

## “Rejoice!”

12-13-15

What a powerful message! In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is talking to John’s disciples and telling them He is the Messiah, and also showing how important John was to Jesus’ ministry. Open to Philippians 4. In our second reading from Philippians, Paul, who’s in prison is telling the people from Philippi to always rejoice! What great advice! Verses 4-5, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.”*

How do we daily live this joyous Christian life we’re being called to live? Paul gives us three principles. **First**, he informs us that **Joy is a Choice**. We’re not victims of circumstance! If we believe in God and His Word, then He is our guide, not fate. We’re not controlled by some sort of uncontrollable force that’s tearing the joy out of our life! In other words, the source of true joy doesn’t come us, it **Comes from God!**

There’s a tremendous difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on what’s going on around us, but joy is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. True joy is a gift from God! If we accept Jesus, not only as Savior, but also as the Lord of our life, then we’ll have this joy to penetrate our life.

We’re called God’s own, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us and God’s DNA contains this eternal joy. Joy comes from God who lives in us.

Paul’s in prison when he writes his letter to the Philippians. In this predicament, he’s obviously not happy. His future is uncertain. But even in this situation, he proclaims, *“Rejoice! Let joy encompass you!”* Joy isn’t just an emotion, it’s an attitude that effects how we look at life.

When it comes to Joy, what you give, you’ll receive. If you’re seeking Joy, then give joy! When you give it, you’ll receive it back. When you have a lack of joy in your life make a decision and choose to pass joy on to others, and when you do, it becomes contagious, and you’re more joyful!

Think about this. Have you treated everyone fairly? Have you brought joy to someone? You can go through life looking at a half-filled cup and thank God you have something to drink, or you can be upset and complain that you only have half a cup! It’s a choice! It’s your choice to rejoice! Remember, don’t look for the thorns among the roses, but be thankful that among the thorns, there are glorious roses! It’s your choice!

Open to Habakkuk 3. Situations in life aren’t always the best. We each have times when it seems we’re going backward rather than forward. But look at what Habakkuk says about those times. Verses 17-18, *“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”*

The words, *“I will”* revealed Habakkuk's belief that he could choose his response, either to sink into despair, or to rejoice in God's presence and power. His decision was to rejoice! *Our attitude towards life is important* We can trust God, even in hardships. The choice to rejoice is ours every day!

**Secondly, You Are Blessed!** I want you to understand, how blessed you are today. **Don't Take Anything For Granted!** If you woke up with more health than illness, you're more blessed than tens of thousands of people who won't survive the week. If you're attending service today without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you're more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you can read, you're more blessed than over two billion people in the world. If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you're richer than 75% of this world. You are blessed, so very blessed! So rejoice, You and I are blessed in so many ways we may never fully comprehend how we're blessed this side of eternity!

And **Lastly**, Paul informs, **You Must Commit Yourself to Prayer**. Prayer's a personal time with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Prayer is when we share everything with God openly and honestly. Only when you give your worries to God, can you experience true peace and joy.

There's nothing wrong with having concerns, we all have them. But it's when our concerns become worries that they become burdens. You think about them all the time and you're in their bondage. Open to Matthew 11. There are so many times we need to realize that joy comes from knowing Jesus is always with us. Verses 28-29, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

When in life you face a difficulty or burden, **Don't Worry, Give It All to Him!** Paul tells us very clearly, let them go! Give them to God. Prayer is an expression of our faith and trust in what can do in our lives. Corrie Ten Boom shared this truth, *"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."* A new song puts it so well about giving everything to God. *"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."*

Dwell on those things that speak of life from Philippians 4:8, *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."*

Are you rejoicing and choosing joy? You're blessed and are called to be a blessing. Go to God in prayer, with your sorrows and burdens, and He will turn your life into joy! Rejoice!