



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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## The Discipline of Peace

Philippians 4:4-9

Many of us have tried to study the book of Proverbs. And there are portions of Scripture that just beg to be outlined — Acts is a good example. Luke clearly patterns his treatment of the Acts of the Apostles according to Christ's words in Acts 1.

Acts 1:8b, "...and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

And thus we have this:

- The Church's Witness to Jerusalem, Acts 1-8.
- The Church's Witness to Judea and Samaria, Acts 9-11.
- The Church's Witness to the Remotest Part of the Earth, Acts 12-28.

BUT when one tries to outline Proverbs, say for example the chapter fourteen, and you are at a loss. Starting in av v. 1 we have:

- v. 1: "The wise woman..."
- v. 2: "He who walks..."
- v. 3: "In the mouth of the foolish..."
- v. 4: "Where no oxen are..."
- v. 5: "A faithful witness..."
- v. 6: "A scoffer seeks wisdom, and finds none..."
- v. 7: "Leave the presence of a fool..."

It is clear that this chapter, and for that matter most of the book of Proverbs, defies any attempt at an outline. Rather, the book is often viewed as a series of unconnected statements — wise sayings from the hand of the Lord.

In Philippians 4:4-9, Paul seemingly is bouncing around as he exhorts the Philippians. He goes from

- Rejoicing, v. 4.
- Forbearing, v. 5.
- Prayer, vv. 6-7.
- Our thought life, v. 8.
- Our practice, v. 9.

Looking at the flow, on the surface it appears that this section contains a series of unconnected exhortations much like the book of Proverbs. YET upon a closer look, we see that it is the exact opposite. As we saw when we looked at vv. 2-3, at the close of this letter Paul addresses head-on the divisions that were ripping this church apart. In his discourse, recall that in v. 2 he exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to have the "same mind" and so to cultivate the same world view- the same *φρονέω* (*phroneō*).

Philippians 4:4-9 represents the “mind” — the φρονέω (*phroneō*) — that Euodia, Syntyche, and all God’s children are to pursue if they are to “live in harmony in the Lord” (v. 2). And thus, we come to this section which discusses the discipline of peace.

### Rejoicing, v. 4.

We begin with v. 4a, rejoice: χαίρω (*chairō*); the root of this word is χαρά (*chara*) which is the Greek word for “joy” — a fruit of the Spirit rooted in the deepest part of our being. In Scripture the environment of joy is the compound realization that:

- On account of our sin, we rightly deserve the wrath of God- hell. And yet...
- On account of God’s grace, Christ stood in our place on the cross and suffered for us the wages of our sin. And thus...
- In Christ, we stand before God forgiven- white as snow!

Now when we come to the realization that we are forgiven — that we stand before God not guilty of any sin — the result is the deep-seated conviction that it is well with our soul before God. The Bible calls this “joy”!

What then is “rejoicing?” “Rejoicing” is defined simply as “joy expressed,” and thus speaks of the pervasion of joy in every part of our life. Speaking of those trusting in Christ, Peter said, “...you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” ( 1 Peter 1:8b).

Philippians 2:17-18, “But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”

Thus, the call to rejoice is the call at all times to live in light of your joy! And so, when Paul exhorts the Philippians to “rejoice,” he is calling on them to have the joy of the Lord pervade their:

- Workplace.
- Home.
- Relationships
- Lying down.
- Rising up.
- And everything in-between.

That is what rejoicing is all about. It is living at all times in light of the knowledge that God has forgiven you; your life has been spared His wrath!

Many of have viewed the movie, "Saving Private Ryan" which is about a man, by a man, by the name of Private Ryan in the military during the Normandy invasion of France. His brothers all died in the invasion leaving his mom with only him as a surviving child. Accordingly, the military deigned to send Private Ryan home lest his mother lose him as well. Accordingly, Captain Miller (played by Tom Hanks) is charged to find Private Ryan.

This movie begins in the present with Ryan staring at Captain Miller's tomb stone. The movie then flashes back to the Normandy invasion and Captain Miller and his group of men endeavoring to find him. At the end of the movie, Captain Miller and almost his entire group are killed. Private Ryan is shown standing over Captain Miller whose horrible last words to Ryan were, "Earn This." The movie then pans on Ryan's face which is then transformed to the present where he breaks down asking his wife and family if he was a good man, etc.

Praise God that Christ didn't say that on the cross to us, "earn this!" That being said, it is obvious from the movie that Captain Miller's sacrifice had a massive impact upon Ryan. It is that which drove him throughout the rest of his life.

Family of God, that is what "rejoicing" is all about! It is having the life and death of Christ be that which governs your life so much that it overflows into thanksgiving, praise, and service. It impacts what we think, desire, and believe. It is gazing upon the grace, kindness, and love of God and allowing that to be glory, praise, and theme- as in 1 John 4.

1 John 4:19, "We love, because He first loved us."

Do you understand? All that we do is in response to the knowledge/reality of the love of God!

Psalms 149:4, "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation."

Think of that! If you are a child of God, right now, the God of creation "takes pleasure" in you!

Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."

This is God's disposition toward you right now in Christ! Meditate on this! Allow it to be that which moves you most in life! In fact, listen to the call of Jeremiah.

Lamentations 3:23-24, "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. *They* are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness."

In what way is God's love and compassion "new"? This does NOT reference anything about God, BUT the call upon our lives each morning — to wake up and renew your understanding and appreciation for it!

Christian, the call for us this morning is for us to come to a greater appreciation of the favorable relationship with have with God! That is what "rejoicing" is all about! With this, notice the qualification.

### The Qualification, v. 4b

Philippians 4:4b, "rejoice in the Lord."

ἐν κυρίῳ (*en kurio*); this is an important statement when it comes to our relationship both with God and man. For today the temptation is to "rejoice" in so many things:

- Prosperity.
- Personal accomplishment.
- A loved one.
- A sweet providence.
- The affections and approval of man.
- Our reputation.
- How people treat us.
- What they think of us.

We truly are well-diggers.

Jeremiah 2:13, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Though we are saved, we are so good at rejecting the love that God has given us in favor of doing our own thing in the hope of impressing God or just getting by. And so, we

place our hope and joy in the horizontal, passing things of this life. Yet get this, NOT ONLY will these never satisfy, BUT they are in fact a rejection of the fresh, clean water that comes from God!

That is the contrast here. The tepid, warm, dirty, and critter infested water of a cistern which inevitably will NOT hold what we place in it... in comparison to the freshness, cleanness, and exhilarating water of a spring which bubbles out of the earth! Such is the grace, love, and compassions of the Lord.

I hope you see, rarely is the cause of our joy the person and work of Christ! Yet it ought NOT to be this way. We must strive to hold Christ ever and always as the basis of ALL our joy in this life! This ought to be that in which we rejoice ultimately.

Psalms 73:25-26, "Whom have I in heaven *but Thee*? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Isn't this glorious?! It is God who ought to be our greatest joy, NOT what He has done for us, BUT first and foremost His person! This was the case of the Psalmist.

Psalms 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

As such we are instructed.

Psalms 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord..."

This is the very thing Paul spent his Christian life doing.

Philippians 3:8, 10a, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..."

And so it was with the Psalmist.

Psalms 94:18-19, "If I should say, 'My foot has slipped,' Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, will hold me up. When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul."

In fact, such is a description of the child of God.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

Yet sadly, that was NOT Euodia and Syntyche. Why were they at odds? Why were they NOT getting along? Based on what we saw when we looked at Philippians 4:2-3, it is obvious that they had slipped in their walk with Christ such that their joy in life NO LONGER was:

- God's approbation of them.
- The Lord's love and affection.
- The declaration that they were without sin.

BUT the love and affection of others! Thus, when it came to getting along with one another, there was friction, alienation, distance. Neither were giving what each other thought they deserved. Both were looking out for their own interests! This is what happens when we don't "rejoice in the Lord"!

## The Galatian Churches

In Paul's ministry to the churches of Galatia, he had to address a growing problem of division.

Galatians 5:13-15, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another."

How sad! And how interesting! Fellowship in these churches had become like an animal fight with acts of biting, devouring, and consuming! How did this happen?

Galatians 5:16, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

How instructive! Why had the relationships between God's people broken down in Galatia? God's people were living in the flesh being characterized by such things as, "...enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions..." (Galatians 5:20) So, what were they to do? They were to "walk by the Spirit" which would have a life-changing result.

Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..."

What is the second consequence of walking by the Spirit? It is joy? Or, to use the language of Philippians, "Rejoicing in the Lord"!

Listen, there can be no personality conflict if the source of all rejoicing is Christ! If Christ is your sufficiency, then you won't seek it or want it from others! William Gurnall wrote, "We fear men so much, because we fear God so little."

THE fundamental question when it comes to your daily living is, "What is it that moves you most?" If it is God, then you and I will be freed from so many of the petty things of this life. BUT if it is NOT, THEN we easily could get swept up in a Euodia/Syntyche type struggle! That brings us to the standard.

The Standard, v. 4c

Philippians 4:4c, "Rejoice in the Lord always."

Always πάντοτε (*pantote*); this is such an important qualification. The word for "always" means "at all times" or "in every circumstance of life." It carries the idea of consistency. Now it is NOT that we are called to rejoice over the loss of our well-being, trial, difficulty, or neglect. RATHER, the call is to "rejoice in the Lord always."

This means that we rejoice NOT ON ACCOUNT of all things, BUT IN all things! And so, when life gets hard, we do NOT faint. For the greatest burden of life has been lifted in Christ — the burden of our obligation to God. Such was the example Paul gave to the Philippians.

Recall that when Paul came to Macedonia on account of a vision (Acts 16:10) that he went down to the river to preach the gospel (Acts 16:14) — there obviously wasn't a synagogue in this largely Gentile town. And with this the Philippian church was begun!



But there was also the persecution. Recall, following the founding of this church, Paul cast a demon out of the slave-girl (Acts 16:18). Soon a riot broke out, and Paul and Silas were cast into prison — yet NOT before being severely beaten (Acts 16:22-24)!

Now, Paul was in Macedonia according to the will of God. And yet, far from great crowds coming to the know the Lord, Paul and Silas found themselves:

- Beaten.
- Bloodied.
- Rejected.
- With stocks on their feet.
- Cast into prison.
- Awaiting the fate of a criminal!!!

Now, how did they respond?

Acts 16:25, “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

This call to “rejoice in the Lord always” is NOT conditioned by circumstances, treatment, life-stage, the favorable prospect of survival, or our standard of living. RATHER, it transcends the contingencies of this life for it speaks of a mindset — a paradigm — by which we process the things of this world.

Yet you say, “How do you cultivate an outlook that rejoices in the Lord always? How do you cultivate this paradigm?”

First, understand that that is what God so often is doing when He ordains the bitter things in life. They are NOT there on account of an angry, peevish God. They are there because God loves us and knows that our best is bound up in Him. Hosea, speaking of God’s rebellious people who wanted their way, their rights, their good, wrote:

Hosea 2:6-7, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. [we are talking here about bitter providences] And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!’”

As that is the case, how do we “improve upon our suffering”? In essence we “Set [our] mind on the things above, not the things that are on the earth” (Colossians 3:1) which means that we:

- Put down anything and everything in this world that distracts us from Christ.
- Give up our claim on the things of this life.
- Lose our life for Christ’s sake being happy to be unseen if Christ be glorified!

And then we endeavor to:

- Fall in love with Christ over and over again.
- We become a student of God and His glory.
- Meditate upon His person and character.
- See life through the eyes of God!

And so, Paul exhorts Euodia and Syntyche — two warring sisters — to cultivate the mindset of rejoicing! That brings us finally to the urgency.

The Urgency, v. 4d.

Philippians 4:4d, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”

“Again I will say, rejoice” *πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε (palin, ero, chairete)*; this is the tenth time that Paul has exhorted the Philippians unto joy in this epistle! From this we conclude that EITHER Paul is in a serious rut and needs to get over it OR the call to rejoice is easily forsaken.

Obviously, it is the latter! As “rejoicing” is a fruit of the Spirit and appears in our lives as the gospel becomes more and more precious to us, it is so easy to lose it.

- Our fallen nature still is an enemy of grace.
- Our default paradigm would have us relate to God and one another on the basis of our merit.
- Our passion for a right standing before man makes us “play the victim” when we don’t get our way.

Consequently, we can lack biblical joy — and the joy we do have in life oft-times is the joy of this passing age. Accordingly, Paul exhorts the Philippians ten times to cultivate a heart that rejoices in Christ!

How we need to hear this simple message! See, rejoicing is a delicate fruit, easily destroyed by sin, the flesh, the longings and cravings of this world, and fear. And so, to enjoy it today is no guarantee that you will possess it tomorrow. And so, we must...

- Guard our hearts!
- Watch over what we find ourselves delighting in.
- Daily renew our faith!

Lest our hope and confidence drift from our Savior!

When this becomes our lives, we will have robbed interpersonal conflict any beachhead in which to control our lives!