

Rejoice
Philippians 4.

Romans 5:1-12

Hebrews 13: 1-17

Congregation: Psalm 16: 7-11

READ 1-7

Last week we went through the first 7 verses of this chapter and we saw Paul's instruction to the people of that church to be unified together in Christ. To put aside their petty differences and to focus on what truly matters and that is the gospel. As I said last week we do not have any insight into what the contention was between Eu-o-dia, and Syn-ty-chi, but we do know from Paul's writing here that they were both women of the faith who ministered with Paul.

This week I want to dive a little deeper into some of the stuff that we went over last week, namely, verse 4. Paul says to "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say Rejoice." He repeats himself here so it obviously is a very important point that Paul wants to make here. Last week we looked at this verse as being instruction to be a point of focus, if we are focusing on rejoicing in Christ and the things that he has done for us, then our trials, our differences should pale in comparison. It should create in us a pure joy, even while we maybe going through a tough season in our lives. Understanding that God sent his son to die for us, individually, that God in his sovereign will and mercy chose to save us individually out of a mass of fallen humanity should serve as a fountain of joy ever springing up in our hearts.

While in the first 3 verses here there is definitely instruction that we can take from this, it was written directly to specific people for a specific purpose but here in verse 4 is instruction not only for them, but for all Christians. It is sound advice, it is wise council and something that I think we need to remind ourselves of every day. We as humans tend to look toward our problems, worry, fret, become upset. We may start our day already on the wrong foot knowing that there are things that we will have to deal with that day. As we read in Matthew last week, Christ says, Worry not for tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble on its own.

I am guilty of this for sure, I tend to worry about tomorrow, I tend to get a little anxious about things that may happen and often find it difficult to not worry about tomorrow. Even James said that we should not worry about tomorrow for what is our life? It is a vapor and for a little time it will vanish away. We don't know what tomorrow brings, we do not know God's plan for our life so why fret, why worry. Ultimately what is happening when we do worry, is we are not putting our faith and trust in God as we ought. What it really is saying, is that we don't trust that he will take care of us. And I think that is one reason why it is so important to keep our focus on Christ, to rejoice in him always for what he has already done, and not be concerned about what may or may not happen.

So as you can see, while the first 3 verses here in chapter 4 are important in setting forth an example of mediation, of dealing with problems that arise between 2 fellow believers, this verse here really goes to the heart of the issue, and it applies not only in these times of contention or problems but throughout our entire lives. Rejoice, and again I say rejoice. So an interesting thing about this, is that Paul actually uses the word joy, or some version of it 16 times in this little letter. He starts right on in the first chapter verse 3. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy." Then again in verse 18. "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

Even when people were seeking to add to Paul affliction, he still found joy in the ministry, of the preaching of God's word even by those who meant it for harm. Then verse 25 and 26 “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.” Then over to chapter 2, verse 2.

“fulfill my joy, by being like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”, verse 16-18. “Holding fast to the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not labored in vain. Yes if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Then again, talking about Epaphroditus, verse 28 and 29, “Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem. Now over to chapter 3, verse 1. “Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious but safe.” and in chapter 4, verse 1 “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, stand fast in the Lord beloved.” verse 4. “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” then finally verse 10, “but I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.”

So seeing that this is a big focus on Paul I think it is important to look at this a little deeper than we did last week. And I hope will help us to understand how we are to rejoice in the Lord always. So first off, fairly simply as Paul says here Rejoice always. He isn't saying occasionally, or just when we are happy and when things are going our way, but always. I think back to our study in James, when he says, to count it all joys when we fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of faith produces patience and let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. Or in Roman's 5 that we read this morning we see the reason for our joy even in trials. It is because we have been justified by faith so that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Just that truth alone should cause joy to well up in our souls, having right standing with God because of his grace and mercy toward us.

And not only that, not only have we been justified by faith, we now have access to God, the sovereign lord and creator of all things. Let that just sink in a minute, we have access to God, we can come before him with our trials, with our problems, the very creator of all things will bend his ear to listen, and not only listen he says that he will care for us and keep us for we are his little children. Oh, brothers and sisters...why do we fret? Why do we worry so? Why do we let the cares of this world bury us in doubt and despair at times when God is in control? Should we not instead rejoice in his mercy, and rejoice in his grace toward us?

In the verses here that we read that Paul wrote that he used the word joy, or some version of it, it gives us an example and shows us what we have to rejoice in. The first thing that we see Paul rejoice in is in his prayers. he says that he prays for them often making requests for them with joy. He rejoices for the church at Philippi, for God's work there, and the ministry that they have. When we come to God, in prayer for each other, and for our churches we should do so rejoicing in the work that God has done in our lives, and in our fellowship together. Focusing our prayer life around rejoicing in what God has given and has done already helps recall to our hearts and minds the blessings we have received and how many times we have been delivered, or forgiven making our petty differences seem less and less important. Maybe pray rejoicing for one another instead of praying that someone will agree with you on minor issues of the faith.

Next we see Paul praying for the spreading of the gospel, and rejoicing in that even during times of trial. We must remember Paul's circumstance here when he wrote this book, he was imprisoned, chained to a guard night and day, awaiting trial. And yet, despite his circumstance he rejoices in the opportunity to minister to the guards, to minister to those around him, and rejoices even in those who are preaching to mock him and scorn him seeking to add to his pain and affliction.

Next we see Paul rejoices in the unity of the saints. Of being one mind, of being found worthy of the gospel. As I said last week, I think this is one of the places that our churches today struggle the most. Churches are full of factions, and people of different belief systems, and I think that fault goes to the preachers and the elders of the church for often times the focus has become more about existing as an organization and growing and being "successful" allowing odd doctrines, weird beliefs, and at times down right false doctrine come in under the idea of being unified and coming together. While unity is important, and indeed one of the focuses of this book, notice that Paul still takes a strong stance against false teaching, and against wrong doctrine. JC Ryle said, "Unity which is obtained by the sacrifice of truth is worth nothing. It is not the unity which pleases God."

Sadly it seems this is actually more of the type of unity we see, we see para-church organizations made up of all kinds of different faiths, different beliefs coming together in unity not around Christ and his word but around political parties, social issues, or the life and growth of the organization itself. This is not the unity that Paul is rejoicing in, this is not the type unity that we are called to have. If you look at us, even our little group here. We all come from different experiences, different walks of life, we have different likes, different dislikes, and in many ways are opposites. Yet we all share the love of Christ, and that love flows out from us to each other. So despite any of our personal differences, hobbies, interests or lack of things we may have in common we have Christ in common and have unity through him.

Another example is those who came to do pulpit fill for us, how even upon their first week of coming there was a sense, a type of unity that we all shared through a mutual love of our savior and a preaching of his word. This is the type of unity that Paul is talking about here, and this is the type of unity that he is rejoicing in, and this is the type of unity we should be seeking and also rejoicing in. Now the next thing that we see Paul rejoicing in here is an odd one as far as the world is concerned. For Paul says that he rejoices in the prospect of dying and being a martyr for Christ, for the sake of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is can be a difficult one to do, when facing even persecution and death yet to rejoice in it. In Acts chapter 5 we see an account of the apostles who were beaten and told to no longer teach about Christ, and then it says, that they departed from the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. It is only in Christ that we can have such a peace and understanding to rejoice even in the face of persecution and death. As Paul said in such circumstances our joy comes from the fact that we will be united with Christ, and it is at that time that we will fully realize our promised inheritance. Paul said that he was hard pressed to choose between life and death, knowing that to die is to be with Christ, but to remain is beneficial for the brothers and sisters that he loves. So we can see there is reason to rejoice, in both life, and in death. For Christ has conquered death, and even in this thing that mankind sees as the end, or as the thing to be most feared, Christians see it has the end of the race, the obtaining of the prize, and the beginning of life everlasting.

The last example we see of Paul rejoicing here is in the love of the brethren. We have not gotten there yet as we have been working our way through this book, but in verse 10 of chapter 4 as he is closing out this letter he says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again, though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity." Paul rejoices not only in the receiving of care, but also in the opportunity that was given to the Philippians to do so. Knowing full well, and understanding that all things come from God, and that it was God who had given them the opportunity to provide for his needs at that time, and in that he rejoiced.

So we see this joy that Paul has, in everything, not matter his circumstance, or what is happening around him is bound up in Christ. This is very important, for as we all know there is a type of joy offered by this world. There is the joy of anticipation of good things to come, the joy of good food, good company, of entertainment, of acquiring goods. None of these things are bad in themselves, but as we also know, all of these joys are temporary and fleeting. They only last for a little while and then we are off looking forward to the next one. This type of joy, rejoicing in such things can be a trap if left unchecked, it is a snare and if we are not careful and this becomes the focus of our joy, and these are the things that we rejoice in we become like addicts seeking to get our next fix. Our focus is then lead away from God, and it instead becomes our own desires, our own pleasures, and our own joy. Paul mentions these in chapter 3, vs 18. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and not tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame who set their minds on earthly things."

But in verse 17, Paul says that we should join in following his example, and take note of those who do and use them as a pattern for our lives. Paul's example of what to find joy in is what we should model in our own lives, it is the joy that we should be seeking. The only true joy that can be found is that which is found when we are abiding in Christ. It only comes from a personal, living relationship with him. It is only through him, and by him that we can have these joys, and rejoice as Paul rejoices. For when we abide in Christ we enjoy peace with God, that we read about in Romans 5. But that is not it, we also get help in times of trials and temptations. Skipping a head a bit again in verse 13 of chapter 4, Paul says that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. That same thing applies to all who are abiding in Christ.

Not only do we have peace with God, and help in times of trials and temptations, but we have assurance of God's deliverance, that he promises that he will never leave or forsake us as we read in Hebrews this morning, "Let your conduct be without covetousness, be content with such things as you have. For He himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what can man do to me." So this confidence in our assurance of deliverance does not mean that God will necessarily save us from death, or from persecution, but rather it is knowing that because we are his children, because we are abiding in him that he will care for us, and even in the event of our death, we can rejoice knowing that in death we will be united with him.

I think having a deeper more filled out understanding of what Paul means here by rejoicing in the lord, and rejoicing always will help us to know how we should be in all circumstances in our life. Having our focus being Christ's glory, being in prayer, and praising and rejoicing in Him will help to keep our heart and minds focused as we go through rough times. Once again Paul is an example of this, This Jew, who was the top of his class sort a speak, had power, money, and fame is here imprisoned, he is chained to a guard awaiting trial that could mean his death. All that the world seeks, all that it

desires, and it holds up as a standard to happiness and success Paul lost because of Christ.

But he doesn't see it as a loss, but rather a gain. I know we already talked about this a few weeks ago but as Paul says, Writing the same thing to you is not tedious but is safe. I think it is of great importance to get this right, to see Paul's example to us and puts this passage we are looking at today in perspective. Chapter 3, verse 4. "Thought I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Paul had everything, he was a rock star of the Jewish faith, but he says in verse 7.

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all thing and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of this sufferings being conformed to his death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

I wanted to read over that again to remind ourselves what Paul had, what Paul lost, and how all that he had lost he counts as gain for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The salvation that we have in our savior is priceless, and no amount of earthly wealth or fame can surpass the peace we have in Christ, the fellowship with have with the Father, and with each other. Understanding this, understanding the riches of God's glory, the treasure of salvation, and the glory and mercy of God's grace helps to put life in perspective does it not? This man Paul, mighty in Jerusalem reduced to a prisoner of Rome, the very people who held him in high esteem now seeking his death. Paul lost everything, yet says he has gained everything in Christ! And what does he do, he doesn't mourn the loss of his freedom, of his earthly goods, he rejoices in Christ! Despite all this, he says rejoice in the Lord always. Paul understands the riches of this faith,

Turn with me to Matthew 13, starting in verse 43, "Then the righteousness will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, he who has ears to hear, let him hear." Christ is saying, you better listen up for I am telling you of the value of this faith, of the treasure of salvation and reconciliation to God. "Again the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." If you look at a field, flat, plain ground..nothing exciting nothing interesting, nothing pleasing to the eye that would cause one to sell all his has to buy it, unless one knows the value that is hidden within. It is the same with each and every one of us who has been bought and paid for by the blood of Christ. We are this field, the treasure in us that is worth more then any amount of money is the blood of Christ that has been laid to our account. Do we think about that? Sometimes I think we get caught up in the rat race of this world, if we only could make a little more money, if we only had nice things, no..we have a treasure far beyond any that this world has to offer buried inside us. Rejoice in the Lord, give thanks to God for this treasure that he has hidden in this plain muddy unappealing field of your life.

Verse 45, "Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Same thing, Christ is this pearl of great price, and he is worthy of the sacrifice of all things, including our very life for the gift that he has given us. And what is this gift? It isn't God's promise that you will have all you desire, it isn't his promise that you will be healthy, wealthy, and powerful. Lets look at verse 47,

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels but threw the bad away. “ and here it is, “and so it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Without the treasure of Christ hidden in the field of your heart, you will be cast out and only those who Christ has purchased with his own life will be spared. I don't think we think often enough of this treasure we truly have. Paul does, Paul knows it, he understands it that even in his darkest hours he is richer than any king, he is mightier than any army, for even the power of death will not keep him from his heavenly reward. Let us be determined to think in such a way, to live in such a way worthy of the pearl of great price, worthy of the gospel of Christ, in all things, great and small, in times of joy, and times of trial and grief, rejoice in the Lord for this, That he has given himself as a ransom, as a payment so that we may be reconciled to God, so that we may stand before God at the judgment seat in confidence for it is now our righteousness, but it is that of his son's that is buried in our hearts. Rejoice in this, rejoice in the lord always, and again I say, rejoice.