

Introduction

1. I had childhood friend who, upon growing-up, signed every letter w/Philippians 4:4. (Show)
 - a. *What's so special about Phil. 4:4 that she'd add it to every signature? Do you know?*
 - b. *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!* (Show) Then I understood.
 - c. That little verse was how she stayed positive, encouraged and uplifted.
 - d. And by adding it to all her letters she was passing it along to everyone else.
2. So meaningful is this verse that it was made into a popular song sung by millions. (Show)
 - a. If you notice the category under which it is listed it reads **THANKFULNESS**.
 - b. This song is appropriate to be sung at Thanksgiving. Let me tell you why.
 - i. Joy or rejoicing is the inner disposition from which thanksgiving flows.
 - ii. Thanksgiving is an outward expression of praise that arises from joy in the heart.
 - iii. Thankfulness then is the natural outgrowth of rejoicing in the heart.
3. This little verse encourages with the secrets to a rejoicing heart. Show Title/Text.

I. Rejoicing is God's gift to believers.

A. Rejoice in the Lord.

1. That little expression, *in the Lord*, means two things.
 - a. **One**, it means that we are a Christian – the Lord Jesus has come to live in us.
 - b. **Two**, it means that when He comes He brings the joy of the Lord with Him.
2. So it means Jesus is the **SOURCE** of our joy and the **REASON** why we have joy.
3. Remember Nehemiah said this in Nehemiah 8:10. Joy of the Lord is your strength.
 - a. Joy of the Lord = Hebrew construct = Lord is origin, source, or author of the joy.¹
 - b. Jewish people who returned after captivity heard Ezra teach them the Law.
 - c. They realized that Babylonian Captivity & all their suffering was because of sin.
 - d. They were grieved and crushed & weighed down w/sorrow & remorse.
 - e. Nehemiah reminded them the same God Who judged them also forgave them.
 - f. Lord = Yahweh, God's personal Name reminding them of covenant relationship.
 - g. God was their Father Who loved them, forgave them, and would still bless them.
 - h. Their joy in God'd give them strength to go on despite what their past had been.
4. Phil. 4:4 = inner joy: Jesus loves me. He saved me. He's w/me. He's good.

B. Reason Why Many People Are Not Happy

1. Dennis Wholey wrote a book *Are You Happy?* Only 20% of Americans are happy.
 - a. Think of that. If we're typical of most Americans only 2-out-of-10-of-us is happy.
 - b. I think I know why. Most Americans don't know only the Lord can make happy.
2. Who do you suppose said this? It won't surprise you once you know who. (Show)
 - a. I sit in my house in Buffalo & sometimes I get so lonely it's unbelievable. Life has been so good to me. I've got a great wife, good kids, money, my own health – and I'm lonely & bored....I often wondered why so many rich people commit suicide. Money sure isn't a cure-all.²
 - b. Simpson said this long before was convicted in civil court of 2 infamous murders.
 - c. In his boredom/aloneness had he turned to Lord found only Jesus satisfies us.

¹ "origin or source (including authorship); Noun 2 is the author or source of Noun 1." Putnam, F. C. (2002). *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student's Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (p. 18). Quakertown, PA: Stylus Publishing.

² O. J. Simpson. *People Magazine*, 1978.

- d. Imagine how things could've been different had he discovered that?
- e. Pain/suffering inflicted on others might've never happened if found joy in Jesus.

II. Rejoicing cannot be canceled by our circumstances.

A. Always

1. No matter what our circumstances are we can always rejoice in the Lord.
2. How can that be? Paul, how can that be because some situations are painful?
3. Some things in life are hard to take. Aren't you being unrealistic? Rejoice always?

B. What's The Answer?

1. Paul is not saying we should never feel sad over losses/hurts – not deny our pain.
2. But our earthly losses remind us to turn our attention to the Lord. That's the idea.
3. When we do we find: He's always there. His promises = true. Blessings = eternal.
4. Knowing that brings a deep peace & contentment even despite painful loss.
 - a. Have you ever seen anyone smile & weep at the same time? Didn't think possible.
 - b. Then my predecessor in the ministry, Pastor Bob, died of cancer at home.
 - c. His son, Dr. Jim Pluddemann—well-known missionary, met me at the door.
 - d. When he opened the door there were tears streaming down his face, but smiling.
 - e. I had never seen that before in my life. Surprised. Smiling/crying at same time.
 - f. Crying because he'd just lost a beloved father-in-law who was do dear to him.
 - g. Smiling because he knew Pastor Bob had gone to heaven – no tears, pain, cancer.
5. Even the hardest events cannot disturb the eternal promises of Jesus Christ.
6. This is the Christian – crying on the outside yet joy in the Lord on the inside.

III. Rejoicing is needed most when things look the worst.

A. Objection (Time when need rejoice in the Lord the most is when we don't feel like it?)

1. Evidently Paul anticipated that people would object to what He was writing.
 - a. The Philippians themselves were facing suffering, persecution & hardship.
 - b. Philippi was a military town where there was fierce loyalty to Caesar.
 - c. It was not popular to say Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. Hatred, intimidation, & fear.
 - d. And so Paul knew they'd say he really didn't mean it. Couldn't be.
2. So he adds this little phrase, Again I say, Rejoice.
 - a. I've carefully thought it thru and I really mean this.
 - b. No matter what happens, Rejoice in the Lord always. You need to do this.

B. What Paul Means

1. The time we need to rejoice in the Lord the most is when things look the worst.
2. By rejoicing in the Lord we'll find healing for our souls. Keep from giving into despair.
3. In other words, rejoicing in the Lord will give us strength to make it through.
4. Two of the best known Christian psychiatrists are Paul Meier & Frank Minirth.
 - a. Wrote a book entitled Happiness Is a Choice. Been a help to many people.
 - b. Paul was not urging us to be unrealistic. He was not saying that we should never feel sad. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). However, he was advocating focusing on the blessings we have in Christ and being grateful for these regardless of how sad we may feel at any particular time.
 - c. This focus on the Lord will help us make it thru the healing process.
5. I love it when psychiatric studies confirm what the Bible teaches.

- a. What really makes people satisfied with their lives? Amazingly, the secret may lie in a person's ability to handle life's blows w/o blame or bitterness. These are the conclusions of a study of 173 men who have been followed since they graduated from Harvard University in the early 1940s. The study, reported in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, noted that one potent predictor of well-being was the ability to handle emotional crisis maturely.
- b. By rejoicing in the Lord we heal our emotions & we can handle life's blows.
- c. Let's sing it together as we enter Thanksgiving week.