

“Rejoice in the Lord Always”

Philippians 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again I will say, rejoice!”

Sorrow and grief are all around us. We find it in war, death, failure, sickness, injury, disease, and a host of other unpleasantries. These are found in realms personal, familial, societal, national, and international. No one is exempt from them. Nevertheless, the believer in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is exhorted to “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

We here will consider:

1. What is it to rejoice?
2. In what should we rejoice?
3. When should we rejoice?

I. What is it to rejoice? To *rejoice* is to “be glad”, as the Greek word (*chairo*, pronounced *khah'ee-rō*) is elsewhere translated (e.g., Luke 15:32).

When Biblical saints rejoiced “they rejoiced *with exceedingly great joy*” (Matthew 2:10) and “rejoiced ... *greatly*” (Philippians 4:10), were “*exceedingly glad*” (Matthew 5:12) and “glad with *exceeding joy*” (1 Peter 4:13).

And they did “make merry” (Luke 15:32), “leap for joy” (Luke 6:23), “praise God with a loud voice” (Luke 19:37), and “glorify the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:48).

The heart of the child of God is no place for gloom and doom, sour and dour! “Rejoice Again I will say, rejoice!”

II. In what should we rejoice? “Rejoice in the *Lord*.” Unbelievers “rejoice in *iniquity*” (as in 1 Corinthians 13:6) and in sinful pleasures that soon pass away. But Christians rejoice in their Lord.

1. *Rejoice in the Lord's incarnation.*

Undoubtedly His mother Mary and her husband Joseph rejoiced when He was born. Imagine their rejoicing when she gave birth to God's Messiah and their Savior.

The angels who announced His birth rejoiced, “praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:13f).

The shepherds who saw Him on the night of His birth rejoiced, “glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them” (Luke 2:20).

Apart from the Lord's incarnation, we have no good reason for true rejoicing. Because of His incarnation, we have salvation and everlasting joy.

However, the devil and his demons did not rejoice at the birth of the Lord. Never do they obey the exhortation “Rejoice in the Lord always!”

2. *Rejoice in the Lord's power* – which is healing and delivering (as in Luke 13:10-17). There was in attendance on this occasion “a woman who had a spirit of infirmity [i.e., a malevolent demon] eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up” (v.11). Jesus described her as “whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years” (v.16). When “Jesus laid His hands on her, ... immediately she was made straight, and *glorified God*” (v.13) – “and all the multitude *rejoiced* for all the glorious things that were done by Him” (v.17).

And all who delight in His healing and delivering power will do so!

But the legalistic observers, instead of rejoicing at this miracle, became indignant because Jesus performed it on the Sabbath (v.14). Therefore do not be surprised if legalistic people find it impossible to obey the exhortation “Rejoice in the Lord always!”

3. *Rejoice in the Lord's salvation.* This was a constant theme in Old Testament days, even before Jesus' incarnation, whom they knew to be not only their Savior but also their Salvation.

They looked forward to His coming and confessed: “Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, *let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad*” (Psalm 147:5; 53:6); “And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; *we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation*’” (Isaiah 25:9).

However, so certain were they that He would come that they rejoiced in Jehovah's Salvation even before He arrived (1 Samuel 2:1): “My heart *rejoices* in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I *rejoice* in Your salvation.”

Surely we who live in the day of Jehovah's Salvation should not rejoice in His Salvation any less than they did!

III. *When should we rejoice?* “Rejoice in the Lord *always*.”

Note well that Paul repeated this exhortation not only in this verse, but also elsewhere: (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18): “*Rejoice always, ... in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*”

1. *Continue the rejoicing you commenced when your Christian life began.*

i. You were like the *Gentiles of Antioch* when you first understood the gospel (Acts 13:48): “Now when the Gentiles heard this, *they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord*. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

ii. You were like *Zacchaeus* when the Lord called you to come to Him (Luke 19:6): “So he made haste and came down, and received Him *joyfully*.”

iii. You were like the *Ethiopian eunuch* when you followed the Lord in Christian baptism (Acts 8:39): “Now when they came up out of the water, ... he went on his way *rejoicing*.”

2. *Rejoice in times of bliss.*

i. Rejoice *when you are reminded that your name is eternally enrolled in glory* (Luke 10:20): Jesus tells His disciples to “rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

And rejoice in all that this implies: Rejoice that God in His free and sovereign grace set His love on you before the foundation of the world, and then chose you to salvation, and that therefore your name is from and throughout eternity in glory indelibly “written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

ii. Rejoice *when you hear that Christ is preached* – as did Paul the apostle (Philippians 1:18): “Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

Some rejoice when they hear the preaching of their favorite doctrine.

Some rejoice when they hear the preaching of their confession of faith, creed, or denominational distinctives.

Some rejoice when they hear their preacher preach himself and exalt their “free will”.

The only thing Paul rejoiced to hear preached was Christ!

Do you rejoice with him?

iii. Rejoice *when you are reminded of your liberty in Christ and freedom from the Law of Moses* – as did the early Christians (Acts 15:31).

Let us set forth the incidents which resulted in this rejoicing: “certain men came down [to Antioch, Syria] from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (v.1). And “some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses’” (v.5). “Now the apostles and elders [in Jerusalem] came together to consider this matter” (v.6). They after deliberation sent a letter to the Christians in Antioch declaring in essence that Christians under the New Covenant are not required to be circumcised according to Old Covenant custom or to keep the Law of that covenant (vv.23-30). “When they had read it [the reminder of their liberty in Christ and freedom from the Law of Moses], they *rejoiced* over its encouragement” (v.31).

This is a good reason for rejoicing!

It does not surprise us that people who choose to remain under the Law’s bondage do not rejoice in the liberty obtained by Christ.

iv. Rejoice *when the Lord saves a lost soul* – for He says “*Rejoice with me*, for I have found my sheep which was lost!”

(Luke 15:6).

Also, when the Prodigal Son returned home, his father said, “It was right that we should *make merry and be glad*, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32).

And if God’s angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10), surely God’s saints on earth should join them in their rejoicing.

3. *Rejoice in times of adversity.*

i. Rejoice *when you experience physical deprivation* (Habakkuk 3:17f): “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls – yet I will *rejoice in the LORD*, I will *joy in the God of my salvation*. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.”

If you rejoice in the God of your salvation in such times, He will give to you strength to outrun your troubles and bring you out of the depths into which they have placed you.

ii. Rejoice *when you experience grief* – being “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). Saints rejoice even at the death of a fellow-saint. We do not “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

iii. Rejoice *when you suffer for Christ’s sake* (Matthew 5:11f): “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad* [‘and leap for joy’ (Luke 6:23)], for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (cp. Luke 6:22f; Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:13).

iv. Rejoice *when you suffer for the sake of other Christians* – as did Paul when he said, “I now *rejoice* in my sufferings for you” (Colossians 1:24). (Note that he here practiced what he exhorted in our present text.)

Paul here expresses what is an especial joy of gospel ministers. This sinful world inflicts suffering upon Christ’s preachers because of their ministry to believers. (Indeed, Paul wrote these words from a Roman prison [see 4:10, 18].) But such suffering confirms their call to the ministry – even as Christ had told Paul at his conversion, “I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:16).

Believer, your minister will suffer at the hands of this world because of His witness of Christ to you. But he will rejoice when he suffers for you. Rejoice when the world considers your minister worthy of suffering for the sake of Christ – and you!

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

– Daniel E. Parks