

Three Virtues Commanded

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[0:00] Philippians 3, we'll begin reading in verse 17 and read through chapter 4 and verse 4. Would you stand together with me for this reading of God's holy word.

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For as I have often told you before, and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yoke fellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clements and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are written in the book of life.

[1:26] Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Every true church of Jesus Christ is a standing miracle on the earth.

If we rightly understand just how sinful men are, then wherever we see a church of gathered believers, worshiping the Savior, singing His praises, we should be amazed at the grace of God that has come there, made them new creatures, the blood of Christ that bought them, the spirit that regenerated them, and is producing worship in spirit and in truth.

Well, 2,000 years ago, there was a church in a Roman colony in Philippi, present-day Greece. And in that church was a converted jailer who once had nothing to do with the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

And around him is his family as well, all believers. And over here is Lydia. And she and her family also have come to believe in the Savior and are part of this congregation.

And others whom the Lord had saved through the preaching of the Apostle Paul and his fellow workers. Now, they have elders and deacons there.

[3:00] We've met Epaphroditus, that gem of a believer from Philippi. And today we'll meet several other believers in this congregation. But this church held a special place in the heart of the Apostle.

He remembered just 10 years earlier from when he wrote the letter of what it was like to visit that place and what God did, literally shaking the earth in that prison and how He shook the hearts of people and brought them to faith in Jesus Christ.

They were a cause for great joy and gratitude to Him. And they felt the same about Him. You sense a warm relationship. There's not the challenge of His apostleship that you find in the letter to the Corinthians.

There is rather this warmth that flows both ways. Paul to the church, the church toward Paul. They had been the only church that as he started out from Philippi, supported him.

And so there was this close bond that knit them together. Now, Paul told them of his love for them at the outset of this letter. And now as he comes toward the end of the letter, he tells them again.

[4:10] And he holds back nothing. Heaps up expression after expression of love. Verse 1 of chapter 4, Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown.

That is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. Think of all those terms that he uses as he addresses them. My brothers, you who have the intimacy with me as one who shared the same womb, you whom I love and long for, not a love that doesn't like to be with them, but a love that

yearns with deep desire to spend time with them, my joy and crown.

They had been a source of great joy to Paul. Paul, they were his crown. The word there for crown is used of the victor's wreath in the athletic games.

It was the reward that was given to the victor. Paul says, You are my crown. And he's thinking of that last day when he'll stand before the judge. And in that day will be this Philippian jailer and Lydia and their families and these other dear believers at Philippi standing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Christ. And in that day, Paul says, What a reward it will be for me just to see you there. You'd made it all the way to heaven. You're my reward.

[5 : 38] You're the proof that my labors over you were not in vain. And lastly, he calls them dear friends. Dear friends.

You sense the warmth in this man. He's a wise pastor. He has some commands to give to this congregation. But he first wants to be sure that they know that he loves them.

That these commands are commands of love coming to them. People are more prone to receive commands from one they know loves them and seeks their best interest.

That was Paul. That was Paul. And they knew it. He's simply reassuring them again and again as he gears up to lay before them several commands.

There's more than we'll have time this morning. A string of loving exhortations, commands that they are to follow. We'll have time today, Lord willing, for the first three and more to follow.

[6 : 42] The first command. Loving command. Stand firm in the Lord. Verse 1. This is a plea for steadfastness.

A call to stand firm clearly implies some opposition, doesn't it? If you're standing in the foyer after church just casually talking, I wouldn't come up to you and say, stand firm, brother.

You're just standing there in a relaxed way. There's no opposition. There's no reason for you not to be standing on your feet and to remain standing. But rather, when this word comes, stand firm, it implies that there is some force trying to knock you down, trying to take you off of your stance.

And that's exactly the way that it is. I'm reminded of the sumo wrestler. And there he stands, you see, in that circle. And his legs like tree trunks.

And he plants them. And it's like, you try to move me now. He's standing firm. But he's not alone in that circle, is he?

[7 : 55] There'd be no reason for him to plant his big legs. There's another sumo wrestler in the ring who's doing all he can to move him off of his stance, to take him off of his feet, to push him outside the circle.

So the call to stand firm makes sense for the sumo wrestler. These Philippians had taken their stand for Jesus Christ in a pagan culture.

And there were all kinds of pressures being brought to bear on them to defect, to give up following Christ, to no longer stand firm for Jesus, to turn away. And all the pressures that they faced are with us still today.

In one form or another. We've already seen what these pressures were in the letter up to this point. We'll just mention them briefly. First of all, outside persecution from the world.

The end of chapter 1 made clear that these folks were suffering for Christ. They were going through the same struggle that Paul had in the past and that they now heard that he was still having.

[9 : 01] Where is Paul? He's in prison. There's persecution going on against him. And these believers at Philippi were experiencing the same. And so he called on them there at the end of chapter 1 to not be frightened in any way by those who oppose them.

There's the word again. Oppose them. You've got people opposing you there at Philippi. Don't be frightened by them. Stand firm. Don't let them move you by their threats.

You say, I don't feel threatened. The world is increasingly stirring up hatred against Christians. We saw it again last earlier this month in Turkey, didn't we?

And the brutal slaying of those three Christians. I've heard of it again in India. the beating of a Christian pastor on cameras of the news.

Nothing being done. Just letting these youth come and pelt this pastor. Increasing hostility around the world. So it hasn't come to our shore.

[10 : 11] The reality is we buckle for less persecution than that. We're not scared of someone coming and slaying us perhaps because of our Christian faith but we sometimes zip our lip from our

witness because we're afraid of someone looking at us or thinking that we're a little strange.

Yes, there's a pressure there, isn't there? A pressure to back off in our walk with Christ. To not stand firm when that opportunity presents itself.

That's one form of pressure. There's false doctrine from within the church. Remember Paul talked about those dogs preaching that Christ was not enough to make you right with God.

You must add something to the gospel. It's Christ plus circumcision. Seeking to move them away from looking to Christ and His righteousness and His obedience to make them right with God to working out their own righteousness.

Stand firm. don't let that move you. Don't budge an inch from the simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ alone. Not only outward persecution but false doctrine from within the church and then moral laxity also within the church.

[11 : 32] We saw that last week. The moral laxity of professing Christians. Many of them there Paul refers to who make a God out of their appetites. Who glory in things they ought to be ashamed of whose minds are on earthly things.

Immediate pleasures. Things that perish with the using. And the pressure is ever upon us to live like the world. Neighbors have this so we need this now.

We seek to live for the things of this world. tremendous pull to give up the flesh denying pursuit of holiness and instead to indulge the flesh to live for pleasures to live for the things of this world like others who call themselves Christians.

Stand firm. Stand firm. Don't follow those examples Paul would say. Don't be moved. Don't slacken your pace in your pursuit of likeness to Jesus Christ.

Christ. So there are these pressures. Where are you feeling the pressures this morning? Where in your week do you feel just to move back a step from your stand?

[12 : 42] To relax and indulge your flesh. To sit loose to Bible doctrine. It's not important. To set aside the Bible. To be like the world.

To fit in with them. To add something to Christ for justification. No. Stand firm. And notice he says stand firm in the Lord. In the Lord. You are in him like a branch is in the vine.

Now stand firm in him. Don't let anything move you from him. And in the final analysis that's what all the pressures are seeking to do is to put distance between you and Jesus.

Now stand firm in the Lord. Remind yourself daily that you are in him. you are united with Christ.

And that means that all the resources that are his are yours. All the strength you need to stand firm. All the perseverance. All the patience. All the love.

[13 : 41] All these things that you don't have. They're in Christ. Stand firm in him. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in him and you are complete in him.

You have what it takes to stand firm in the Lord. What do you need to stand firm in the high school on the job in the home where the pressures are felt?

Look to the Lord and stand firm in him. Let no idol no false doctrine no moral laxity no indulgence of sin move you from him.

So that's the first charge but notice it's the conclusion of what went before. The first word of verse 4 or verse 1 is therefore. Therefore.

So he's summing up isn't he? Therefore my brothers this is how you're to stand firm in the Lord. It could have been labeled chapter 3 in verse 22 by those who put numbers on the different verses.

[14 : 43] It's labeled 4-1 in our Bibles but it is a summation and a conclusion of what's gone before. So stand firm in this way.

That's what he's saying. So stand firm as I've just told you. So how is it that we stand firm? By pressing on after likeness to Jesus.

By forgetting what's behind and straining what's toward before us ahead of us. Keeping our eyes fixed on the goal the prize of seeing Christ and being made like him. Remembering our citizenship is there.

That's our home. And when we get there we'll see Jesus and we'll be made like him even our bodies as well as our souls. In this way stand firm brothers. It's by running all out after likeness to Jesus that we stand firm.

Now that's a mixing of metaphors isn't it? But he's just been telling us to run after Jesus and now he's telling us to stand firm. And he says this is how you stand firm by running without any slacking and holding back after likeness to Christ.

[15:54] Well the second word is think the same in the Lord. Think the same. Stand firm in the Lord. Now think the same in the Lord.

Be like-minded in the Lord. Agree with one another. Notice what he says in verse 2. I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

Now this is a plea for unity. It's not a new plea. It's something that we're quite familiar with now having come through the first three chapters. Paul often has been urging them to unity.

It's been a constant theme in this letter. In chapter 2 and verse 2 he uses these same words calling on all of them to be like-minded or to think the same things. To agree with one another.

But what makes this plea for unity unique and different from the rest is that this call for unity gets personal.

[16:53] Very personal. Like singling out two ladies in the congregation personal. Can you imagine that?

This letter was written by Paul way far away in a Roman prison sent back probably by Epaphroditus and Epaphroditus comes back into town and they're all glad to see him.

They'd heard that he was sick and even nigh unto death and now to see that he's well they're happy and they're asking how's Paul doing? And he tells them how he's doing. He said you know I've got a letter from him.

And so he starts reading. There's the gathered church and he's reading the letter. And he comes through the greeting and the first three chapters and he comes to chapter there were no chapter divisions but he comes to this section of 4.1 Therefore my brothers you whom I love and long for my joy and my crown that is how you should stand firm in the Lord dear friends I plead with Euodia and Syntyche that they agree with each other in the Lord.

I imagine there was an embarrassing moment of silence in the congregation at that point when you could have heard a pin drop and nervous eyes stole a glance over there at Euodia and over there at Syntyche because they weren't sitting together.

[18:19] They had a fallout and distance was between them. Awkward moment. Perhaps they were like the elephant in the living room that nobody's talking about.

Everybody knows the problems there but nobody brings it up and speaks out and out in the public. It's been hush-hush perhaps dealt with in private but the thing festered and worsened and now suddenly Paul brings the thing right out into the open in public in the letter that's being read to them in the gathered assembly.

He mentions this spat between Euodia and Syntyche. How sad that the reason we know these two sisters at Philippi is because of their fallout with each other.

You wouldn't know Euodia and Syntyche except that they had a problem that was unresolved between them. A sharp disagreement and they remained at odds.

Euodia and Syntyche the two women who couldn't get along with each other that's how they go down in history. Wonder what you'll be remembered for. Oh her.

[19:34] She was the one who Oh him. He's the guy that Euodia and Syntyche get along.

Be in agreement in the Lord. Who were these two women? Well there's a lot we don't know about them but we do know several things. There had been this fallout between them and it had continued unresolved.

We know as well that they were very active in the work of the gospel. At Philippi verse 3 refers to them as these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

These women were not on the fringes of church life at Philippi. They weren't mere spectators just sitting back and watching as the work of Christ grew at Philippi.

They were sleeves rolled up hard workers for the sake of the gospel. They had both been co-workers with the apostle Paul the founder of the church. Perhaps this is a reference to what had happened ten years earlier that these women, these two women were working so hard together alongside each other side by side together with the apostle Paul and all the other fellow workers Clement and the others.

[20:53] He doesn't even mention them but he says they're known in heaven, their names are there. Yes, they had once worked together fighting against a common enemy but they are no longer together.

They are now apart fighting against each other in this continuing quarrel. Those who work hard for the gospel, those who want to see the kingdom of Christ grow, they get spotted on the radar screen of hell.

the sleepy Christian doing nothing. Why bother him? He's already serving our case by showing that this is nothing, this gospel is nothing to make known.

No, it's the one who's out seeking to bring others to know Christ. You be very careful, you will become a target of the enemy and one of the things the devil loves to do when he finds energetic workers in the gospel is to turn them against each other.

Get them set against each other. That's what happened to Uodia and Syntyche. He wants to bring the gospel work to a halt, to silence the good news about Jesus Christ.

[22:08] And so we need to be very careful as we seek to make Christ known in this place.

Brethren, make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

Because there's one who's working hard at our elbows to stir us up against each other. Yes, even those who work the hardest in the cause of Christ are not exempt from this problem.

We know this about them. They were both real Christians. Paul is convinced that their names too are in the book of life, along with all the other co-workers that he both mentions and just refers to.

Real Christians can fall into grievous disagreements with each other. We know this about them.

They were both still loved by the apostle. Everything that he said in verse 1 applied to them.

Paul loved them. He longed for them. He viewed them as brethren, as dear friends. Now, we don't know.

[23:12] The one thing we'd like to know, probably, is what was the problem. We don't know the cause of the friction. We don't know what the disagreement was about. We know it wasn't about the color of the carpet of the church, because there wasn't a church building.

They met in their homes, so it wasn't that. But it was probably something that came up in the work of Christ. How the work of Christ should go on. Should we do this way, or should we do it that way? Who should do it? Should I do it? Should you do it? Perhaps it was something as trivial as the color of the carpet put into first century vernacular.

something that is so insignificant. But Satan can stir up little things to set two believers working for Christ at a grinding halt and stopping the work.

Whatever the issue was, we can be sure that pride was at the root of it. Because what do we hear from Paul throughout this letter? Banging on humility, isn't he? Oh, be humble brothers.

[24:15] Be humble. Esteem others better than yourself. Now we're getting to see a little what all this background preaching on humility is about. He's got a real life situation in mind.

And only in chapter 4 and verse 2 does he bring it to the surface. It's these two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Something had become more important to them than unity in Christ.

Each one wanting to be right, wanting to get their way. Who started it? We don't know. How long had it gone on? Evidently for some time. It was still unresolved.

News of it had reached all the way to Paul in Rome. There's still a problem. Think about that. How did Paul learn about this? Well, Epaphroditus came from Philippi.

And no doubt Paul's wanting to know how's the church doing? And in answer to the question how's the church doing? Epaphroditus had to say Brother Paul we've got a problem. Evidently this problem not only had continued but it was affecting the unity of the whole congregation.

[25:26] You might think it's just me and brother so and so. It's just me and this sister. It doesn't have anything to do with the body of Christ. That is rarely the case.

Rarely the case. This sort of thing spreads like cancer affecting their immediate families. Okay, here's Euodia and what's her husband to think now of Syntyche's husband?

And what about the children of Euodia and the children of Syntyche? Are they not set against each other? And then friends are forced to take sides in this thing and pretty soon you've got a big split in the church all because of two women who had a disagreement and remained unresolved.

And so the unity of the whole church was disturbed. The work of Christ was interrupted. The name of Christ is honored. It must not go on and Paul puts his foot down and calls them down on the carpet by name in the public assembly.

A public rebuke. Notice what Paul does. He doesn't take sides but he pleads with each one to agree with the other in the Lord. He repeats the verb.

[26:43] I plead with Euodia. Euodia he says. Please agree with Syntyche. And I plead with Syntyche. Please agree with Euodia in the Lord.

Agree with her in the Lord. He's the foundation of your unity. In the Lord. You find that the things that unite you are far greater than the things that divide you.

You're sisters in Christ. You share eternal life the same life. You're going to live with each other in heaven one day forever and ever.

Now get along on earth. Agree with one another in the Lord. And again in the Lord reminds them that they are in Him as a branch in the vine.

Everything you need for unity is in Christ. You need humility to own your sin and stubbornness you'll find it in Christ. Be of the same mind with each other he's saying.

[27:54] And for Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind it reminds us that Paul had said in chapter 2 and verse 5 let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

You see these two would be of the same mind if they each had the mind of Christ. Though he was in full equality with God did not consider that equality something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking a form of a servant was made in the likeness of man and he esteemed us better than himself he put our interest above his own and went to the cross and died for us now you too you be of the same mind that means you have Christ's mind and if you each will have Christ's mind you'll find yourselves agreeing with each other to hear the imprisoned apostle who loved them and whom they loved and had worked with elbow to elbow pleading with them to agree in Christ must have been a powerful argument and to receive that in the presence of the congregation wow that's not all Paul does he does more than plead with them he also asks someone in the church to help them resolve their differences you know sometimes true

Christians have breakdowns in even their reconciliation process and they cannot reconcile it is time for a third party to come in and mediate it's a picture of us and God there was such a breakdown in the relationship between God and man there was no hope of reconciliation until a mediator Jesus Christ came the only mediator between God and man to bring us to God to reconcile us to God and so he calls on such a peacemaker in the congregation verse three yes and I ask you loyal yoke fellow help these women now just who this loyal yoke fellow was we don't know maybe it's a guy whose name was yoke fellow in the Greek it's Syzykus maybe that was his name you know we have people called charity so there were!

people called yoke fellow and perhaps this should be translated yes and I asked you Syzykus yoke fellow that was his name loyal yoke fellow not only a name but in person you are you are a worker with me in deed and truth you help these women to reconcile to one another perhaps he was an elder in the church most likely he had great tact in working with people he's called upon in this very important situation whoever it was that was clear to the Philippians having the letter read to them who he was he would know oh that's a job for me to do and he was being asked to be the peacemaker helping these women sort out their problem an objective set of eyes an objective heart a third party to come in and to hear both sides and to give an objective word of counsel but this must be resolved wouldn't it be wonderful to have a chapter five of

Philippians or a later letter and to find out what happened to you Odie and Sintake someday we'll find out the last chapter has been written but I wonder what happened that day did they go home as they had come to church that day or did they go home humbled of their stubbornness toward their sister did they go home repentant did they go home willing and agreeing to meet with this mediator and to work on their problem rather than to go home stubborn refusing the help that has been offered I wonder what happens to you week by week as the Holy Spirit puts his finger on things in your life that aren't right how do you go home the same way you came in or do you go home humbled are you driven to Christ and that grace and forgiveness and strength that is found in him do you go home humbled in

[32:27] Christ but rejoicing in that standing that you have before the father in Christ and the cleansing in his blood Yodi and Sintiki had a savior to confess their sins to what a privileged position was theirs yes it was sinful yes it was grievous but Jesus suffered enough to even pardon that sin do you have a euodia or a Sintiki in your life maybe it's a brother or sister in the congregation you've had a fallout and it's unresolved and there's still tension and there's still junk going on maybe it's your husband maybe it's your wife maybe it's your parents but it's unresolved and you're unwilling to resolve it you know it's

Jesus Christ who's making his plea through his apostle Paul and he says to his child oh brother so and so agree with sister so and so agree with your brother dear husband dear wife work it if you need a third party find one get one do not let these things go on we can't afford as a church to grieve away the spirit of God everything good that we have comes from Christ through his spirit and if the spirits grieve by our lack of unity we might as well go home stand firm in the Lord think the same thing in the Lord and lastly rejoice in the Lord isn't that something how Paul takes these themes and piles them up one after another he's just talked about a very serious problem in the church the very next word rejoice in the

Lord here's his third admonition it's a plea for joy rejoice in the Lord always I will say it again rejoice notice Paul's emphasis on this theme of joy it's a happy note that's found ringing throughout his epistle this is the sixth time he mentions this word or one like it and when he does come to mention it again he mentions it twice right on top of each other it almost is like double speak Paul you're stuttering you just told us to rejoice in the Lord always and then you say I'll say it again rejoice what do you think did we did you think we couldn't hear or what there's obvious emphasis being placed upon joy there's obvious importance that Paul's not wanting to let these Philippians or us escape without getting the point that we are to be a people marked by joy by the way quarreling people are not a people marked by joy are they perhaps it's just another argument being heaped up again settle this thing you're to be joyful in

Christ why is it so important to Paul why is it so emphasized by our God in scripture well ever since the garden many reasons but consider this one ever since the garden of Eden Satan has been spreading his propaganda that God is the kill joy in the universe and that if you follow Jesus all the fun is happening on the broad road folks there is no joy on that solitary narrow road and some of you young people are believing the lie and you're still buying into Satan's propaganda and Paul says it's time that this world learns the truth of the way it really is and they must learn it from you dear Christian that all his ways are pleasant ways and all his paths are peace that solid joys and lasting treasures none but

Zion's people know that heaven itself is called sharing in your master's happiness come and share the joy of your Lord and that joy is given to us here and now as a down payment of that joy that is yet to come the world needs to see in the people of God that the precepts of the Lord are right giving joy to the heart that we never knew joy until we knew Christ that's the truth of the matter never knew lasting joy till I knew Christ would people describe you as a joyful person if they followed you around for a week and noticed your face when he said that to you when she did that to you when this happened to you and what they say she's a joyful person isn't she he sure does a lot of rejoicing doesn't he if not dear

[37 : 54] Christian you're abetting the enemy you're helping spread his propaganda joy is to be found on the broad road and joy lessness is found on the narrow road with Christ no no joy is the birthright of every child of God no notice this is a command you can't notice it in the English version as well as in the Greek in the Greek it is clearly an imperative mood it's a command given to us as much as the command to stand firm as to agree with each other in the Lord is this command rejoice in the Lord but what a kind command rejoice always I want you to be joyful always I want you to experience this abundant life of joy all the time you mean I can't be dreary you mean I can't be upset and you mean I can't be miserable and he won't let me be gloomy and despondent that's right the command is rejoice always

Spurgeon calls it delightful duty what a command who would not welcome it rejoice always it's a far reaching command isn't it it reaches to every situation every circumstance of my life rejoice in the Lord always not just when the sun is shining and Mr.

Blue birds on my shoulder and I have this wonderful feeling that everything's going my way but on the days when everything's going against me everything's falling apart things are breaking down pressures interruptions troubles disappointment failures yes rejoice joy joy on the inside when all is dark and dreary outside can you really mean this Paul rejoice!

always it's like he he thought we'd have that question and so he says I'll say it again rejoice that's exactly what I meant now remember where Paul is as he writes this he doesn't have any freedom he's he's in prison he's in prison and he's rejoicing and ten years earlier when he first visited Philippi because of his preaching the gospel and setting free that demon possessed slave woman he was flogged and put in prison there he is in the stocks and about midnight Paul and Silas were doing what they were praying and singing songs joy to the Lord he does mean always doesn't he Paul

you're in prison you're not able to go on in the ministry to which God has called you is that not reason for you at least for a moment to lose your joy are you kidding absolutely not no I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really caused to further the gospel do you know that the people are more bold in their witness because

I'm in jail do you know that the palace guard has heard the gospel that otherwise wouldn't have heard the gospel rejoice prison has meant advance for the gospel oh but Paul you know there's some jealous preachers out here and they're just trying to take advantage of the situation while you're locked up in prison and can't preach they're out preaching double time trying to get the glory in the limelight doesn't that make you jealous and lose your joy absolutely not what does it matter whether in pretense or in truth Christ is being preached and I therein will rejoice but Paul you're awaiting!

[41:38] trial before Nero's court and you don't know the outcome of that you could be executed with the sword your head could roll in a matter of days and weeks how can you rejoice why for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain and if I'm killed that will mean Christ being exalted by my life whether it be by life or by death to be with him is better by far and we get the sense that you can't get the joy out of this man and suddenly I'm feeling kind of small about the things that steal my joy the things that just take joy right out of my face right out of my heart because this happened to me and it looks so small and insignificant and piddling and trivial compared to what Paul is here dealing with and I'm ashamed at the things that I allow to walk away with my joy the excuses

I give for not rejoicing because this happened to me because this is not going right and I must repent repent of my sin and my times of joylessness breaking God's command to rejoice always but I also find in this commandment great hope cause for joy itself just the fact that there is this commandment because God would not command us to always rejoice unless there were always solid reasons for joy it's no empty call to just smile even though your heart is breaking just smile that's not the call it's a call to true joy and if it's a call to true joy there must be reasons to make me truly rejoice solid joys real reasons to rejoice and notice they all center in Christ rejoice in the Lord always in the Lord have you seen that every command in the

Lord stand firm in the Lord agree with each other in the Lord rejoice in the Lord Paul keeps sending us back to Christ that's where it's found folks in Christ draw upon him get to know him rejoice in him there's always abundant reason for joy in the person of Jesus Christ in the work of Christ what he is and what he's doing there's enough in him to sustain our joy in the darkest situations that means the whole matter of my rejoicing always really becomes an indicator on how well I know Christ doesn't it do I know him well enough in this situation to rejoice without him in the picture there's no joy in this circumstance but what I know of Jesus gives me reason to rejoice even in prison even when others are doing this against me even when

I may not live to see the new year do I know Jesus that well no wonder Paul is saying I want to know Christ it's in Christ that we find our joy and that's why daily Bible reading is so important why memory of the word and meditation is so crucial!

because it's in here that we meet Christ and we reasons to rejoice and if you don't know this book don't expect on Monday morning when things go wrong to have this joy just bubbling out of you no it's because of what is said here yes I can rejoice because of what I know about my Savior it's joy food eat it devour it memorize it strengthen your joy think on it and this is what makes the Christian's joy different from the world the world's joy is in things and circumstances and so it's sporadic and it's interrupted it doesn't last because things don't last and circumstances change but the Christian's joy is in the Lord who is the same yesterday today and forever and that's why his joy can be constant that's why it can be uninterrupted no matter what is happening around him this is a call to find our joy in the

[46:18] Lord brethren there's no good in the creature that cannot be found in him so when our joy leaves it's a clue that we had our joy in the wrong thing all along we thought we were rejoicing in the Lord but I see now that I was rejoicing in the Lord's gift to me and so when my health is taken my joy goes out the window thought I was rejoicing in the good gift of my health that he gave me when joy leaves it's a wake up call you're not rejoicing in me son you've let your cart of joy be hitched to the wrong horse you've got to hitch it up to me and if your joy is in me you'll find in every circumstance reason for joy John Gwyn Thomas says when everything else in anybody or anything else we can rejoice in God and we must rejoice in him for he never changes so it's good news for us when

I don't feel like rejoicing I'm not at the mercy of my fickle feelings I'm not at the mercy of my changing circumstances Christian refuse to be dominated by your feelings refuse to be ruled by what's happening to you and around you you can always rejoice as you fix your eyes on Christ rejoice in the Lord always I'll say it again rejoice you say how can I rejoice my son is unconverted oh you know a savior and you have access to him and you can talk to him about your unconverted son mother and he's got the key to the heart of your son rejoice rejoice in Jesus how can I rejoice I fallen again to my besetting sin and you're telling me to rejoice always oh brother and sister we have a fountain open for sin and uncleanness go and bathe again plunge yourself in again rejoice that there is forgiveness in Jesus blood and righteousness a better question is why shouldn't we always be rejoicing wasn't that many years ago that we were!

on our way to eternal miseries in hell and Jesus rescued us changed our address forever and ever from hell to heaven how can you not rejoice always!

may may Whatever was his was theirs. And every citizen had access to the castle. And they could come and see him at any time, day or night. And he reigned with absolute power and sovereignty. [49 : 47] Nothing happened in his kingdom that he did not approve of. That he did not say, it shall happen. Absolute control. And there were some things that he didn't allow to happen in his kingdom.

Like anything. That he would not work for the good of his citizens. It wasn't allowed anywhere in the realm. Couldn't happen in this place. And under this reign, they thrived.

And they lived and they moved. And they had their being. No wonder they were always rejoicing. And I must tell you one other thing about their joy.

If you would understand the very heart of their joy. You see, all these citizens were once death row criminals. Just waiting their execution.

And the king himself said, I will die in their place. And he took the death penalty. And he took the punishment. That they might go free.

[50 : 51] And then he rose again in triumph over death. And these folks can't get over it. They sing about it. They sing about this king. They sing about his dying love.

They sing about his reign and control over the universe. All for their good. And he's promised to make even death work for their good.

And to take them and raise them from the dead. And to take them to heaven. And to live with him forever and ever. Well, of course, the Lord Jesus is the king. And you, brothers and sisters, are the citizens of that kingdom.

And all that has been said of them is true of you and more. So rejoice. Lift up your head. Rejoice. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.

Every outsider that visited that kingdom couldn't escape it. They saw it in the shops. They saw it in the homes. The schools. The fields. The ball games. The funeral parlors. This joy was impressive. And it exposed their own hollowness.

[51 : 54] These visitors. And their own lack of this joy. And it made them want to belong to this king. Whose presence and reign produced such joy in his subjects. And if you're outside of Christ this morning.

I want to say to you, my friend. This king welcomes you. To come by way of faith and repentance to him this morning. And he'll receive you. And make you a citizen in his kingdom.

And I want to apologize that we who are his citizens are no better representatives of the joy that's found in Christ.

I assure you the problem is not with our king. It's with us. There's enough in him to make a man or woman joyful.

For all of time and eternity. Come to him. Taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Come. And see. How good our king is.

[52 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen.