals who have gone through great hardships. I want to invite you to take one of the yellow cards from the pew rack and write a note to a fellow church member. Some of those

members may not be here this morning. Some may be sitting at the other end of your pew. Some may need a note of encouragement because they are still in the midst of a bad situation. Others may need a note of affirmation, telling them that you have seen God working good through them in the midst of a bad situation. And whether we are in the midst of the adversity, or we're past it, we can all rejoice knowing that God can work good even in the midst of bad situations.

## **REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 3**

### **Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory!**

**Dr. Derek Morris**

Preaching passage: Philippians 2:1-11  
Subject: How Christians should live  
Complement: like Jesus.  
Exegetical idea: Christians should live like Jesus  
Homiletical idea: **When you open your heart to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, you will love God with all your heart, love those around you more than life itself, and be will be filled with inexpressible and glorious joy!**

Purpose: To remind my hearers that when they allow God's love flow through them back to God and to those around them, they will experience inexpressible and glorious joy!

#### Introduction

One of the benefits of moving house is that you can get rid of things that you've been storing for years and years and years and don't need any more! You know the things I'm talking about...in your closets, under your bed, in your attic, in your garage, in the trunk of your car!

One of the benefits of moving is that you can get rid of some of those things that you don't need anymore. Another benefit of moving house is that you find family treasures that you haven't seen for years. I found some treasures this past week! These two precious boxes. They may not look that precious to you. But they are priceless to me and to my wife Bodil! Can anyone guess what these boxes contain? Piles of love letters. No! You can't read them! These are mine, and those are Bodil's!

Bodil and I first met when we were both students at Newbold College, in England. I had grown up in England and, at the time we met, I was a junior theology major at Newbold College, just west of London, England. Bodil was starting her first year of college and, as a bold and daring high school graduate, had decided to come to England from the United States. You're

probably expecting me to tell you that when I heard her melodious alto voice, saw her long flowing hair and looked into her sparkling eyes that I was instantly and hopelessly smitten. That may actually be true, but I'm not sure that I would ever admit that in public. What I am willing to admit is this: as days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, Bodil and I became best friends. We saved places for each other at Chapel and in the Dining Hall. We took walks together. And we began to write notes to each other. Lots of notes.

We spent some time reading some of those love notes this past week. Here's one that Bodil sent me on our first Valentine's day. "....." I'm happy to report that she has never stopped eating peanut butter! Here's another one that it wasn't easy for a rather reserved young lady to send to a rather loud and boisterous Englishman. "....." I found one of my love notes to her. It's a Ziggy card. (Read card)

As we read these love notes, our hearts were filled with the joy! We rejoiced as we remembered God's wonderful leading in our lives and we still rejoice in things God continues to do in our lives day by day. Our hearts are still overflowing with love. As you can imagine, these love notes are very precious to us because they reveal the essence of our thoughts and feelings towards each other.

God has also sent a Love Note to us. That love note also reveals the essence of His thoughts and feelings toward us. But unlike these love notes, (point to the boxes), God's love note to us was not written on a Hallmark card or on parchment with pen and ink, or even on stone with His own finger. God's love letter to us was sent in a Person. Who is God's love note to us? That's right! Jesus! The Bible tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus, the Son of God came to reveal the essence of the Father's thoughts and

feelings toward us. And the message was as simple as it is precious: **God loves you. God loves you. God loves you.**

We have come to the place in our study of the letter to the Philippians where the apostle Paul speaks of God's love so perfectly and absolutely revealed in His love letter to us, the Lord Jesus Christ. The portion of Philippians that we are going to study today is one of the most profound passages of Scripture in the entire Bible. Many scholars believe that it was actually an early Christian hymn because it is written in carefully chosen phrases which have a clear rhythm.

I'd like us to begin our study of the Philippian letter this morning by reading this early Christian hymn together. If you have your Philippians scroll, this early Christian hymn about God's love letter to us begins on the fifth line of the second paragraph. In our Bibles, it's found in Phil 2:6-11. Talking about Jesus, the apostle Paul has this to say.... Let's read together from our scroll.

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
but made Himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness,  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

What an amazing picture of the love of God in action! Tell me something. Why was Jesus willing to empty Himself, to make Himself nothing? Why was He willing to stoop so low

for wretched sinners like you and me? Can you answer that question for me? The answer is simple: Because He loves us. And He came to reveal the Father's love. The Father loves you! That is the message written to bold print in God's love letter to us. **God loves you! God loves you! God loves you!**

And the apostle Paul appeals to the Philippians believers and also to us to embrace that love and to allow that love to transform our lives. Notice his admonition to the Philippians at the beginning of the second paragraph of his letter. It begins with the words "if you have any encouragement..." Let's read this section of the letter together.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,  
if any comfort in **his** love, if any fellowship with the Spirit,  
if any tenderness and compassion,  
then make my joy complete by being like-minded,  
**having the same love,**  
being one in spirit and purpose.  
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit  
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.  
Each of you should look not only to your own interests,  
but also to the interests of others.  
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

And what was the attitude of Christ Jesus? Very simply this: His life was so filled with the love of God that He loved the Father with all of His heart and He loved God's children more than life itself. Let me say that again. Jesus was so filled with the love of God that He loved the Father with all of His heart and He loved God's children more than life itself.

And the apostle Paul's admonition is clear. Let your attitude, let your approach to life, be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Let the love of God so fill your heart that you will love Him with all your heart and love those around you more than life itself. And that's a miracle of God's grace. You can't work up that kind of love. You can only open your heart to receive it as a gift

from God. Paul told the believers in Rome that God's love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to us. And when your life is filled with the love of God, you will have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus. **When your heart is filled with the love of God, you will love God with all of your heart and you will love those around you more than life itself.**

And when you receive God's amazing love note through Jesus Christ, you will not only love God with all of your heart, which is the first great commandment, you will not only love those around you more than life itself, which is the second great commandment, but you will be filled with glorious and inexpressible joy!

The apostle Peter speaks of this joy in his first epistle. He writes: "Though you have not seen him, (speaking of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God's love letter to us), though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Pet 1:8-9 The KJV describes this joy as "joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

Jesus experienced that glorious and inexpressible joy as He loved God with all of His heart and loved us more than life itself. We read in Hebrews 12:1-2, "....." And that joy was not just a future joy. It was a present joy. Luke records in Luke 10:21 that Jesus was full of joy by the Holy Spirit!

And you can know that joy today. That glorious and inexpressible joy when you receive God's amazing love note to us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When you receive Him, you will not only respond by loving God with all of your heart, and loving those around you more than life itself, you will be filled with a glorious and inexpressible joy! The old gospel song is

true. I'm not sure than I can remember all of the words. But it goes something like this:

If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy  
let Jesus come into your heart.  
If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy,  
let Jesus come into your heart.  
Your sins He'll wash away  
Your night He'll turn today  
Your life He'll make it over anew  
If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy,  
let Jesus come into your heart.

And Paul says, when that is your experience, when you receive the love of God poured out through Jesus Christ, when you love God with all of your heart and love one another more than life itself, "you will make my joy complete." Literally, you will fill up my joy.

As your new senior pastor here at Forest Lake Church, I've seen a lot of love revealed in the past few weeks. And much of that love has been directed towards me and my family. Six weeks ago, we moved here to Florida from southern California. Since we've arrived, we've been invited to Sabbath lunch each week by various church elders. That ends this Sabbath, by the way, so we are open to lunch invitations from mid-November until Jesus comes! We've had the CCC, the Charitable Chainsaw Crew, come over and help clean up our yard after Charlie and Frances visited our neighborhood. We have received notes and cards of encouragement and support. And we have also witnessed many other acts of love and kindness in the congregation. For example, Pastor Don came to staff meeting on Tuesday in dirty work clothes. He had just come off someone's roof, helping to make some needed repairs. He doesn't have to do that. But that's what happens when your heart is filled with the love of God. You love God with all of your heart and you love those around you more than your own life. And when I see the love of God manifested in you, it brings joy to my heart as your pastor, just like the Philippian believers

brought joy to Paul's heart. And I know that you will also experience joy. Real joy. Wonderful joy. Glorious inexpressible joy as you allow God to fill you with His amazing love.

I want to give you something this morning to remind you how much God loves you. It's a simple card that you can put in your wallet, put in your purse, in your Bible, put on your bulletin board. It says, Dear.....(and you can write your name), I love you. God." God loves you no matter what you've done or where you've been. God loves you no matter where you came from. God loves you whether your rich or poor. God loves you whether you're pretty or ugly! God loves you and He has sent you a love letter in the person of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Won't you open your heart to His love to perfectly and completely revealed in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord? When you do, His love will so fill your heart that you will love Him with all of your heart, you will love those around you more than life itself, and you will experience a glorious and inexpressible joy!

You will still face challenges in life. You will still face difficulties. But like it says in the song that our children sing, "This joy that I have the world didn't give it to me. This joy that I have the world didn't give it to me. The world didn't give it and the world can't take it away. Am I speaking the truth this morning?

Is there anyone who needs to experience that glorious and inexpressible joy? It won't come with more money or more friends or more stuff. That glorious and inexpressible joy comes when we receive God's love note to us, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Is there anyone here today who needs to trust Jesus completely as Savior and Lord and be filled with glorious and inexpressible joy? I want to invite to raise your hand right where you are. Praise God. God sees your hand brother. God sees your hand sister.

We're going to close our service this morning by singing an old gospel song based on 1 Peter 1:8-9. As we sing this song, if you raised your hand to trust Jesus completely as your Savior and Lord and be filled with inexpressible and glorious joy, or even if you didn't raise your hand, but that's your heart desire right now, I want to invite you to come forward as we sing this song so that we can pray with you and rejoice together!

Evan, lead us as we sing. And as we sing, if you've made an important decision to trust Jesus completely today as your Savior and Lord and given Him permission to fill you with inexpressible and glorious joy, I invite you to join me here at the front of the church.

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory, full of glory, full of glory.**

**It is joy unspeakable and full of glory and the half has never yet been told!**

## REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 4

### Rejoicing Together

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Philippians 2:12-18
Subject:	Why we should rejoice together
Complement:	because God is at work in our midst as we cooperate with Him
Exegetical idea:	We should rejoice together because God is at work in our midst as we cooperate with Him
Homiletical idea:	<b>We can rejoice together because God is at work in our midst!</b>
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to rejoice together because God is at work in our midst and to invite them to affirm those in whom they see God at work.

#### Introduction

The passage of Scripture that we are going to study this morning has been misused and abused. Zealous individuals have used this text as a club to beat people over the head. It has been used like a robber to steal the joy and peace of many a sincere follower of Jesus. It may well be one of those passages of Scripture that the apostle Peter refers to when he says, in reference to Paul's writings, "His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." 1 Pet 3:16

Some would rather ignore this text completely. And that's such a tragedy. Because the passage of Scripture that we are going to study this morning is actually a reason for joy. Properly understood, this passage of Scripture will encourage us to rejoice together. I'm referring to a portion of the Philippian scroll—Philippians 2, beginning with verse 12. If you have your scroll, it's found at the bottom of the page. Let's begin reading with the words, "Therefore, my dear friends....."

Some people have suggested that salvation is not by grace alone, through Christ alone,

received by faith alone. They take these words of Paul that we have just read to argue another position. Even though Paul, explicitly states in his letter to the believers in Ephesus, (2:8-9) “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast,” some take these words of Paul in Phil 2:12 and argue that *we* must work out our *own* salvation...and not only work out our own salvation, but do so with fear and trembling.

What is Paul saying here? And how is it, that rightly understood, this portion of Scripture is actually a reason for joy? Well, notice the first word in the sentence. Philippians 2:12. What is it? What is the first word in the sentence? “Therefore.” Whenever you see the word “therefore” you must always consider what it is there for! Paul is connecting what he is about to say with what he has just said. And what has Paul just been speaking about? He began by telling us that God, who started a good work in us, will be faithful to complete it! And that’s a reason to rejoice, isn’t it? Then Paul told us that God can work good even in the midst of what kind of situations? Bad situations. Soldiers chained to Paul were converted! Members of Caesar’s household were converted. Fellow Christians became bold in the speaking about Jesus! Paul even noticed that God was working good in his own life, even in the midst of a bad situation! I’m so thankful today that we serve a God who can work good even in the midst of bad situations! Aren’t you?

And then Paul speaks so eloquently about God’s love letter to us. We studied that first part of Philippians chapter 2 last week. Paul reminded us about the majesty of Jesus Christ who humbled Himself even to death for our salvation. And we learned that when we allow God’s amazing love to fill our hearts, we will not only love Him with all of our hearts, and love those

around us like Jesus did, but we will be filled with a glorious and inexpressible joy!

And then Paul says, THEREFORE, In the light of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for you, something ought to happen in your life. Work out your salvation. Oh! There's that text again. That club that some have used to beat people over the head! But listen carefully. Because rightly understood, this text is actually a reason to rejoice! The common verb in Greek for work is  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\omega$ . The noun is  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\sigma\iota\alpha$ , work, from which get the English word ergonomics. But the verb used in this text has the prefix  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ . Not just  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\omega$  but  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\omega$ . The prefix  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  means "down." Are you listening carefully? What does the prefix  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  mean? Down. So, for example, the verb  $\beta\alpha\lambda\omega$  means to throw. So  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\alpha\lambda\omega$  would mean?.....to throw down. That's right! The verb  $\pi\epsilon\sigma\chi\omega$  means to fall. So  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\sigma\chi\omega$  would mean?....to fall down. That's right! Now  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\omega$  means to work. So the verb used in the text,  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\omega$ , would literally mean?....to work down.

Now, I want you to notice that Paul doesn't say "work for." Salvation isn't something you could ever earn, no matter how much you do. Salvation is a gift based on what Jesus Christ has already done. Amen? Neither does Paul say "work up your salvation." Salvation isn't something that you can work up, by being just a little more enthusiastic, just a little more zealous. No! Salvation comes from above. Salvation needs to be worked down. It is by God's grace that you have been saved. And the next verse on our scroll makes that very clear. Notice what it says. Let's read the passage again, and continue reading to the end of the sentence. Beginning with the word "Therefore." "....."

Who is it that works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose? God. It is God who is doing the work, not you. Isn't that a reason to rejoice? But don't miss Paul's point.

The apostle is saying you need to cooperate with God. You need to join God in what He's doing. Don't get in God's way as He works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Paul uses a strong verb for God working in you. It's also related to the Greek noun for work,  $\kappa\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . The verb that is used by Paul for God working in you is  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omega$ , from which get the English word ENERGY.

God wants to work in you! It's His  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omega$ , His energy, not yours. God wants to work in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. But we need to be willing to cooperate with God. We need to be willing to join God in what He's doing in our lives. And notice what will happen when we cooperate with God in His work in our lives. Let's read on, beginning with the words "Do everything without complaining...." Phil 2:14 "....."

When God's energy is at work in you, when you allow God to work in you according to His good pleasure, you will shine like stars in the universe. What an amazing picture! What a reason to rejoice! You will shine like stars. I got excited as I studied this portion of our Scripture passage. I wondered, What does Paul mean here to shine like stars? So I looked at the Greek text. The common word for star,  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\eta$ , isn't used here. Rather, Paul uses a rare word, found only twice in the NT:  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$ . The word  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$  means light. So  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$  is a luminous star. As soon as I read this word, I got excited. Because Jesus said, "I am the  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$  of the world, I am the ...? Light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$  of life, the light of life." Jn 8:12. And the apostle Peter calls Jesus "daystar" in 2 Pet 1:19. Literally, the Light Bearer, the  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$ . If you've ever seen phosphorus burning, you know that it's bright! When you are connected with Jesus, the  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$ , the bright and morning star, when God is working in you to will and to act according to His good purpose, you will

shine like a luminous star. But it's not your light, is it? No. It's the light of the daystar, the Light Bearer, Jesus Christ, shining through you.

And that's a cause for rejoicing. The apostle Paul says, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. Yes, we can rejoice together because God is at work in our midst. We can rejoice together because we see our brothers and sisters in Christ shining like the stars. We can rejoice together because we see the light of Jesus bursting forth through the lives of those around us. We can rejoice together.

And Paul thinks of two individuals who shine like stars, two individuals who are cooperating with God as He works in them to will and to act according to His good purpose. The first individual is Timothy. Notice what Paul says about this young preacher. Phil 2:19ff. "I hope in the Lord Jesus....."

A second individual that Paul thinks of who shines like a star is Epaphroditus. Do you remember Epaphroditus from the first sermon in this series on Philippians? Epaphroditus was an elder of the church family in Philippi, and he was sent to care for Paul in his time of need. Notice Paul's affirming words about this brother in Christ. Phil 2:25 ff "But I think...."

As Paul thinks about individuals like Timothy and Epaphroditus who are shining like stars, he rejoices. He rejoices that they are cooperating with God as He works in them to will and to act according to His good purpose. And Paul says, "Let's rejoice together. Rejoice with me." We can rejoice together because we see God at work in our midst. We can rejoice together because we see brothers and sisters in Christ shining like stars!

We have all met Christians who shine like stars, haven't we? One great man of God who shined like a star, reflecting the glorious light of Jesus, was H.M.S. Richards. Did anyone here

ever meet H.M.S. Richards? He started the Voice of Prophecy Radio Program. Did you know that he read through the Bible over 160 times, filling his life with the Word of God? He didn't do that to try to work FOR his salvation, did he? He didn't read the Bible to try to work UP his salvation. H.M.S. Richards filled his life with the word of God because God was working IN him, to will and to do according to His good pleasure. One time, Richards said, "The problem with our ministers is that we don't even spend four hours a day in prayer!" He was quoting John Wesley. But was he saying, "Pray more, so you can work FOR your salvation?" No! Was he saying, "Pray more, so you can work UP your salvation?" No. H.M.S. Richards was saying, "When you give God permission to work IN you, you'll be a woman of prayer, a man of prayer. No wonder that man of God shined like a star, reflecting the radiance of Jesus Christ, who is the NTHN  $\bar{\Delta}\cong H$ , the bright and morning star.

When I was a little boy, I met a young school teacher, Christine Emerson, who shined like a star. She was my second form teacher at Newbold primary school. I didn't know anything about Ms. Emerson's time alone with Jesus. But I knew that she knew Jesus. I knew, even as a little 7 year old, that she was letting God work IN her. And she was shining like a star. Ms Emerson, now Christine Emerson Wood, I hope you're listening to this sermon! I want to thank you for letting God use you to bless my life! You are a shining star for Jesus!

There are many in *this* church family that I see shining like stars. I've only been here for a few weeks, but I can already see the light of the bright and morning star shining through you. And as I see you cooperating with God as He works in you, I rejoice! (Give examples, of people sitting in the congregation, and then give people an opportunity to share the names of members who they see shining like stars.)

When we see God at work in our midst, I believe that it is appropriate that we should rejoice together Don't you? We should rejoice together. I want to invite you to take a moment to think of someone else in this church family that you have observed shining like a star, radiating the light of Jesus Christ, cooperating with God as He works His good purpose. I want to give you an opportunity to write a note of affirmation to that person. It may be your spouse, your best friend, your Sabbath school teacher, one of the pastoral staff, the person who sits next to you in church. It may be someone who isn't here today. Write that person a note just now. We have prepared yellow postcards to pass from the center aisle. But I want us to write hundreds of yellow cards today! Not hundreds each! But if you write one card, and the person next to you writes one, there will be hundreds of affirmation cards written today!

You can either give that yellow card to the person right after church or you can write their name on the reverse side of the card, drop it in the basket in the lobby, and we will mail it to them this week. Let them know that you rejoice to see them shining for Jesus, shining like stars as they cooperate with God as He works in their lives. Would you take a moment now to write that note of affirmation?

I'm so thankful this morning that we have discovered the truth of this passage. Paul is not calling us to try to earn our salvation, to work FOR our salvation. Paul is not calling us to work UP our salvation, by being a little more zealous, a little more perfect. Paul is calling us to cooperate with God as He works IN us to will and to do according to His good purpose. And when that happens, we will shine like stars. We will see brothers and sisters in Christ shining around, reflecting the radiance of Jesus. And when we see that. we can rejoice together because God is at work in our midst!

## REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 5

### Rejoicing in Jesus alone

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Philippians 3:1-4:1
Subject:	Where is our confidence for our salvation
Complement:	not in ourselves or our works but in Christ Jesus alone.
Exegetical idea:	Our confidence for our salvation is not in ourselves or our works but in Christ Jesus alone.
Homiletical idea:	<b>Your confidence for salvation is in Jesus alone.</b>
Purpose:	To remind my hearers that we can have no confidence for salvation in ourselves or in our own works but only in Christ Jesus and to encourage my hearers to trust wholly in Jesus and rejoice in Him.

#### Introduction

Do you ever read the signs that people put in their yards? Some of them are quite humorous. I saw one near Damascus, Maryland. It was right alongside a mailbox that had been attached to a telephone pole, about 20 feet above the ground. And the sign read, "Air Mail!" Then there was a sign that was reportedly placed in the front yard of a funeral home: "Drive Safely..We'll Wait."

Some signs are intended as a witness. There was a sign in someone's front yard not too far from my home in California which read, "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth." Unfortunately, the language seems rather archaic to connect with young people. What thinkest thou? But maybe someone will read it and understand that it's good for people to get to know God while they're young.

Then there are the intimidating signs, like one that I saw near Pastor Mark's in-laws home in Collegedale, Tennessee. It is attached to a chain link fence in someone's front yard and it reads, "Trespassers will be shot! No questions asked. No warning given." Needless to say, I never visited the folks in that house!

Perhaps the most common sign that you see in peoples' front yards is this one: BEWARE OF THE DOG. Sometimes they will add an "S" just to really scare you: BEWARE OF THE DOGS!" Or they will add the picture of a snarling canine, just in case you can't read!

I'm not that surprised when I see this sign in someone's front yard, but I was really shocked to find this sign in the middle of the Philippian scroll that we've been studying.

If you've been with us for the past few weeks, you will remember that we've been studying Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi. We began with the testimony of Epaphroditus, and discovered two reasons to rejoice: First we can rejoice because God has started a good work in our lives. That's a reason to rejoice, wouldn't you agree?! God has started a good work in our lives. Praise His holy name. And a second reason to rejoice is this: God, who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it! Hallelujah! Those are two reasons to rejoice.

In the second sermon from this series we discovered that God can work good even in the midst of bad situations. He can work good for those around us, like the members of the Praetorian guard who heard Paul's testimony during his house arrest, and for the members of Caesar's household. God can also work good even in the midst of bad situations for us personally. Paul learned in the midst of his trial to trust wholly in Jesus Christ, and we can learn that lesson too, by God's grace. Yes, God can work good even in the midst of bad situations.

In the third sermon in this series from Philippians we discovered that when you realize how much the Father loves you, when you accept His love so perfectly and completely revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord, you will not only love Him with all your heart and love others more than life itself, but you will be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy! And that's

good news, what do you say? I'm still singing that old gospel song: "If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart!"

And then in the most recent sermon in this series on "Rejoicing in the Lord" we discovered that we can rejoice together. When we see brothers and sisters in Christ shining like the stars, reflecting the radiance of Jesus Christ, allowing God to work in them according to His good pleasure, we can rejoice together because God is at work in our midst. And we need to take more time to rejoice together, because God *is* at work in our midst. What do you say? We mailed out over 100 of these yellow cards this past week, plus many more that were hand delivered. Those yellow cards of encouragement and affirmation give us an opportunity to rejoice together when we see God at work in our midst. You'll find some in the pew rack in front of you, and I encourage you to write a yellow card to someone today. Let people know that you see them shining like a star for Jesus, and rejoice together.

And now we come to the place in the Philippian letter where Paul almost seems to be drawing to a close. He begins paragraph #3, what we call Ch 3:1, with what sounds like a conclusion. Let's read it together. The first part of paragraph 3. "Finally, my brother, rejoice in the Lord." And it almost sounds like he's finished. Doesn't it?

Then all of a sudden, without any warning, Paul holds up this sign: BEWARE OF THE DOG. The change is so abrupt that some have suggested that most of chapter 3 and the first part of Ch 4 was added later. One commentator suggests that Ch 3:1 and Ch 4:4 "fit together so exactly that upon sober reflection one must come to the conclusion that a later hand has pulled the two verses apart." [Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 72]

So, did an over zealous copyist add the section we're going to study this morning? I don't believe so. First, there is absolutely no manuscript evidence to suggest that this portion of the letter was added later. The third paragraph of this letter is found in all of the manuscripts of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Secondly, if an over-zealous editor was desiring to add a personal interpolation, why would he or she make the transition so abrupt? If anything, there would be an attempt to make the transition smooth. Wouldn't you agree. So I don't think this section is added by someone else. There is every reason to believe that this is Paul's work, given to us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So, why does Paul make such an abrupt shift? And what is Paul talking about here? Apparently it's very important, because he just has to address this issue before closing his letter. It's almost as if he paused for a moment after writing the first sentence of the third paragraph, thought carefully and prayerfully for some time, and then decided that this portion of the letter had to be included.

Let's read Paul's words together, at the beginning of the third paragraph of his letter to the Philippians. Beginning with the word "finally". "....." Those are strong words! The imperative "look," "watch out" or "beware" is actually included three times in the Greek. Watch out for those dogs, watch out for those men who do evil, watch out for those mutilators of the flesh. And it's a present imperative, which implies ongoing action. Watch out, and keep on watching out. Beware and continue to beware.

So who are these people that the apostle Paul calls "dogs", workers of evil, and mutilators of the flesh? Well this is not the first time that Paul has mentioned them in his writings. In his letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul has some more strong words for these "dogs," these

workers of evil. In 2 Cor 11:13, Paul calls these individuals “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.” 2 Cor 11:13

These “dogs” as Paul calls them are pretending to be part of the Christian community. They are masquerading as apostles of Christ. But actually they are “men who do evil,” “deceitful workmen.” Paul also speaks of these false apostles in his letter to the Christians in Galatia. Listen to Paul’s stern words in Gal 1:6-9. “.....” Literally, “let him be anathema!”

So what was this false gospel that these supposed followers of Christ were preaching? We find a clue in our Philippian scroll. What did Paul say? Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil...but notice the next phrase: “those mutilators of the flesh.” These “dogs”, as Paul calls them, were Jews who were teaching that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough for salvation. There was something else that *you* had to do. You also needed to adhere to Jewish laws and traditions. And so, among other things, they taught that a male convert to Christianity would need to be circumcised. Now Paul was a faithful Jew, but listen to his rejection of this false gospel in Gal 5:1-6. “.....”

Paul is really upset with these individuals that he calls “dogs”. Listen to his comment in Gal 5:12. “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves.” Those are startling words to find in Scripture. Paul is filled with a holy indignation. A righteous anger. These “dogs” are distorting the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation does not come through faith in Jesus Christ plus what we do. Our confidence is not in ourselves, who we are, what we’ve done, or haven’t done. Our confidence is in Jesus alone.

Many have wondered about Paul’s use of the term “dog” to describe these enemies of the

cross. It sounds so harsh. Some have suggested that Paul uses this term because dogs were considered shameless and unclean. But it may be that Paul is using a term that was common in Judaism and is turning it upside down. You see, the Jews used this term “dog” in reference to Gentiles, people whom they considered to be outside of the covenant, beyond the grace of God. And Paul may well be saying, “These Gentiles who trust in Jesus alone for salvation without all of the laws and traditions of Judaism, they are not the dogs. *You* are the dogs. You are the ones who are outside of God’s grace. You are trusting in something or someone other than Jesus alone for your salvation.

And then Paul begins to reflect on his own life. He remembers how he used to have confidence in himself, who he was, what he had done. We can read his thoughts on line #4 of paragraph 3. Beginning with the words “if anyone...” Let’s read together. “.....” Paul says, “if pedigree was of any worth in terms of salvation, I’d have it made!” Or if zealous performance of works of righteous would save me, I’d be knocking on heaven’s doors. But...says Paul. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ....”

His confidence for salvation is in Jesus alone. His assurance of salvation is based on Jesus alone. He says, “Your family pedigree is of no saving value. Your works of righteousness, however zealously they have been performed, are of no saving value.” Salvation comes from above, received by faith. Our confidence is not in ourselves, who we are, what we’ve done, or haven’t done. Our confidence is in Jesus alone.

But someone might say, “What about the commandments of God? Isn’t it important to keep the ten commandments?” Absolutely. But my assurance of salvation has nothing to do with my commandment keeping. We keep the commandments because we love Jesus. Not in

order to have assurance of salvation. Didn't Jesus say, "If you love me, keep my commandments"? And to those who claimed a relationship with Him, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things I say?" Obedience is not unimportant. But it is the fruit of our relationship with Jesus. We place no confidence for salvation in who we are, what we have done, or not done. Our confidence is in Jesus alone.

Well then, if our confidence for salvation is in Jesus alone, what is there left for us to do? Paul answers that question for us. Look with me at the end of line #9 in this third paragraph of Paul's letter to the believers at Philippi. It begins with the words "I want to know Christ....." Let's read it together. "....." Paul says, "Because my confidence is in Jesus alone, I will make knowing Jesus the passion of my life. I will press on. "Not that I have already obtained all this....."

And what is the prize? Is it just living forever? Is that the prize? Is it just avoiding eternal death? Is that the prize? No! The prize is eternal life with Jesus, our wonderful Savior and Lord. The prize is being with Him forever. "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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. Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!"

If I were to sum up Paul's message in this portion of his letter in one sentence it would be this: your confidence for salvation is not in yourself, who you are, what you've done, or haven't done—Your confidence is in Jesus alone.

Someone here might be thinking, "But pastor, I'm really struggling with a sinful thoughts

or sinful habits in my life. Don't I have to overcome all of those problems before I can be saved? What does the Bible say? 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins..." Friend, if you are struggling with thoughts or habits that are out of harmony with the will of God, and out of harmony with the Word of God, then turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth....will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Don't let anyone steal your joy by trying to turn your attention toward you. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. On one occasion, Pastor Morri Venden was speaking to a group of Christians about rejoicing in Jesus alone. And after one of the meetings, a man came to him who was struggling with an addiction to alcohol. It could have been an addiction to smoking, or an addiction to pornography, or an addiction to gambling. But it was an addiction to alcohol. And this brother said to Pastor Venden, "I've tried, but I just can't get the victory!" And do you know what Pastor Venden told him? "Will you promise me that you'll spend time every day focusing on Jesus, drawing closer to Jesus?" And the man said, "But what about my problem?"

Do you see this brother's real problem? It wasn't the alcohol problem. The real problem was focusing on his problem, rather than focusing on Jesus. He needed to focus his attention on Jesus. But, you ask, what happens if we stumble? Just get up. Confess your sin, and keep focusing on Jesus. Because Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. Yes, He is. Your confidence is not in yourself, who you are, what you've done or haven't done. Your confidence is in Jesus alone.

Well, a year went by and Pastor Venden saw this man again. And the brother said, "It worked! It worked!" Ah, yes, my friends! There is victory in Jesus. There is deliverance in Jesus. There is freedom in Jesus. There is healing in Jesus. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. And if

someone comes up to you and tries to steal your peace and joy because you are still a work in progress, just hold up this sign! Your confidence is not in yourself. Who you are. What you've done. Or what you haven't done. Your confidence is in Jesus alone!

And that's why I want to encourage you to spend more and more time with Jesus, getting to know Jesus better as your best friend. Because that's where we need to focus our attention. I brought a box of books with me this morning. It's my favorite book on the life of Jesus. Do you sense the need to spend more time focusing on Jesus? Do you need to take your eyes off of yourself and turn your eyes upon Jesus? Then I want to invite you to come up after the service and get a copy of this book. I'll give you a copy of this book if you'll promise to read it. And may we always remember that our confidence for salvation is not in ourselves, who we are, what we've done, or haven't done. Our confidence is in Jesus alone.

## REJOICING IN THE LORD - PART 6

### Always rejoicing

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Philippians 4:2-23
Subject:	How it is possible to always rejoice
Complement:	by not remaining focused on our problems but by remaining focused on Jesus.
Exegetical idea:	It is possible to always rejoice when we do not remain focused on our problems but remain focused on Jesus.
Homiletical idea:	<b>When you remain focused on Jesus, you can rejoice in the Lord always!</b>
Purpose:	To challenge my hearers to shift their focus away from their problems and rather to remain focused on Jesus so that they can rejoice in the Lord always.

#### Introduction

Have you noticed when you read the Scriptures that certain passages jump out at you and catch your attention. Perhaps you're reading Isaiah, and you come across Is 40:30-31 where it says, "....." Or Jeremiah, and you are impressed by Jer 29:11-13: "....."

Memorable portions of Scripture.

In the closing paragraph of the Philippian scroll, we find numerous memorable portions of Scripture, passages that have become favorites of Christians down through the ages. Here are a few examples: Phil 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phil 4:19 "And my God shall supply all of your need according to His riches in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

And then there is the passage that we are going to focus on this morning. It's near the beginning of the fourth paragraph of your Philippian scroll. What we call Phil 4:4. Let's read to

together: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” How many of you have heard that text before? Most of us. We even sing that passage as a Scripture song. You know the song, don’t you? Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.

But I have a question for you. Do you really believe that this text is true? Is it really possible to rejoice in the Lord always? I’m not talking about when we get to heaven, or in the earth made new. I’m talking about right now, right here, in the midst of this sin-sick, sin-marred world. Is it really possible to rejoice in the Lord always? Or is the apostle Paul naively idealistic, living in an imaginary fantasy land? What do you think?

Well, I want to suggest to you this morning that it *not* possible to always rejoice if your focus is in the wrong place. If you go through life focusing on your problems, you will not be able to always rejoice. In fact, if you are preoccupied with your challenges and difficulties, or on yourself and who you are, what you have done, or haven’t done, you will lose your joy altogether. If your focus is in the wrong place, it is impossible to always rejoice.

This fourth paragraph of the Philippian scroll begins with a brief comment about two individuals in the church at Philippi. Do you see their names there at the beginning of paragraph four? Euodia and Syntyche. Euodia and Syntyche aren’t getting along. They’ve had a disagreement. I wondered why Paul mentioned these ladies by name. So I decided to look up the meaning of their names. Euodia means “Fragrance” but she was acting more like “Stinker.” And Syntyche means “fortunate” but she was acting more like obstinate. And Paul appeals to them: “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other.” Don’t keep focusing on the problem. If you do, you’ll lose your joy.

That’s what happened to the disciples after Jesus was crucified. Instead of remaining

focused on Jesus and repeating the precious promises that He had given to them, the disciples became preoccupied with their problem: Jesus, their Master, had been arrested, beaten, crucified, and was now dead. Luke records the experience of two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Do you know the focus of their conversation? They weren't focusing on Jesus. Luke tells us that these two disciples were focusing on "all the things that had happened.." Luke 24:13-14 And from their perspective, every THING that had happened was bad. It was a problem. And as they focused on that problem, it loomed larger and larger in their minds. So much so that when Jesus came along side of them, what happened? Let's read Luke 24:15-17 "....." I think you would agree with me that these disciples have lost their joy. Why? Because they are remaining focused on the problem. They are preoccupied with the difficulty. And as a result, they have lost their joy. Their faces are downcast.

But it doesn't have to be a problem as massive as the cruel execution of your best friend, your Master, your Messiah, to cause you to lose your joy. Any problem in life, however small it may seem at first, if you remain focused on it, if you become preoccupied with it, any problem can steal away your joy.

Some time ago, when we were still living in California, Bodil and I were enjoying a wonderful morning together. We got up early and enjoyed a refreshing walk. We prayed together and thanked God for His love and the gift of a beautiful day. When we got back to our house, we saw a small flock of Western Tanangers in the large oak trees alongsies our house. I don't know if you have ever seen a male Western Tananger. It's beautiful, with a bright yellow body and a reddish head. And there was a flock of them. A beautiful sight! I was beginning to feel like I was living in the garden of Eden. A few hours later, I went out to my mailbox and

found a letter. Here's what it said: "Postal customer: This is to inform you of recent mailbox vandalism in your area. We found the enclosed mail, (which was addressed to me and was opened) discarded in Forest Falls on Tuesday, April 16. (That's a mountain community about 16 miles from my house). Thieves may be after social security checks, income tax refunds, public assistance checks, food stamps, credit cards, or other valuables." All of a sudden, I had a problem. This didn't seem much like the garden of Eden anymore! And if I had decided to remain focused on that problem, and become preoccupied with it, I could have lost all my joy.

That's what happened to a friend of mine. There was a problem with vandalism along the Russian river where his family owned a summer home. Gangs would come in and tear up the houses, smash the contents, and steal anything of value. My friend became so focused on this problem, so preoccupied with it, that he lost all of his joy. He became filled with anger and hatred. He actually set an ambush one night, laying with a loaded gun, intending to kill anyone who tried to vandalize his home. Fortunately, no one showed up that night, or he might have ended up in the State Penitentiary! That story certainly illustrates what can happen to people when they become preoccupied with the problem. They lose their joy, and anger and hatred can take over. It is impossible to always rejoice if you are focusing on your problems, your challenges, your difficulties.

So how can we maintain our joy? How can we rejoice always? The answer is simple. It's right there in our text. What does Paul tell us in Philippians 4:4? "Rejoice in the Lord always." Instead of focusing on your problem, remain focused on Jesus.

When we have a reason to be anxious, worried, stressed out, notice what Paul tells us to do. Read with me from the fourth paragraph of your scroll. We all could have reason to become

Phil 4, beginning with verse 6. Let's read it together. "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."

Your peace is found in Christ Jesus. Your joy is found in the Lord. That's why Paul doesn't just say, "Rejoice always," but "Rejoice in the Lord always." You can rejoice always when you stay focused on Him.

Those same disciples, who had lost all their joy, discovered that when they shifted their focus from their problems to Jesus, they experienced a change of heart. Notice Luke's testimony at the end of his gospel record. Luke 24:50-53. "....." Those same disciples were filled with great joy. They were rejoicing in the Lord. And later, Luke records in Acts 5:41, even after the apostles were beaten before that Sanhedrin and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus, they "left the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing** because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." They weren't rejoicing because of the situation. It was a bad situation. They had just been beaten. But they weren't remaining focused on the situation. They weren't preoccupied with the problem. They were focused on Jesus. They were rejoicing in the Lord. They were filled with joy because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

My brothers and sisters, God doesn't promise us a trouble-free journey to the kingdom of heaven. But He does offer to fill our hearts with joy as we stay focused on Him. When we stay focused on Jesus, we can rejoice in the Lord always.

If your loved one dies, you will be able to rejoice in the Lord for the precious times that

you were able to spend together. Those times were a gift from your loving heavenly Father. If that person was a Christian, you will be able to rejoice in the Lord that death for the Christian is not the end. You will see that person again in the resurrection of the righteous when our Lord returns in glory. And even if that person was not a Christian, you can still rejoice in the Lord that He is gracious and merciful God.

If you are facing a sickness, and you remain focused on Jesus, you will be able to rejoice in the Lord for the times of good health that you have enjoyed. You will be able to rejoice in the Lord even in the midst of your sickness, that He is with you to comfort and to bless. You will be able to rejoice in the Lord that a better day is coming.

It works! Dear friends. It works! I've asked Roger (first service) and Arnold & Rhode Espinosa (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> service) to share their testimony this morning. Listen to how they have learned to rejoice in the Lord always.

Interview with Roger Anderson (1<sup>st</sup> service), Arnold and Rhode Espinosa (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> service)

In every situation, no matter what the problem, in sickness or in health, in times of comfort or times of adversity, stay focused on Jesus. Then you can sing your personal testimony: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and I again I say rejoice." So why don't we sing it now and remind ourselves that when you stay focused on Jesus, you can rejoice in the Lord always.

“ Postal customer: This is to inform you of recent mailbox vandalism in your area. We found the enclosed mail, (which was addressed to me and was opened) discarded in Forest Falls on Tuesday, April 16. Thieves may be after social security checks, income tax refunds, public assistance checks, food stamps, credit cards, or other valuables.”