

Series: God Is Near #1621

Title: Philippians 4.4-5

Joy in Jesus

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Last time we began to talk about the nearness of God in our lives. *God Is Near*. Our text is Philippians chapter 4, verses 4-8. And in verse 5 of that fourth chapter we read this, "**The Lord is near.**" Do get that highlighted in your Bible. Philippians 4, verse 5. Now, as we encounter this text, we want to know something of the theme, background, and setting for the Book of Philippians. The theme, as we said, is the joy that we have in Jesus. Finding our joy in Jesus is what this letter is all about.

The Apostle Paul is the author. And the recipients are the believers in the church at this place called Philippi. I have had the pleasure of visiting there on multiple occasions and it is one of my favorite cities in all of Greece. This was an important city in Paul's day, which had the status of a Roman colony and was situated along a Roman road. It was also located nearby mountains which contained gold mines. Concerning the people of God, the Philippian church was the first church Paul founded in Europe. He came there on his second missionary journey after receiving the vision in the night from the man of Macedonia. You can read all about that in Acts chapter 16. (Acts 16.)

You might well remember two significant conversions to Christ in Philippi. Lydia, by the riverside. And the jailer after the earthquake struck his jail but the prisoners did not escape. Those converts were amongst the new believers who established the church at Philippi. And, as we read the accounts in Acts and Philippians we learn that Paul loved those Philippians as they did him. He writes to them to tell them of his circumstances (more on that in a minute), to explain why he was sending Epaphroditus back to them, to warn the church about false teachers, and to thank them for a very generous financial gift they had given to Paul's ministry among the poor in Jerusalem. This is a wonderful letter sent and received in the love and joy of the Spirit of God. I recommend you read all of it. It is very readable and applicable for your life.

And speaking of background, especially as we consider the theme of joy, we really need to know that Paul wrote of circumstances in his life and the Philippians received this letter in the circumstances of their lives, circumstances unlikely to be joyful. Paul writes from his prison cell in Rome. He is a prisoner, in chains, with an uncertain future and he writes about...joy! And the Christians in Philippi received the letter dirt poor, being persecuted for Christ, and being attacked by false teachers. Besides all that, two prominent women in the church were fighting with one another and causing disunity among the congregation. And yet, taking all this into account, *joy in Jesus* is the clear theme.

Note this: Jesus is mentioned over forty times! Joy is mentioned nineteen times. As you read the text look for the name "Jesus" and "Christ" and the words "joy" and "rejoice." Highlight each one and you will find a whole lot of highlights in your Bible. I will not take the time to read them all, but we have this in verse 4 of our passage. Philippians 4, verse 4 says, "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!**" And those words come from a man who was beaten and thrown into a jail in Philippi. Again, read Acts chapter 16. And those words were read by Christians who faced great, practical threats to their very lives. Finding their joy in Jesus, they overcame their many troubles and struggles and were victorious.

This message should resonate with us. We've got all sorts of twenty-first century trouble. And we are very tempted to complain, to get down, to be very unhappy, and to think nobody knows the struggles we have had; nobody knows the pain and heartache. We are Christians, to be sure, but we are *not* finding our joy in Jesus. And this is a big problem for so many of us. Well, then, Philippians is the Book for all who need this instruction and correction. This is not a complete study on the Book of Philippians. We will only be looking at a few verses. But my prayer is that what follows in the days ahead will be of immense value to you and to anyone you invite to join us who needs to hear and to *know* that God is near. And that knowing this, we will all find our *joy in Jesus*.

In John's Gospel chapter 15 and verse 11 Jesus said, **"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."** I love that. Life in Christ immerses us in joy. The Lord wants His joy in us and for our joy to be made full. This is not joy in the sense of a feeling or an emotion. Our feelings and emotions are fleeting. They are constantly changing. What the Lord speaks of here is an ongoing, continuous, steady conviction that Jesus loves me and everything that happens in my life is under His sovereign, providential loving care and protection. True joy, Jesus joy does not come and go. It is not based on our inward or outward circumstances. Jesus plants His joy in us so that our joy may always be full no matter what we go through.

This is precisely why Paul begins in verse 4 of Philippians 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always..." Notice rejoice *in the Lord*. He does not only say "Rejoice always." He says "Rejoice in the Lord always." Why do we rejoice? We rejoice because we are in the Lord. And for how long do we rejoice? We rejoice *always*. See! There it is. Joy is ongoing, continuous, and steady. So as we get to know the Lord Jesus, as we fellowship with Him, spending time each day together, joy will permeate our lives.

I am thinking of the promise of Psalm 1, verses 1-3, **"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers."** (Psalm 1.)

Christians must be joyful people. If you belong to Christ but you lack this permanent joy, go to God in prayer and ask Him to minister to you His joy. Stop walking in the counsel of the wicked and standing along the path of sinners. Get far away from the seat of scoffers. Make your delight the law of the Lord and meditate on God's Word, His law, day and night, night and day. Devour the Bible, men and women of God. Then, you will have this joy. And you will become like a tree firmly planted by streams of water. You will yield fruit in season and your leaf will not wither. Whatever you do will prosper.

"In the Lord..." Those are such significant words. We find our joy in the Lord. Never outside of the Lord. And certainly knowing that the Lord is near gives us the confidence to receive our joy from Him and to exude that joy in ourselves and out to those around us. We are talking about the theme, background, and setting for our text. And here is a good place to add some comments on the next phrase in Philippians 4, and that is in verse 5. Listen as I read it, "Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near." We will get to "the Lord is near," but what does the Apostle mean by inserting this instruction, "Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men."

Frankly, I found the placement of these words a bit odd the first times I read this. I would have thought Paul would move from "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (to)...The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing," etcetera but that is not what he does. He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" And then he adds, "Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men" before adding, "The Lord is near." Why?

We have some time to begin an answer. And first let's take up the Greek word translated in the reading "gentle spirit." This is actually a fascinating ancient Greek word that can be translated in a number of ways. Don't worry about writing these down. Just listen as I read them: mildness, patience, yieldingness, gentleness, modesty, forbearance, sweet reasonableness, friendliness, magnanimity, charity towards the faults of others, mercy towards the failures of others, unwillingness to litigate or contend, leniency, big heartedness, and moderation. That's quit the list of options. But perhaps the best word in the English language is *graciousness*. Graciousness.

"Let your graciousness be known to all people." Let's pick up here next time. And we will find the connection between rejoicing in the Lord always, our gentle spirit or graciousness, and the Lord being near. Join us because God Is!

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