

“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”:
FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD

“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS”:
(PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7)

I. God of Joy

○ Habakkuk 3:17-18: ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

II. Personal Pleas (Phil 4:1-3)

- A. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he was in jail in Rome.
- B. Philippians 4 begins with Paul encouraging some people who are very precious to him.
 - 1. In verse 1, he exhorts his dear friends to “stand firm thus *in the Lord*...”
 - 2. He also urges two women Euodia and Syntyche who were at loggerheads with one another “to agree *in the Lord*” (v 1).
- C. The phrase “in the Lord” suggests that the Lord Jesus is somehow the Realm in which believers live; or else he is the Power under which believers live. “In the Lord” implies that every good thing we need is in Christ Jesus.

III. Rejoice in the Lord Always (Phil 4:4)

- A. The phrase appears again in verse 4: “Rejoice *in the Lord* always; again I will say, rejoice” (v 4).
- B. This is a commandment to be happy in the Lord. It is a commandment to celebrate in the Lord. And to do this not merely once. Not just twice. But “always.” And almost as if to drive his point home, Paul says: “again I will say, rejoice.” So this is not a light point.
- C. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? It is to rejoice in...
 - 1. what he has done for us.
 - 2. the Lord Jesus himself, to let the Lord be our chief happiness.
- D. We must not doubt that God wants us to draw happiness from him.

IV. Do Not Be Anxious (Phil 4:5-7)

- A. The Lord also teaches us how to deal with our worries (vv 5-6).
 - Phil 4:5-6: “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
- B. The Lord calls us to bring our fears and concerns to him; through prayer and supplication, but also with “thanksgiving.”
- C. Thanksgiving...
 1. reminds us of all that the Lord has already given to us.
 2. helps us to nurture our trust in the Lord, and also our love for the Lord and joy in the Lord.
- D. When we practice bringing our fears to the Lord in this way—with petitions *and* thanksgiving—“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds *in Christ Jesus*.”
- E. The Lord has given us the necessary conditions for long-lasting, unshakeable happiness. These conditions cannot be changed by events around us, because they are rooted in eternal things. They are rooted in the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we give thanks to God, we remind ourselves of these conditions. We bring them in our hearts. We strengthen the memory of them in our minds. In doing so, we preserve and nurture our happiness in the Lord.

V. Feasting on God’s Goodness (Phil 4:8-9)

- A. Paul calls us to fill our minds with good things. I believe that he is still teaching us how to grow in our experience of the peace of God:
 - Phil 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.”
- B. If we want to experience the peace of God on a day-to-day, moment-by-moment basis, we need to be actively filling our minds with wholesome content.
- C. Our bodies need to be engaged in the practice of wholesome things as well—life according to the Gospel.
 - Phil 4:9: “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

VI. Rejoicing in Action (Phil 4:10-18)

- A. From verse 10 all the way to 18, Paul expresses thankfulness for the concern that his friends have shown him:
- Phil 4:10: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.”
- B. Through Paul’s example, we see that rejoicing in the Lord encompasses the good things the Lord does for us (in Paul’s case, it was enabling people to care for him).
- C. When good things come our way, when we receive words or deeds that encourage us in the Lord, we are to receive these as from the Lord and use them as occasions to rejoice in the Lord.
- D. Yet, Paul teaches us that rejoicing in the Lord is not dependent on receiving good things.
- Phil 4:11-13: “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”
- E. But Paul does not become “super-spiritual.” He continues to express appreciation for his friends (vv 14-18).
- Phil 4:14-18: “Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”
- F. Through Paul’s example, we learn that rejoicing in the Lord involves being thankful for the material gifts that he gives us and being content in the Lord even when we have little.

VII. God Will Supply Our Every Need (Phil 4:19-20)

- A. “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory *in Christ Jesus*” (v 19).

- B. Again, we have a reference to our union with Christ: “in Christ Jesus.”
- C. We are able to rejoice in the Lord Christ Jesus, because it is in him that we receive every good thing we need.
—In the Lord Christ Jesus, God provides us with every blessing.
- D. Paul closes with thanksgiving: “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” (v 20).

VIII. Rejoicing in the Lord

The Lord Jesus wants us to rejoice in him. He wants us to be happy in him all the days of our lives. He wants us to find our sweetest laughter, our most precious delights in him.

- A. Rejoicing in the Lord is not an optional extra. It is a perpetual command. It is a happy command. But a command no less.
- B. Rejoicing in the Lord is...
 1. how we are able to stand firm in the Lord (v 1)
 2. keep our hearts and minds in the Lord (v 7)
- C. Rejoicing in the Lord is...
 1. protected when we actively entrust our fears to the Lord (v 6).
 2. nurtured when we give thanks for all that the Lord has given to us (v 6).
 3. nourished when we fill our minds with wholesome thoughts (v 8) and strive to live in accordance with the Gospel as Paul did (v 9).
- D. Rejoicing in the Lord happens when we...
 1. truly appreciate all the earthly blessings that he gives us (v 10).
 2. are still contented in the Lord even when we have little (v 12).
- E. Rejoicing in the Lord is rooted in the promise of God himself: “my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (v 19).
- F. God gives us his very best—his only Son Jesus Christ in whom every spiritual blessing is found (Eph 1:3).
- G. He calls us to come to Christ for everything that we need. He calls us to receive Christ as his gift of joy.

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Is there anything about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. What does the phrase "in the Lord" entail?
3. The Lord wants to be our deepest joy. What does this teach us about his character, his attitude toward us?
4. What do we learn from Paul's example about what it means to rejoice in the Lord (vv 10-18)?
5. Based on Phil 4, how do we protect, nurture, and nourish our rejoicing in the Lord?
6. Do you see rejoicing in the Lord as something optional? Are you aware that the Lord wants you to be happy in him, to rejoice in him?
7. Phil 4:19: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Pray for the grace to believe this promise more and more.