

## Rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 3)

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2012

### Intro

- How do you cope when it seems the enemy is throwing everything he has at you? Does it make you think God has rejected you or for some reason wants you to fail, or do you think the opposite- that God is about a great work in you and that the tough time is a confirmation that you are on the right course?
- Today we are going to look at a tough situation that the Apostle Paul was facing. One of the Churches he had planted, Philippi heard about his ordeal and sent one of their best men Epaphroditus to encourage him. Unfortunately Epaphroditus then got sick and nearly died and Paul had to send him back! It seemed like a disaster.
- The situation was that Paul was in prison in (probably) Rome awaiting possible execution- we don't know if he was released at this time, but what we do know from history is that he was beheaded in Rome, so this is likely to be near to the end of his life.
- What follows is an excerpt from the letter Paul sent to them explaining how he is doing, but they get more than that- he really let's them know how he would like them to be doing! Let's read this letter as if written to us, because it is how god would like us to be doing today.

### Read Phil 3:1-4:9

#### 1. Rejoice in the Lord- *jubilation*

- **Four times in this passage- 3:1 'rejoice in the Lord'- 3:3; 4:4 (twice).** Paul must have considered rejoicing to be really important, so he mentions it 4 times here.
- **It takes faith** to rejoice in god when you are going through a tough time, but this is what Paul and others advocate in the Bible. Yes, grieve, yes, sorrow, but never despair- set your hope on what is coming when Christ is revealed.
- The Philippians must have recalled Paul and Silas' rejoicing in their prison. The Church in Philippi was started by Paul during his second missionary journey as a response to a vision of a man calling from Macedonia 'come and help us'. The story is in Acts 16. As a result Paul travelled with his companions to visit the key city in Macedonia, Philippi. There they met Lydia a dyer of purple cloths from the city of Thiatyra- she became a Christian and her house became the base for their mission. Then there was a slave girl who told people's fortunes. She kept telling everyone who Paul and his companions were until Paul commanded the Python Spirit that was inside her to come out. As a result of this she could no longer tell people's fortunes and Paul and Silas his companion were thrown into prison. First they were whipped and then thrown into the stocks in prison. At midnight they were praying and singing praises to God when God sent an earthquake, opened all the prison doors and loosed all their chains- the jailer was about to kill himself but instead was led to the Lord by Paul, along with his whole household and they were immediately baptised. It often seemed that Paul's response to hardship was to praise God- and this time in Rome was no exception! *It was the rejoicing that broke the power of the evil one and released the deliverance of God.*
- 2Cor 6:10 – when Paul lists the afflictions he has gone through for Christ he says 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing'.
- who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by

fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1Pet 1:5-9.

- "for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." - Satan wanted to take a wonderful moment in Israel's history- the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem and preaching of God's laws to bring discouragement when the people realised how much they had messed up. Instead the Levites encouraged rejoicing saying 'the joy of the Lord is your strength'- this is a supernatural joy that looks to God as the source of our joy rather than our circumstances.
- To the Philippians Paul couldn't do what he loved anymore it seemed- preach the gospel and plant Churches- it seemed like the devil had won, but Paul writes back saying that they should rejoice and that all this has happened to further the gospel- more Christians were preaching the gospel- many incensed by Paul being in chains for preaching and others seeing it as an opportunity to win more converts, but Paul rejoiced anyway because the result was more gospel preaching.
- Also it became an opportunity for him to witness to the soldiers etc as they all realised he was in chains for the gospel, and they were a 'captive audience' being chained up to him, so they would ask 'what is the gospel?' As a result he finished the letter 'all the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Ceasar's household'- 4:22, i.e. his recent converts.

(On the night he was robbed:) I thank Thee first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed and not I who robbed.-Matthew Henry

- **Thankfulness is evangelistic**- Not complaining- 2:14- 2:16 'holding fast the word of life'=holding out as if offering a cup of wine to a guest was how the phrase 'holding fast' was used in literature in Paul's day. It means the gospel is appealing to others when we don't spoil it and complain- then we stick out like stars in the dark sky, because the world is so good at complaining.
- **Peace of mind**- prayer with thanksgiving. Cultivate attitude of thanks. Protects us from anxiety.
- Satan is a thief- but he can only steal our joy if we allow him to. When was the last time you truly rejoiced in your saviour?

It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness. You say, 'If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.' You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.- Charles Haddon Spurgeon

How rich is anyone who can simply see human faces- Corrie Ten Boom

## 2. Remember the Gospel- justification

- **3:9 'not having my own righteousness'**
- Thinking we are something when we are not- film stars, 'top Christians'
- The circumcision group- saved by believing in Christ AND being circumcised, obeying the law of Moses. Paul here says he wished they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves! Gal 5:12. Here in Phil 3:2 he nicknames them not the circumcision but the 'Mutilation'!
- Paul before knowing Christ far more zealous and Jewish etc. Than them- had all the brown points but when met Christ the penny dropped- he realised he was in reality spiritually bankrupt without receiving the free gift of Christ's righteousness.
- High priest Joshua standing before God in filthy rags in Zech 3:1-5. Our good works without Christ are filthy rags- 'rubbish'- dog's muck, or scraps chucked to dogs (literally Phil 3v.8 **skubalon**). But He replaces our rags with robes of righteousness. Grace alone- righteousness by faith- i.e. a gift
- Deception that we are saved by good works rather than trusting in Christ- church attendance, praying, worship, reading the Bible, being 'good', being christened/baptised, having Christian parents. If we could earn the right to get to

heaven then Christ died for nothing. If we could get saved by doing these things then why did the Son of God have to suffer so badly? Let's not throw His sacrifice back in His face, let's fully embrace the reality that 'it is finished!- by HIM!'

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. **Prov 14:12**

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **Rom 3:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Rom 6:23**

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. **Rom 10:9-10**

What is justification? It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Savior. It is not mere pardon. Pardon is a free forgiveness of past offenses. It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. Justification has respect to the law, and to God's future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as righteous--as if he had not sinned. The basis for this is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, merit that we can plead as if it were our own. He has taken our place and died in our stead; He has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own heads if He had not interposed. **Albert Barnes.**

there was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He cabled the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, "I'm having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?" Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over! The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, "How much is this going to cost me?" So when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce." That is justification! W. Wiersbe, **Key Words of the Christian Life, p. 16**

'Just-if I'd never sinned'

Grace=God's Riches At Christ's Expense

- Do you have an assurance of salvation? God wants you to.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. - **1John 5:13**

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **John 17:3**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. **John 3:16-18**

- Procrastination-  
"I will to-morrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it;  
To-morrow comes, to-morrow goes, And still thou art 'to do it';  
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,  
Until the day of death is one, And judgment is the other."
- The key elements- faith and repentance- both essential, they go hand in hand and are like twins. Sorrow for sin without faith for salvation is not saving repentance, neither is faith without sorrow for sin- the two are necessary- repent and believe (Mark 1:15).

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test? **2Cor 13:5**

### 3. Press on - sanctification

- **3:14 'I press on for the goal'**
- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works,

so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph 2:8-10

Grace properly understood makes us active not passive- Paul wanted to truly KNOW Christ by living in the reality of the power of Christ's resurrection life as well as knowing what it is to suffer for Christ even unto death. Although Paul knew complete assurance of salvation and that all the work had been done by Christ to secure his salvation it did not mean there was no work to do. Christ had chosen him for a life of gradually getting to experientially know Christ more and more intimately- Paul said v12 that he hadn't already attained or been perfected- that was still to come- 'I'm not there yet, I haven't arrived, God hasn't finished with me yet. Sanctification is only fully complete in glory- there is always more maturing and growing in God we can do in this life- and that was Paul's desire.

- Paul contrasts his old life to the growing reality of his new life in v10, which is also his aims- to KNOW Christ-- i.e. know Him deeper- v10 'to know'= 'to know by experience'- (gnomai). To know the POWER of His resurrection- power=dunamis=the source of our word dynamite- Paul's increasing experience in life now was increasingly knowing God's resurrection power to live holy and do signs and wonders in the power of God. The last aspect he is living for is to understand by experience what it means to suffer for Christ, even unto death and come out the other side in a glorious resurrection- we too have to suffer for Christ- we too may even be martyred.
- V11 'if by any means to attain to the resurrection from the dead'- exanastasin=ex 'out/out from' resurrection- the 'out-and-out' resurrection only used here in NT. Paul desired to attain to a life where he was resurrected from a particular type of death- the death of a martyr- he is not here hoping he is good enough to get to heaven, but rather that he continues to have the passion to live for Christ and make the ultimate sacrifice for Him just as Christ did for him. That is one of the goals he is hoping to attain to.
- What has Christ 'laid hold of you for?' v12. Are you doing it?
- 3:17- 'brethren join in following my example' Have you settled, or, like Paul are you desiring to 'know Christ' deeper.
- V20 'Our citizenship is in heaven'- Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12):

'After the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C some Roman soldiers were order by Anthony to live there. Then in 30 B.C. Octavian forced some people in Italy to give up their homes and settle in Philippi and elsewhere. These Philippian residents were given special privileges including the 'Italic right'. This meant that the colonists, in return for thei displacement, were treated as if their land were part of Italian soil. So the residents were citizens of Rome, their 'mother city', and enjoyed the full rights of Roman citizenship, including exemption from taxes.' (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, pgs 647-648, 1987 Victor Books).

- Paul uses this fact to say 'live like you are a citizen ('conduct yourselves' 1:27- lit. 'live as citizens'), but not of Rome, but rather heaven (3:20)'. Behave like you are a citizen of Heaven. In the world but not of it. Is this how you are living? Are you living as if you are shortly going to be arriving in Heaven? Are you living as a stranger here from another place?

#### **4. Agree- co-operation**

- **3:16, 4:2 'be of the same mind'.**
- **1:27-** Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
- Euodia and Syntyche. 4:2- Paul employs them to be of the same mind in the Lord. These were good women, mature in Christ. They had both worked together alongside Paul and others for the cause of the gospel, but were now not talking- he urges them to sort it out and asks 'true Syzygus' a name which means 'yoke-fellow'

to intervene.

- Euodia means 'prosperous journey' and Syntche means 'pleasant acquaintance'- they were not living up to their names. Are we living up to our names? Is there someone that is grating with us, someone we try to avoid where possible in the body. Paul would urge, for the sake of Christ agree together, be mature enough to sort it out and cover over with love.
- These women were cultivating a critical spirit and Paul knew that this becomes a death nail to Church growth. As we embark on a new venture having a Church building let's make sure we don't just do physical building work but also look to the strength of our relationships one with the other.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together. **Vesta Kelly.**

During World War II, Hitler commanded all religious groups to unite so that he could control them. Among the Brethren assemblies, half complied and half refused. Those who went along with the order had a much easier time. Those who did not, faced harsh persecution. In almost every family of those who resisted, someone died in a concentration camp. When the war was over, feelings of bitterness ran deep between the groups and there was much tension. Finally they decided that the situation had to be healed. Leaders from each group met at a quiet retreat. For several days, each person spent time in prayer, examining his own heart in the light of Christ's commands. Then they came together. Francis Schaeffer, who told of the incident, asked a friend who was there, "What did you do then?" "We were just one," he replied. As they confessed their hostility and bitterness to God and yielded to His control, the Holy Spirit created a spirit of unity among them. Love filled their hearts and dissolved their hatred- **Our Daily Bread, October 4, 1992.**

## Summary

- Rejoice in the Lord- jubilation
- Remember the Gospel- *justification*
- Press on- *sanctification*
- Agree- *co-operation*

## Song

*All I once held dear*