

[pro-rejoice]

:: philippians 3.1 ::

The purpose of our studies in this epistle have been to discover the fullness of God in the average Christian life. As we open up the Bible, we find very quickly that God intends that every believer has a life filled up with His Spirit and all that comes with Him. If we aren't feeling that sort of filling, there's something we can and *should* do about it.

This has been Paul's point so far. We're halfway through his letter and what he's been saying is that there *IS* a work and a power and a completion that God is working in our lives as long as we stay willing and open to Him. He's writing to teach us about pressing on and moving forward in the faith, not stagnating, not regressing, but growing and developing under the power of the Spirit, moving past obstacles and difficulties and realizing what this life is all about.

This is a great book because Paul goes back and forth writing to us as individuals and as a church gathered together. He's giving devotional and practical insight. He *wants* our love to abound so that our testimony will endure and spiritual fruit will be added to our lives.

This is what he expected the Christian life to be. And for the first 2 chapters he says, "Look at me. Look at Jesus. Look at Timothy. Look at Epaphroditus. *THIS* is what it means to be a disciple and *THIS* is what we can expect and what we should do as believers." And he's showing us how God takes a disciple and awakens within him a desire to minister and a desire to be forever with the Lord. And again and again Paul teaches us regarding our future in heaven, where our fullness is finally made complete and he's teaching us about our conduct as Christians in the Church, in our relationships and as representatives of Jesus Christ, who are charged with the task of carrying out the Gospel and God's will wherever we are sent.

So now, *finally*, Paul gets to his conclusion...sort of.

I say sort of because you'll notice that in chapter 3 verse 1 we read "finally brethren." But, then again in chapter 4 verse 8 we read the same thing: "finally brethren."

Epistles are generally broken up into 4 main sections: **The Introduction**, where the writer introduces himself and greets the recipients of the letter, **The Statement Of Purpose**, where the writer explains why he's writing, **The Main Teaching**, where the writer explores that topic or issue, and then **The Closing**, where the writer concludes and usually makes some personal remarks.

Nearly all of the Epistles break up this way. Hebrews doesn't because we're not given the introduction at the beginning.

But Paul here seems like he's wrapping up, but then for an entire chapter he launches into a new idea. And what we see there is a wonderful example of how the Holy Spirit inspired the

authors of the Bible, not dictating words to them, but moving through them when they were penning the Scriptures. But also we see how natural a thing it is when the Holy Spirit impresses on us something that we hadn't planned before. Paul intended to finish up this letter, but the Holy Spirit moved in him to add these wonderful treasures of chapter 3 and the first 7 verses of chapter 4. It was an additional message from the Lord that the Philippians and all of us need to hear. And it all centers around this opening verse of chapter 3:

Philippians 3.1 - Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Again, Paul is going to teach us about our future reward in heaven, our conduct as Christians, our unity in the Church, our pressing on. And it all centers on this key: *To rejoice in the Lord.*

That word *rejoice* is used 7 times in this book alone. And here in verse 1 we see that the command to rejoice in the Lord is a needful thing that we all must be reminded of continually. Because, apparently Paul had already written letters to the church in Philippi. He says that he's writing the 'same things' to them. And then he explains that it's not a bad thing when teachers or preachers repeat the basic tenets of the faith.

The foundational points of Christianity need to be reiterated in our minds again and again and again because that's what creates a secure faith. A faith that is grounded and anchored in truth, not just in feeling or some wind of opinion that is influencing us. We must be fixed on the truth which God has revealed to us and we must purpose to fasten ourselves to that truth and repair any ties that are being weakened or frayed by the enemy or by weariness or by doubt.

I love this quote from Bible commentator William Barclay:

It may well be that one of our faults is our desire for novelty. The great saving truths of Christianity do not change; and we cannot hear them too often.

We do not tire of the foods which are the essentials of life. we expect to eat bread and to drink water every day; and we must listen again and again to the truth which is the bread and the water of life.

We may enjoy the 'fancy things' at meal times, but it is the basic foods on which we live.

In this text, the key to securing our faith is to be men who **rejoice**.

The word in the Greek means to be full of cheer, to be happy, to be well and to **thrive**.

As I said, the word is used a number of times in this letter alone. So, from this epistle, we can see how we are to rejoice.

First, in our text, we are to rejoice *in the Lord*.

If you desire fullness in your life, you must find your satisfaction in Christ Jesus. We've seen this not only taught, but demonstrated in the life of Paul, who was able to find contentment in any circumstance. A man who counted everything else in the world as rubbish as compared to knowing the Lord in personal intimacy. And if we compartmentalize our faith, if we just make it a small part of our life, an adjective rather than a verb, then we will not know satisfaction on the earth.

Jim Carrey is credited as saying:

“I hope everybody could get rich and famous and will have everything they ever dreamed of, so they will know that it’s not the answer.”

We’ve seen this already in our studies and throughout God’s word. A Christian cannot not find satisfaction unless they are willing to abandon themselves to the Lord and His will. Peace and contentment and confidence and happiness is found when we are thriving in the Lord. Rejoicing in His presence. Moving out our desires for temporal things and replacing them with the desires of heaven. It is a simple teaching, but one that must be repeated in our minds each and every day.

Second, we are to rejoice in *the preaching of Christ*. Chapter 1 verses 12 through 18. Paul explains that a disciple rejoices when the Gospel is preached and souls are saved.

If we have no passion for the saving of souls, then I would dare to say that our relationship with Christ is dormant and in need of revival.

The purpose of our Christianity is not to gather together as some exclusive social club. The purpose is to discover who God is and what He does and then to bring others into that saving knowledge so that they might be spared the destruction that is coming. We need to always keep evangelism at the forefront of our ministry and our activity. We rejoice in the preaching of Christ Jesus by participating in it as Godly witnesses and by supporting the Church at large which is sending out laborers *into* that harvest.

Third, we are to rejoice *when God uses us as sacrificial servants for His work*. Chapter 2 verses 17 and 18. That God would look down on me, in all my imperfection, in all my unworthiness and say, “Yes, I want to use you to impact lives and make a difference,” should fill me with cheer and joy. It should bring a vigor to my heart and my day to day living.

Often times I let the opposite happen. I’ll get annoyed when God asks me to do something or when I get treated like a servant. But to be an emissary for the King of Heaven is something almost unfathomable. God, in His grace and His mercy, uses you and me to bless the world and extend eternity to them.

Forth, Paul indicates in Philippians that we should rejoice in *the unity of the Church*. Chapter 2 and chapter 4 talk about our accord together as Christians in local churches. Which means that we are to thrive together as a Biblical church, carrying out the roles and the mission and the corporate worship that God reveals to us in the Scriptures. Church is not created to make you happy. Instead, you find spiritual happiness by being a part of Christ’s Body in the way that He intends. Being unified with others. Serving others. Putting others before yourself. By being disciplined and disciplining others. By praying together and studying together and ministering together. That’s the Church. Not that we come in for some sort of entertainment or to be pandered to. Unity within the Church means following the Biblical examples we read about and finding our place in our body of Believers so that we can serve one another and build together.

Fifth, we are to rejoice in *ministry*. Ministry encompasses evangelism and what happens in the Church, but Paul makes a special mention in verse 10 of chapter 4, where he talks about the

physical ministry that the church in Philippi was participating in. The fact that Christians will actually go out and help others. Show compassion to others. Love others. That's how we **thrive** in ministry. By presenting ourselves to God and actually saying, "Here I am, Lord, send me!" By supporting those who are being sent and asking God to give us a burden for our community or for people and places elsewhere in the world.

God moved in Paul to teach us that spiritual safety is found when we rejoice in the Lord and all that entails.

But we're never left without practical instruction on how to actually start doing that. We've already seen the example of Christ and of Paul and of Timothy and so many others.

So, when we look at these men who discovered a life filled with the Holy Spirit, we must ask ourselves: **WHAT ARE WE DOING?** Are we doing *anything* that they did? Do we have a Biblical mindset? Biblical desires? Biblical activities?

Do I want to spend time with God? Do I care about His Church? Do I have compassion on the lost and the suffering people of the world?

If we do not rejoice in the Lord, if we're not thriving in Him, then we will not be able to withstand the blows of life. And there will be blows. Life on earth is a full contact sport. It's a battle. Especially now that we are citizens of heaven living in a world that is ruled by the Satan.

Nehemiah said that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Paul called it our safety. Jesus said that no one would be able to take a Christian's joy from them.

So, if we stall in our walk with the Lord, we need to understand that our decisions and actions have led to that disconnect. More importantly, we need to understand that we can *return* to the dynamic Christian life that God offers us as long as we're willing to take the road of a disciple.

If we find ourselves with a lack of joy in these areas, the first place to look is at our personal holiness.

H.A. Ironside said, "Holiness and happiness are intimately linked." Remember, now that we're Christians, we can't live half in the world and half in the Kingdom. It creates vexation. That's what Lot tried to do. He made carnal decisions and chose to take the path of worldliness. He was not content to rejoice in Godliness. And what happened? It not only caused great destruction in his life and in his family, but the new testament reveals that his life was full of vexation and grief. That's not what God wanted for Lot. But his decisions led him away from the fullness of the Spirit and into the desolation of carnality.

The same trap is laid for us.

Acquire holiness and you will discover spiritual happiness. Set apart your life to serve the Lord. Wherever He has you. See how you can draw nearer to Him as an individual. How you can preach His saving love just by living a Christian life. Make yourself available to be used by God to further His Kingdom by sending support or being sent yourself. Unify yourself in the Church and find your God-ordained place in it. Value ministry and participate in reaching out to those near and far.

Isaiah 61.10-11 - I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.