

Rejoice In the Lord

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians. Philippians chapter 3 tonight is where we'll be reading verses 1 to 14.

! Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write the same thing to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision.

We who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

[1:38] I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A long time ago I bought a book called Looking Unto Jesus by Isaac Ambrose. It's been with me longer than my wife has been with me, and it sat on my shelf for most of the time.

I tried to read it when I first got it, but it wasn't where I was at for some reason. But then just a few weeks ago I took it off my shelf and I read the first lines and I said, yes, this is right where I am.

[2:58] And this is how he begins. The most excellent subject to talk or write about is Jesus Christ. There is nothing more pleasing and comforting, more animating and enlivening, more ravishing and soul-contenting.

Only Christ is the Son and the center of all divinely revealed truths. Christ is the whole of man's happiness. The Son to enlighten him, the physician to heal him, the wall of fire to defend him, the friend to comfort him, the pearl to enrich him, the ark to support him, the rock to sustain him.

John Calvin said somewhere, a conversation without Christ is a waste. And I wonder if you can relate to that, to that feeling.

I'm seeing it more and more that there's nothing else besides him that really excites me. Not that other things don't excite me, but he is the first and he is the chief.

There's nothing besides him that makes me feel alive. And Paul was a man who was soaked in Christ. They said about John Bunyan that if you poked him, he would bleed Bibline.

[4:13] He would bleed the Bible. And I think if you even touched Paul, Christ would come out of him. And that's what I want for you more than anything in 2015.

For you, for us as a church. And if Paul was looking at his New Year's resolutions, if he was where you are, standing out, looking out at 2015, what do you think he would resolve?

I think he would resolve exactly what we read here. I want to know Christ. 2015 is a year for you to grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ.

I want to gain Christ. I want to be found in him. That's what Paul wanted for himself. And that is what Paul wanted for his people. And that's what I want for you.

And so he wrote. He wrote to the Philippians. Finally, my brothers. Chapter 3, verse 1. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. It is no trouble for me at all to write the same things to you again.

[5:18] And it is a safeguard for you. And so tonight I want to do that very thing. That thing that we've done before. But it's no trouble for me to do it again. And it's a safety.

It's a safeguard for you. We are going to rejoice in the Lord. We are going to look at him. And I guess that's what you did this morning. And there will be no harm in doing it again.

Tonight I want to rejoice in Christ our Lord as God. And my goal is simple. To send you into 2015 with big, happy thoughts of Jesus Christ.

I have four points tonight. And each of them is an attribute of Christ as God. So each of them is an attribute of Jesus Christ as God.

And our first point is this. Jesus Christ as God. God is eternal. He is eternal. So Jesus Christ is God.

[6:17] And that means he is eternal. As to his divinity, Jesus Christ is eternal. He has no beginning. He has no end. And so if we go into our imaginations.

And we think about. We go back to before there was anything. So come with me to that place. Where there is nothing. There is nothing. And we are there in the nothingness.

And we're standing on nothing. And we're looking out into nothing. And then we look over and we see him. He's there. Alive and vivid and real.

And he's our Lord. Our lover. Our husband. Our savior. Our God. Our Emmanuel. And there he is. He is before all things. And in him all things hold together.

Before all things. And we ask, how long have you been here? How long have you been here? He says, I have always been here. I am the alpha and the omega.

[7:22] The beginning and the end. Do you ever get tired? Do you get old? And he says, I am the ancient of days.

But I am life. I'm always young. And I am always old. And how did you get here? Where were you before?

What was here before you? Where were you before you came to this place? And he turns his burning eyes upon us. And he says, before Abraham was.

I am. And if those words hit you like they ought to. You realize he's not like us.

He is not like us. He's not like the first angels. He is not like the ocean or the sun or the moon. He is infinitely and gloriously different than us.

[8:21] There's an infinite chasm between us and him. We grow old and die. And he is. We are born.

And he is. And we see our days go by. And we grow weary. Weary of life. And time wears us down. Doesn't it? Time wears all things down.

Mountains and seas and ocean and bones and ears and eyes. Time wears all things down. And Christ forever just is.

Just is. And so how do we rejoice in that? How do we rejoice in our Lord? Well, think. His love for you is eternal.

As long as he has been. His love for you has been. And if that doesn't make you happy, then I wonder what will. The God that Jesus Christ has forever and ever been loving me and thinking about me.

[9:26] And if that doesn't make you say whatever was to my gain, I now count as loss for the sake of knowing Christ. Then I wonder what will.

What will grab your heart and your attention if that doesn't? His love for you is eternal. It didn't begin with your conversion. When you were saved, that was not the beginning of his love for you.

We were objects of his wrath, but dearly loved. So his heart toward us was the heart of God, like God's heart towards Israel and Hosea.

God says, how can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? My heart recoils within me and all my compassion is aroused. So the objects of his wrath are the objects of his love. You. And he loved us, and yet his wrath was against us. And so what could he do? Well, the cross is the answer. The cross is God's answer to that dilemma for himself.

[10:30] And so the cross was as much for God's peace as it was for ours. Once he set his love upon us, nothing could keep his heart from going out to us. And so once he's given you himself,

once Jesus Christ has given you himself, he will never take it away.

He will never take himself away from you. 2015, you will probably say goodbye to a lot of things. Some small and some big. We might say goodbye to our loved ones.

We might say goodbye to jobs and to money. And he might wither our vines like he withered Jonah's vine. We had such pleasure in it, and then it goes away. But Jesus Christ and his love for you will not wither.

It lasted year after year after year after year after year after year from all of eternity. And so 2015 is just a blink of the eye.

And so you're going to have backslidings and forgetfulness and ingratitude and murmurings and maybe even rebellion and unbelief. But Jesus still says to you, though you are this way, I still love you.

[11:45] Though you've been this way to me, I still love you. And so for every fall, this is what I'm saying, return to him. Every complaining, every forgetfulness, all the ingratitude, all the murmuring.

Every time you find yourself in that position, go back to him because he has been loving you forever and ever. And so Jesus was talking about his heart when he was talking about a father running out and receiving a prodigal son.

He was explaining his own heart and his affection towards sinners. And it was his heart he's talking about when he talked about a father leaving a party to go bring in an elder brother.

He loves you like that. And so return to him, return to me and I return. Yeah, return to me and I'll return to you. And so if you go and you take that and send you, you've thought about it all wrong. You say, oh, then what does it matter? I'll just go and send your reasoning like the devil. That kind of unceasing love demands that we love him in return, demands that we're careful.

[12:51] That kind of love doesn't call for carelessness. It says, oh, let me love him. It calls out my heart's love for him and my obedience and my desire to please him, to be with him.

And if he'll follow me everywhere I go. If his love finds me and pursues me and chases me no matter which way I turn, then don't let me stray.

Christ is eternal. Second point is this. Jesus Christ is God and that means he is omnipresent. He's omnipresent. As to his divinity, he is everywhere.

And that's important for us. And this is important for you to realize he's not just everywhere generically. He's everywhere in all of his offices of prophet, priest and king.

He is there for us. That means he's there as our mediator, as our friend, as our comforter, as our guide. Everywhere we are, he is there in full force as our savior and as our king and as our prophet and priest.

[13:54] So his human nature is in heaven. Seated at the right hand of God. But even as he is there, he is everywhere. Where Matthew 18, 20 says, wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.

Compare that to Exodus 20, verse 24. Yahweh, the Lord says, wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. So the Lord says, wherever I'm worshipped, I'll be there. And Jesus says, wherever my people are gathered, I will be there. So Jesus is with us. He's always with us. So young people, you can go to school, high schoolers, college.

We can go to our school. We can go to the work. And we can look. And as we enter into that building, we can look down on the floor and say, this ground is holy ground because Jesus is here with me. He's here with me.

And you can say with Asaph in Psalm 73, but as for me, it is good for me to be near the Lord. So he's with you to comfort you. He's there to teach you.

[15:07] How good it is to have a hands-on teacher. This is no correspondence course that we have. Our discipleship is not one where he just sends messages. He is there with us.

He knows the circumstances. He knows the situation. He knows exactly what we need. And so he's right there to teach you. He's there to guide you. Where there's doubt, where there's confusion, and we say, which way should I go?

Jesus is there to show us the way as our shepherd. When Daniel's three friends were in the fiery furnace, you remember, they were not alone. He came to them.

When Daniel went into the lion's den, he was there with Daniel. When Jacob wrestled through the night for a blessing, he wrestled with the pre-incarnate Son of God.

In the night, face to face, Jacob wrestling for a blessing, Jesus was there. When John, the disciple, the apostle, was on Patmos, secluded, abandoned, alone in exile, you remember he heard behind him a voice that was like many waters, and he turned, and there was Jesus with him.

[16:14] And so we can rejoice in the Lord wherever your feet take you this year, next year. Wherever your car takes you, wherever your circumstances take you, Jesus is going with you.

Christ is there. He is there as your Lord, as your friend, and as your Savior. Doesn't that fill you with hope? Doesn't that fill you with hope?

With courage? There's no darkness that he can't come to you in, and that you can hide in. There's no maze or confusion that will keep Christ from you.

There's no conflict, no fighting, no storm, no wind, no difficulties, no trials. There's nothing in all of creation that can separate you from Jesus Christ and his love.

He is everywhere. And sometimes we like to say, I wish I could be there for that person, but I can't. We hear about their problems and say, I wish I could be there, but I just can't.

[17:13] I can't do anything about it from here. So men, if your wives are out and they have a flat tire and you hear about it, but it's too far, you can't do anything about it, but you say to yourself, I wish I could be there.

I'd have that tire fixed in no time. I'd be able to take care of her, and it'd be no problem. But we aren't there, and we can't be there. But Jesus never has to say that.

He never, ever has to say, I wish I could be there. I wish I could be there to help them. We wish sometimes we could be with our children to help them and to guide them and to be their cheerleaders, but sometimes we can't, and they go off into situations, and we say, I wish I could be there with them to help them.

Jesus never has to say anything like that. When we go off into difficult situations, he always goes with us, and when we fall into a sudden trial, he's always there with us.

Where they are, I am, and I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you. And so look out in 2015, and you know what I see?

[18:14] No reason at all to fear. No reason at all to be afraid. So give to the wind your fears, we sing. All that anxiety, give it to Jesus.

What are they? To my present Jesus. So he is eternal. He is omnipresent. Now our third point is this. Jesus Christ is God, and that means he is omniscient.

That means he knows everything. He's omniscient. He knows all things. John 2.24, But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.

So Jesus knew the hearts of men. He knew all men, and he knew all about them. 1 Kings 8.39, Solomon is praying at the dedication of the temple, and he says, Deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart, for you alone know the hearts of all men.

So Jesus is God. He knows the hearts of all men. Jeremiah 17.10, the Lord, Yahweh, says, I, the Lord, search the heart, and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

[19:31] Revelation 2.23, Jesus says, I am he who searches the hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. He knows all your heart, all your fears, all your unbelief, all your sin, all your joy, all your love.

So is your love little, and your faith little? And it's so small, and sometimes it's so discouraging, and you say, and you complain, if my love's flame was any smaller, it would just flicker out.

Jesus sees that small love, and he sees that small faith, and it's precious to him, and he knows it's there. Jesus knows our hearts.

Now we can take that, and we can despair. We can take that, and we can turn it against ourselves. We can take that, and feel like we're forever under the microscope, getting poked and prodded, getting sniffed at for our inadequacies, for our sins, but God, that's not how God wants us to, to think about him knowing our hearts.

There's too many passages, where Jesus is saying, I forgive. And God says, I'm going to subdue their iniquities, Micah 7, 719 says.

[20:55] He sees, and he knows our sin, and yet he still loves us. He sees, and knows all of our sins, and says, I will subdue their iniquities. See, our sins, are Jesus' enemies.

We are not Jesus' enemies. We're not the enemy. And Jesus looks at our hidden heart, and all of our hidden sins, like a doctor looks at a patient's cancer.

He hates it. He's not satisfied with it being there. He wants to eradicate it. He wants, but he doesn't want to kill the patient, but he wants to kill the sin.

He wants to rescue the patient. Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan says, our sins move Jesus more to pity than to hatred. So he loves, and he sees us sin sick, and his heart goes out to him.

So mothers, you can know this, and your heart is in some way a reflection of Jesus' heart. When your child is sick, you don't stay away because they are sick. That moves you to deal with them, moves you to comfort them, moves you to help them.

[22:01] And so Jesus' heart, in the same way, runs out to us when he sees our sin. His compassion moves them to action, and he says, I will subdue their iniquities. Our sins are too strong for us, but Jesus, the physician, comes and says, I will get rid of their sins.

So in his love, he's gentle, but his love, there's a certain fierceness to it. A certain fierceness. His heart is soft, but sometimes his hands are hard, and he deals with us.

But never for a moment does he turn from doing us good. He's always on our side. And so when he sees our sin, he deals with it, but he never stops loving us.

And so we should say with David, search me, and know my heart, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. If we're resting in God's love, then we can say that to him. We can say, search my heart. Because his searching is for our good. His searching brings to our attention our sin.

[23:14] And he does it for our joy and not for our destruction. And so I wonder, can you say that to God? Are you willing to say that to the Lord? Search me. One of the best things about being a Christian is that we can be transparent.

We don't have to pretend that we've got it all covered. This is the glorious thing about being a Christian. We can be completely transparent, completely see-through, and I'm safe with him.

And so I can come and say, search me, try me, test me. See, unbelievers have to lie. They have to lie to others, but more than anything else, they have to lie to themselves.

But a Christian can be completely naked with God. And so if you don't have Christ, all I would say is, come out of the bushes. Put down the fig leaves.

Let Jesus wrap you in his righteousness and his arms. He saves all who come to him. He covers all those who come to him naked and saying, this is what I am.

[24:23] Our fourth point is this. Jesus Christ is God and that means he is omnipotent. Omnipotent. He is all-powerful, almighty. Listen to what Jesus says in Revelation.

I am the Alpha and the Omega who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty. The almighty. That means I have all might, all power, all power that there is, I have it.

And so we see his power in creation for by him all things were made that have been made. So he's a powerful savior, a powerful Lord.

And see, he can turn nothing into everything we see. He is able to bend and shape nothing into existence.

We can see his power and his miracles. The leper said, if you're willing, you can make me clean.

And Jesus said, I am willing. And the leper was immediately cleansed and healed. So look at the human response to disease.

[25:29] Look at the human response to the Ebola virus in Africa. Millions and millions and millions of dollars. Hundreds of doctors. Thousands of volunteers. The might of governments wrestling with this disease.

Trying to bring it to its knees. Trying to control it. Trying to contain it. And Jesus speaks. And people far away are healed. Jesus raises the dead with a word.

Young man, and I say to you, get up. And the young man got up. He didn't get up from the sick bed. He got up from the casket. Little girl, I say to you, get up.

And the little girl who was dead sat up. He stands at the mouth of the tomb where Lazarus was dead for four days. And he said, Lazarus, come out.

And out of the darkness of death, out of the darkness, the night of death, out of the tomb, Lazarus walks out. Jesus fetched a man from the grave just by telling him to come out.

[26:32] We get a picture of what Christ is going to do with his power in the end. In 2 Thessalonians, it says, the man of lawlessness will be revealed. And all men will follow him and he

will wield the power of lawlessness.

The idea is that all the rebellion, all the might of fallen men, backed by all the governments of man behind him, thrusting him up against God.

So do you have it? He's the most powerful, most authoritative, most wicked man. And the nations are raging and this man is holding as much power as a man has ever held and could ever hold. And men are falling down before him in awe and in worship. and he's putting himself up against God. It's like the Tower of Babel is finally completed and man is going to now grab the throne of God.

And then we hear an amused, mocking laugh. And I think wiping a laughing tear from his eye, Jesus will stand up and come down.

[27:41] And Jesus overthrows him with the breath of his mouth. A mere breath sends this little tyrant falling head over heels with a skirt over his head and then Jesus destroys, obliterates him with the splendor of his coming.

It's not hand-to-hand combat. It's just a tsunami of glory, this massive tidal wave of glory as Jesus enters into the created world and the sheer glory of Jesus Christ washes this man and all of his rebellion off the earth.

There's no confrontation, no pitched battle, it's just a laugh and then Jesus comes. Why? Because as powerful as that man will be, wielding all the power of lawlessness, he is nothing but a creature. He is closer to a worm than he is to God. He is closer to nothing than he is to something. He is closer to death than he is to life, but Jesus is God.

Jesus is life. And Jesus is the only one who can simply say, I am. So that day is in the future, but dear Christian, what does Jesus say now?

[29:05] All power has been given to me. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And so dear Christian, he's mighty to save you, he's mighty to protect you, he's mighty to comfort you, he's mighty to subdue all your iniquities, to turn all your trials to your good, to make you holy, to make you humble, to make you happy.

There's no foe he can't conquer, there's no sin he can't subdue, there's no fear he can't relieve, there's no sorrow he can't console, everything is under his power, so many things will change in 2015, but Jesus Christ will not change.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so my word for you is go live in him. Go live in him, live in his beauty, live in his glory, and be bold for him.

So what can't you do if he is on your side? What new thing can't you try? What hill is too steep? What question is too hard? What enemy is too much?

What can stand before him? He loves you. He loves you. And he loves you with all of his might.

[30:21] So rejoice in him. Let's pray. Oh Lord Jesus, you know that the feeble words of my mouth are nothing compared to your glory. And all the words of men are not enough to exhaust your praise and your glory and the beauty and the delight that is in you.

So I pray that you, by the Spirit, would come to us and impress upon us the glory of Jesus Christ in such a way that Jesus Christ becomes big and we become smaller.

The whole world gets crowded out because Jesus Christ fills our vision, fills our hearts, fills all of our joy and all of our delight. So that in 2015, we will do things that we have never done before for Jesus' sake.

And in 2015, we will love like we've never loved before. and we will endure and persevere and rejoice in the Lord in new ways, in bigger ways.

Thank you that because you are God, that changes everything for us. And so our weakness, our confusion, our frailty, our sin, all of that, that's not the measure of what we can do and what we can be.

[31:57] But we can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens us. And so help us to rejoice in Him. Help us to honor Him even as we sing. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Your name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.