

**The Rock: 06-08-2021**

**Philippians: The letter of joy**

**First reading:**

**Title:** Rejoice always

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:1-9

**Theme:**

Learning to rejoice in all circumstances takes practice, prayer and the help of your community.

**Introduction:**

As we look at this last chapter of Paul's letter, the best way to get to the beginning of this passage is to understand the end.

It can seem almost arrogant were it not a true statement Paul makes. He says in verse 9 something only Jesus is recorded to have said:

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

**-Philippians 4:9 ESV**

Paul is confident enough in these things that he uses himself as an example to follow. I find that a very powerful witness of genuine humility in an age of absolute arrogance.

Paul is not, nor has he been boastful in this letter. In fact, he has been just the opposite. So, when he says these things it's really a Dad speaking to his kids. Knowing that he has, in Christ, been the example they need.

That is a huge lesson for us all. Kids imitate their parents. Both the good and the bad. Be a good example, set the tone and show what is important. So you can say, so I can say: "What you see in me, put it into practice."

### **The Story:**

He starts out however breaking things down into what I see as short bursts. We see:

A plea for unity (verses 1-3:  
Disagreement in the body)

A challenge to trust in the Lord (verses 4-7: God's peace will spur you on)

Finally:

To think and act a particular way (verses 8-9: Proper focus in a blurry world)

Coming here to the end of the letter, Paul is encouraging them to be in it for the long haul. To hold the line in all of the ups and downs which Paul knows are in all of our futures.

But it is from prison here where Paul expresses his heart for his people in Philippi. Listen, you are my brothers and sisters, and in all the joys and trials that you and I face in this world, let's stand strong. Let's stand together as we stand firm in the Lord.

Don't waiver when things get bad, unstable and uncertain. I've told you we have that sure hope that Jesus will return. We are, after all in a race, a battle in fact, and as citizens of heaven we fight a certain way.

Prayer and confidence in God that no matter what, the victory is already won. Be united by the Holy Spirit in everything.

That's always easier said than done, isn't it? Necessary, but not easy. Standing firm in the Lord, seeing and celebrating our differences as we are growing together.

Learning that we are all in different places on our journey with Christ and

uniting around him and our mission at times can be hard.

We don't always agree on the how. In fact, we simply sometimes just don't agree, period. Being in different places in life and in our relationship with Jesus, our thoughts and opinions don't always line up.

We are called to Biblical unity, not uniformity. It is one of the reasons why Paul, in chapter three said what he did. Live up to what you have attained.

The freedom of the Spirit means that not everything is black and white, or a straight line from point a to b. Why?

We are all so different, gifted differently, tasked with different things, and in different places with Jesus.

Diversity in the body of Christ is what makes us so beautifully complex -and sometimes complicated.

The Corinthian church struggled with this, to the point of confusion and division. Most especially when it came to the gifts of the spirit and how they worked in the Sunday gatherings.

Some thought t they were better than others because they did more, had more,

had a particular gift, or followed the better leader.

Paul tells them to cut it out! God has put you all together for His good purposes! Work it out. He tells them after explaining all that to them, that there is a perfect way to function, a more excellent way in fact.

Love is the most excellent way. Yet, it seems even here in Philippi there are problems. There is never a perfect church, is there? Not COTR. Not Vibrant. Not any.

Why? Because people are involved. It seems even 2,000 years ago people argued. Who knew?

"I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life."

**-Philippians 4:2-3 ESV**

Whatever it was that Euodia and Syntyche had going on, it was public enough and bad enough for Paul to address it publicly. He does so by asking the entire church to "help these women."

Help them solve their issue. Why? Because they have been a great help to me at all levels of ministry, and right now they are struggling to get along.

They were leaders in the church and it seems they were at odds about something and it wasn't being fixed. They weren't working it out.

I wonder if they were even talking at this point. Just speculation, but human behavior being what it is, nothing has really changed. Even those who are found to be most helpful and useful hit a wall sometimes and need a bit of encouragement.

Really, wouldn't it be nice if life were so much easier and we could all just get along. Let's face it, we don't. But we have to recognize that together we are better in all the things we are called to.

So, along with this guy named Clement and the rest of Paul's leaders, these two ladies labored. Help them fix the issue because this is affecting the team.

Biblical unity demands Biblical reconciliation and restoration. That means forgiveness, grace, mercy -All the hard things, in all of our relationships. Both here and everywhere.

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

**-Romans 12:18 ESV**

Don't compromise Biblical truth and doctrine to do so, but we are to hold the line and live even with those who do not agree with the Gospel message.

If we are always fighting amongst ourselves and grouchy every day it's hard to trust the Lord and rejoice, because you distracted:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus."

**-Philippians 4:4-7 ESV**

Rejoice in the Lord always, I say rejoice!

I want you to hear me people! This is a very practical and necessary thing. "Oh, but Paul you don't understand, you don't know how bad it is for me and how many people are mad at me and won't talk to

me. You think Syntyche is annoying, let me tell you about so and so."

"No, you're right, I don't understand. Here in my prison cell, it's kind of hard to have visitors. I get rationed food brought from an occasional friend, and an occasional beating because I won't stop telling people about Jesus. You're right, I don't get it."

Perspective is everything. Our problems tend to always be the worst because they are ours. Right? We are quick to anger, going from 0-100 in a second because of our perspective.

Sometimes anger is justified, but how we handle it shows those around us what we are made of and who we trust.

Let your reasonableness (gentleness-NIV) be known to all. Why? Because we are a reflection of Christ to those who see us, and we have to ask ourselves: "What do people see?" "What does my spouse see?"

Im not talking about faking it, goodness knows we've got enough of that in the church as well as outside these walls. This world carries more than its share of fakeness and a lack of genuineness. Just spent five minutes on social media...

Genuine gentleness, even when you are struggling, is essential for growth. Paul



gives us good instructions on the how. Don't be anxious. Easier said than done, I know. Right up there with Jesus saying don't worry.

So, let's be honest, that's why we have to confront it. We can acknowledge that we aren't supposed to be anxious or worry. But we also have to admit that every day we are anxious and we do worry.

It is human nature, and given our world and all that goes on, it's hard not to. The "trusting in God" is our aim and our goal. That should frame our perspective on things.

Working it out, growing forward in this is how we minimize worry and anxiousness. Make that conscious choice to trust and fight against worry. Anyone who has kids knows just how hard that fight can be at times.

But recognizing that tension and reality that the Bible tells us one thing, and we do another -most especially when it comes to anxiousness and worry.

Admitting that gets us one step closer to rejoicing in spite of -anxiousness, worry, and the circumstances we sometimes find ourselves in.

Make your concerns known. Prayer, that all important conversation with God every

day. Supplication and thanksgiving -all your concerns are a concern to God himself. I find that very comforting.

The fact that the creator of the universe cares enough about me to listen, and not only listen, but answer my concerns and hears my thanks to Him is at the same time, baffling and humbling.

It's so important to have that good prayer life, a time when you can sit in quiet and listen as much as speak.

I find that as much as I find that deep settled peace which Paul talks about in verse 7, I also hear His voice more clearly.

Not this audible voice, but I always pray with my Bible open. Do you? Try it. It happens quite often where in my prayer time I am led to or reminded of a Psalm or verse and I go there and hear His voice in His written word.

I am encouraged more often than not because my prayers are answers right in His word. That's why reading your Bible is so important. In your worship time (singing/praying/reading) He speaks.

The result: Our hearts are safe (guarded), we have peace in Jesus. It's something that is felt inside, as much as it is known in our heads.

As you grow in your relationship, you just know. God's word is God's voice, and His Holy Spirit in you speaks that way. Weird? Perhaps, but only from those who don't know Jesus.

So, Paul pleads for unity, he encourages us to trust in the LORD and finally the challenge to us. To think and to act:

"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. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

**-Philippians 4:8-9 ESV**

We are back where we started.

Glass half empty kind of person? Glass half full kind of person? It all depends on your focus. How about: We have a glass with something in it means opportunity.

99 things can go right on Tuesday -one thing goes wrong- what do we tend to focus on? The one thing that went wrong!! Then all of a sudden, the sky is falling!! Guess what? It isn't.

Paul here is not looking to encourage us in denial of reality. Rather, proper focus in our present reality which helps us to press on and rejoice.

HE gives quite the list here, doesn't he? Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is:

True, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, any excellence, and praise worthy thing.

Focus on these things. Better yet, PRACTICE these things. In other words, they will not come naturally to you. So practicing these things helps us to keep our eyes on Jesus.

Listen, would Jesus have endured the cross if His focus was wrong? If He hadn't practiced obedience to the Father His entire life?

No, and Dr. Luke is good to tell us that. He reminds us that Jesus was not being pulled along by events that were happening to Him,

He was in control of those events and He knew the end game, and He trusted and had peace that God the Father had this under control. So, Luke tells us:

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

**-Luke 9:51 ESV**

Because He was some crazy masochist? A deluded Lunatic? A crazy liar full of delusions of grandeur. No, He was fully God and fully man, and knew His mission, and the joy that was to come on the other side:

"...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

**-Hebrews 12:2 ESV**

Joy in suffering, in persecution, in death itself. Yup. Jesus knew what He was called to. On the other side of all that pain and suffering and ultimately death was victory and salvation.

All that was true and honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, He saw. Why? Because our Jesus looked beyond His circumstances and into the face of God and saw victory, peace and all things praise worthy.

Practice makes perfect. Over and over. Keep on, press on, rejoice always. Do

these things. The God of peace will be with you.

I close with this thought.

The end of verse 9 is a promise of God. I want to encourage you in your prayer time, which has been a focus for us this morning, to pray the promises of God. Plead for Him to fulfill those things He has promised.

Plead His promises, that through His Holy Spirit in you, you will do your part in your walk, just as He promises to do His.