

## 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  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha\zeta\iota\alpha$ , 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  $\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon$ , from which get the English word ENERGY.

God wants to work in you! It's His  $\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\os$ , 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  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$   $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$ . If you've ever seen phosphorus burning, you know that it's bright! When you are connected with Jesus, the  $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$   $\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho$ , 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!