

Rejoice Always

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[0 : 0 0] Well, please take your Bibles and turn to the New Testament book of Philippians, and we'll be reading chapter 3, verses 12 into chapter 4.

Philippians chapter 3, and we'll begin at verse 12. Paul's just said, I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of his resurrection.

I want to know and participate in the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, and so somehow to obtain to the resurrection from the dead. And now he says, not that I've already obtained all this, or I've 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 has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

[1 : 1 9] 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 you, Odeia, 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 Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and I will say it again, rejoice. Rejoice. Next to love, the most attractive and energizing grace of the Christian life is joy.

[2 : 5 9] Joy. It's something everyone wants, and so few seem to have in any consistent manner. Are you a joyful person? If I asked everybody who lives with you, everybody who works with you, those who live next to you, is he a joyful person?

Is she a joyful person? You know what joyful means, full of joy. If I asked you, what would you say? Well, here in Philippians 4, 4 stands a verse that is all about joy, and most of you know it by heart, and I suppose the reason it's so well known is because we all want this kind of joy.

As we've seen, joy is one of the major themes of this letter to the Philippians. Fourteen times Paul refers to joy or rejoice in this short letter.

He tells the Philippian believers that his aim for them is their progress and joy in the faith. He works with them for their joy.

That's our aim as well in this ministry here to you, to see you flourishing, growing, progressing in your joy. And that is my aim and desire for each one of you in this message this morning.

[4 : 25] So without any further introduction, let's dig into this goldmine on joy. And I want you to notice just four things this morning that this verse tells us about joy.

The first is this. To rejoice in the Lord always is a command. It's not a suggestion. It's not an optional extra that you might wish to pursue or maybe not.

It's an imperative. It's written into the very Greek form of the word. It's a commandment. Just as much as remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Or honor your father and your mother. Or love one another as I have loved you. Do you regard it as a command to be obeyed?

Do you confess it as a sin when you do not rejoice in the Lord always? That's our first point. This is a command. The second point is to rejoice in the Lord always is not only a command.

[5 : 32] It's an important command. Now according to the Lord Jesus, not all the commands are equally important. You remember how the Pharisees were applying the commandment to tithe.

So fastidious were they that they applied it to their garden herbs. And so they were very careful. They knew how to count out nine leaves of mint for me and one for God.

Nine for me and one for God. They were very careful to tithe their garden herbs. But all the while they were leaving the more important, the weightier matters of the law, not obeyed.

Leaving them undone. Like justice. Like love. Like mercy. Like faithfulness. And so Jesus says you're straining at gnats and swallowing camels.

And so there you are at your picnic and there's some lemonade and you notice a gnat in it. And you're going to be very careful to get the gnat out before you drink. But as you pull the cup up, you see a camel in there and you say that doesn't matter.

[6 : 41] And you drink it right down. Jesus says that's what you're doing. You're straining at the little command to be tithing your little garden herbs. And you're swallowing down camels.

Huge, important, weighty commands like love one another. Like be faithful to your word. Like justice. And so on. So not all the commands are equally important.

But this command is one of the more important commands. This is not one of those little tithe your mint leaves commandment. No, God demonstrates the importance of this command by the use of repetition.

Now repetition is the way that God puts this command in bold print in your Bible, if you will. The way he highlights it with a yellow marker or underlines its importance to him.

He uses repetition. So it's rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Now he said the same thing in chapter 3 verse 1.

[7 : 50] And here again, twice. And this is not vain repetition. It's not useless redundancy. Once is not enough to convey the importance of this command to God.

So I must ask you. Is it that important to you? Is joy high on your priority list? Or is that a small matter to you?

Whether or not you rejoice in the Lord always. So it's number one, a command. It's number two, an important command. And number three, it's an all-inclusive command.

You noticed that, didn't you? It doesn't say rejoice in the Lord sometimes. Neither does it say rejoice in the Lord most of the time.

We would like that translation, wouldn't we? We would say, well, I'll rejoice next month when this difficult thing is out of my life.

[8 : 49] Or I'll rejoice in the weekend after this hard week of work is past. But, you know, that doesn't work. Because you know what's going to be waiting for you next month?

Is more difficulties and troubles. In this world, you will have troubles. So if you're going to wait until all your troubles are gone to rejoice in the Lord, you'll never get around to it. So the text is rejoice in the Lord always.

Always. And so the command covers every day of the week and every hour of the day. It covers your best days and your worst days. It covers your days of prosperity and your days of searing loss.

It covers days when things go your way. And when everything seems against you.

Rejoice in the Lord always. You know, the Christian can do nothing well without joy. Hence the importance of rejoicing in the Lord always.

[9 : 56] It's a short verse. But what a reach. This command has due to that one word. Always. We could call always the ever present now.

And we could call this command's reach into our lives. A reach into our ever present now. This command follows me around. Rejoice now, John.

Rejoice now, John. Rejoice now, John. It's always the ever present now. Are you hearing its all inclusiveness in your life?

Are you hearing now, dear daughter? Now, dear son. Rejoice in me. So it's a command. It's an important command.

It's an all inclusive command. And you say, wow, pastor's already at point four. You kids know, pastor John's not done. We're going to spend most of the time on the fourth point. Which is that it's a reasonable command.

[10 : 58] It's a reasonable command. Some of you may be wondering how in the world can God possibly require you to always rejoice.

With so much sin and suffering and evil and atrocities and pain in this world. And given your own experiences of difficulty and pain and sorrow in this world.

How can God possibly require us to always be rejoicing? Well, the answer is found in three words.

And it's just this. That the joy commanded is not to be found in this world. Or in your circumstances. But in the Lord. In the Lord Jesus.

Jesus. We're being commanded to rejoice. Always. Who he is. And is for us.

[12 : 02] His name. His names. His attributes. His offices. His works. His promises. Rejoice in the Lord. In all these things and more.

You say, like what? Like what? Well, I don't know. Maybe a good starting point. Is the fact that he is gracious. And compassionate.

Slow to anger. Abounding in love. Forgives wickedness. Rebellion. And sin. How's that for starters? Maybe that he loved me so much.

That he. Though he was God. He became a man for me. And then he became sin for me. And he took all of my sins. Past, present, future. And he took them upon himself.

And he took them to the place of punishment. And there on the cross. He was punished. In my sake. For my sake. In my place. Condemned. He stood. And so.

- [13 : 01] He got what I had coming. And I get what he had coming. I go free. Forgiven. Of all my sins. Never.
- To be brought up against me. For condemnation. Maybe just the fact that he rose from the dead. Which means that he's alive today. And that because he lives.
- I too will live. Maybe that he ascended into heaven. And he's there now. Reigning over everything for me. And he's praying for me.
- And that his presence there. Guarantees my safe arrival there. One day. Some joy to be found in that. Isn't there? Or that he wants me to be with him.
- So that where he is. I might also be. That I might see him. And see his glory. Maybe that his glory. Is his goodness.
- [14 : 00] Maybe that he's coming again for me. And he'll. He'll transform this lowly. Decrepit. Corrupting body. Into a body made like his glorious body. Maybe that he'll.
- He'll answer for me at the final judgment. Father this one's ours. I died for her. I obeyed for her. Here's the record.
- No sins. I took all those sins. Righteousness on her account. I. Gave her my righteousness. Maybe. Maybe that's some cause for joy.
- That all appear in that day. Robed in his perfect. Righteousness. Absolutely sinless. Reflecting his image.
- Forever done with the battle of sin. Maybe that it's the Lord himself. Who will welcome me. Come. Enter into the joy. Of your Lord. Maybe. Maybe I can suck some joy today.
- [15 : 02] And my troubles. Out of the joy. That he's going to welcome me into. Forever. Unmixed. With trouble. Maybe that.
- That I'm going to rejoice in him. And he's going to rejoice in me. Forever. And ever. In a new heaven. In a new earth. The home of righteousness. And that I'll be.
- Welcomed into that loving and joyful. Trinitarian fellowship. With the father. And the son. And the holy spirit. And the saints. And the angels. Where there's no night.
- No tears. No death. Nothing to frighten. Or worry me. And everlasting joy. Will crown my head. And sorrow. And sighing. Will flee away. And gladness. And joy. Will overtake me. And never leave me.
- There's a few reasons for joy. That are always there. Always there to feed on. Whatever the circumstance. So it is reasonable. And possible.
- [16 : 02] To rejoice in the Lord always. Because I am in the Lord always. And nothing can ever get me. Out of the Lord. I'm in Christ.
- Forever joined to him. Like a branch is in the vine. Jesus is mine. And I am his. Forever. Forever. And forever. So I can rejoice. That nothing can ever separate me.
- From his love. Neither trouble. Nor hardship. Nor persecution. Or danger. Or nakedness. Or peril.
- Or sword. No power of hell. No scheme of man. Can ever pluck me from his hand. Till he returns. Or calls me home. Here in the strength. Or the power of Christ.
- I'll stand. I'm in the Lord. And so I can rejoice. In the Lord. He'll never leave me. Or forsake me. And he cares for little old me. What is man?
- [16 : 59] That you're mindful of him. Who am I? That you even know my name. That you know the number of hairs on my head. That you care for me. With such intimate care.
- That you protect me so well. That not a hair can fall from my head. Apart from the will of my father in heaven. Indeed that everything must fit your purpose for my salvation.

That there's a standing invitation to come to you. And cast my cares upon you. And to know that you daily bear my burdens. And you always have the heavier end of that burden.

And I never feel the heaviest burden. That your yoke is easy. Your burden is light. That you actually delight in the well-being of your servants.

You rejoice to do your friends good. That you're for me. And so it doesn't even matter who could be against me. That you're working all things together for my good.

[18 : 01] And you withhold no good thing from me. And that you're full of grace. And full of grace for me. And grace that is sufficient. For my every need. Should I go on? What things are we to rejoice in the Lord about?

You see it's a reasonable command. For God would not command us to rejoice in the Lord always. Unless there were always reasons in the Lord for rejoicing. And there is joy to be found in the Lord.

When there is no joy to be found in our circumstances. Circumstances change. Some are joyful. Others are not.

Moods change. We can swing between up and down for all sorts of reasons. But the Lord Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And in him are always enough reasons to keep you always rejoicing. It's a reasonable command. Paul demonstrates that for us.

[19 : 10] It was ten years earlier before he wrote this letter. It was his first trip ever coming to this pagan city of Philippi. There were no Christians there.

And Paul and Silas came into town. And you remember how they were falsely accused by a stirred up mob crowd. And shamefully stripped in public. And severely flogged.

And then thrown into the inner cell of the prison with their feet locked in stocks. And the Lord was held in this uncomfortable position to inflict further pain and torture. There were not a lot of reasons for joy to be sucked out of their circumstances that night.

But in the Lord, they had ten thousand reasons for their hearts to sing. And so, bleeding and hurting at midnight in the stocks in a faraway prison cell in a pagan city, Paul and Silas are found praying and singing praises to the Lord.

They found enough reasons for joy in the Lord himself to set them rejoicing. Even there and even then. And so can you, brothers and sisters. Because the Lord's the same for you that he was for Paul and Silas.

[20 : 28] You can find enough reasons to rejoice in the Lord always. And since that's true, it's a reasonable command for God to require you to rejoice in the Lord always.

There's enough in the Lord himself to make us happy forever. That's not true of anything else. There's not enough in the things of earth to always rejoice in.

If I said to you, rejoice in your health always. You say, but John, my health does not provide reasons always for my joy. Well, then rejoice in your finances always.

Oh, don't go there. Well, then rejoice in your popularity. People are speaking well of you. Oh, how fickle are the praises of men.

They can be singing your praises on Sunday. And be crucifying you on Friday. There's nothing here. For constant joy.

[21 : 38] But you see, people are seeking joy in all these ways. In all the wrong places. Broken cisterns that can hold no water.

No, we were made for the Lord. That's why he created us with a soul that that can only be filled with joy is the Lord himself fills us. And you'll not find this solid, lasting joy until you come to know him.

And he indwells you by his spirit as your Lord and Savior. He's the only source big enough and good enough to make you rejoice always. Now, all these reasons for joy, where are they?

Well, they're in the in the Lord alone. They're found in him. And where do you find them? Where do you learn of them? Well, in the Bible alone. What is our reasoning faculty that perceives these reasons?

Well, it's the faculty of our heart called the mind. The mind as it thinks. That's how we perceive these reasons that are here for rejoicing in the Lord.

[22 : 48] But we must get these reasons for joy out of our Bibles and into our minds and hearts. They're here, but we must get them in here and in here.

And that's why four verses later in Philippians 4, 8, Paul's going to tell us to think on these things. Use your mind and think about these certain things.

And that's that's the key to rejoicing in the Lord. Always think about these reasons, 10,000 reasons and more for rejoicing in the Lord.

So, Christian, the battle for joy is always a winnable battle, but it requires your mind. The reasons are there, but you must get them into here.

So that means you must read them. You must come and hear them preached. You must sing them with the congregation. You must memorize them.

[23 : 50] Hide them in your heart. You must meditate upon them. Oh, how our hurried age has lost the art of meditation.

Sustained thought on the scriptures and the reasons for joy found in our Lord. We must treasure them up in our hearts like Mary.

And do you remember those two joyless disciples on the road to Emmaus? When was it that their sadness was turned to gladness and holy heartburn for Christ?

It was as Jesus opened to them the scriptures concerning himself. Christian, when will your sadness be turned to gladness and holy heartburn after Jesus?

It's as you linger long enough with Christ, letting him open the scriptures to your mind and heart and show you himself. Here's a book all about himself and linger long enough for the joy bells to start ringing in your heart.

[25 : 04] The psalmist says in Psalm 104, 34, May my meditation be pleasing to him as I rejoice in the Lord. Joy in the Lord is the fruit of meditation.

May it be a pleasure to him and a joy to me. This meditation. Joy in the Lord is the fruit of meditation.

Which is your strength. While ignoring the joy food. Jeremiah says your words were found and I did eat them and they became to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

You eating the joy food. David says, Psalm 119, 111, Your statutes are my heritage forever. They're the joy of my heart.

I find more joy in obeying your commands than a man who strikes great riches. Job says, I've treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

[26 : 33] I find this joy food is more necessary than my daily bread. Not surprising when you remember the circumstances Job was in.

Not circumstances of joy, but he found joy. Treasuring up the words of God's mouth. Mark it down.

Those who have great joy in the Lord make much use of his word. It's here that the Lord Jesus is set before our eyes. And beholding him, we love him. And loving him, we rejoice in him.

And here we see what he's done for us. What he is for us. What he says to us. Here he reveals his love for us. And his promises to us. Sixty-six books of joy food.

A feast always at hand. But you've got to come to the table and eat. Are you feasting on Christ in his word?

[27 : 31] And are you fellowshiping with Christ in his word? You know, who you spend time with can affect your joy. Who are you hanging out with? Joyful people or down in the mouth pickled in vinegar people?

It'll affect your joy or lack of it. Well, what if you could spend time with the happiest man in the universe? Which is what Hebrews 1.9 tells us about our Savior.

Fellowshipping with him is good for your joy. Both listening to him as he speaks in his word. And talking to him and knowing that when I pray, he is listening to me.

He's giving me his attention. You say, John, no, he's giving me his attention. Yes, he is. And I don't understand how he does that. But he is able to give to each of us full attention.

Even bending his ear to us as a mother would linger over a sick child who's too weak to even speak loudly. And turns the ear to hear.

[28 : 34] The Lord hears our every cry. He understands our every groan and sighs that we cannot put into words. He understands our tears. He's the happiest man in the universe.

And he is the most joy-giving person in the universe. Those who make most of the means of grace and don't miss him in the means of grace are the most joyful people in the Lord.

Now let me just seek to remove a couple of misconceptions. The command to rejoice in the Lord always does not deny genuine grief and sorrow in Christians. It is not a call to stuff our grief, to ignore our grief, to act like these things don't bother me.

It's not a command to put on a toothy grin and walk around smiling all the time. Jesus wept. Paul wept.

We read it in our scripture reading. But Paul says of himself in 2 Corinthians 6.10 that though he was sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing. Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

[29 : 41] That's the biblical joy I'm talking about. And there's that word always again. Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

There's Paul practicing what he preaches. Yes, our sorrows and grief are real. And we feel them deeply. But there's a deeper strata of joy down there underneath the surface.

A joy in the Lord that has nothing to do with the surface stuff that's happening in my life. That keeps me from going under. That's a solid foundation under my feet.

So when in sorrows we rejoice that we have a Lord who is sovereign over our sorrows and everything causing them. We rejoice in the Lord who says that weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

That not sorrow, but joy has the last word for us in Christ. We rejoice that he's able to use our worst things to work in us the very best things. That our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

[30 : 53] So you see, this command to always be rejoicing in the Lord is a joy that can go hand in hand with sorrow. Sorrowful, but always rejoicing.

Indeed, sorrow and loss is a call to fix our minds on the Lord. His comforting presence and promises and so to rejoice in him even while we grieve.

Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Even as Paul's writing, where's he writing from? A holiday inn back in Rome? No, a prison back in Rome.

And he's still rejoicing. Because not that prison life and food is so wonderful, but that even here in prison I found new people to share the gospel with.

And people are getting saved. And even the Christians on the outside of the prison, they're getting bolder in their witness. And so though I'm here, my circumstances are gloomy. I rejoice and will continue to rejoice.

[31 : 57] You can always find reasons for joy in the Lord. And Paul, even in this letter, is demonstrating that. You know, that's the trouble with these Christians. You just can't keep them down.

You can throw them into troubles, but their Lord is with them in the troubles. And he helps them. And he's working it all for their good. So the Puritan Walter Craddock says, take a saint and put him in any condition and he knows how to rejoice in the Lord.

It's just because of who the Lord is. And what he does and his promise to do and do for you. So there's everything in the Lord to keep us rejoicing in him always, even if through our tears.

I wonder, have you heard of the tropical berry that is called the magical fruit? I can't pronounce it because it's Latin and I don't know Latin.

It's grown in West Africa. And this miracle fruit, these berries have a chemical reaction on your tongue that sweetens everything. Indeed, for a half an hour after you eat them, no matter what you eat, it tastes sweet.

[33 : 11] So take a lemon, bite into that lemon. Find the most bitter thing and you bite in. And it tastes like a piece of candy. The Lord is better than that.

He can sweeten the most bitter things in life. Not for 30 minutes. But until we see him face to face and then the bitterness is gone forever.

Adoniram Judson spent his life taking the gospel to Burma, which is Myanmar, where the ugly civil wars taking place.

He lost his wife there. And another missionary couple laboring with him. The husband died. And so Judson is writing to the grieving widow, Sarah Boardman, whom he would marry four years later.

You're now drinking the bitter cup, whose dregs I am somewhat acquainted with. And though for some time you have been aware of its approach, I venture to say that it is far bitterer than you expected.

[34 : 17] I can assure you that months and months of heart-rending anguish are before you. Yet, take the bitter cup with both hands and sit down to your feast.

You will soon learn a secret that there is sweetness at the bottom. It's in fellowship with Christ that the bitterest things can bear a sweetness at the bottom.

Never before known. He knows how to bring sweet out of bitter, rejoicing out of sorrow, to turn our mourning into dancing.

Let me remove another misconception. It's a wonderful text in James chapter 1 that tells us to consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. But I think sometimes we misinterpret that.

[35 : 26] And we think, well, when I have a flat tire, I'm called to rejoice in my flat tire, as if it were pure joy. But it's not. We're not being called upon to trick ourselves, to lie to ourselves.

No, that's not what he's saying. My rejoicing is not in my flat tire itself, but in the Lord when I have a flat tire. I rejoice not because of how wonderful flat tires are, but because of how wonderful my Lord is and what he's doing in me and to me through flat tires.

Developing perseverance, character, hope, making me more like Jesus. You see the difference? The rejoicing not in my loss itself, but in the Lord himself when I suffer loss, knowing that his ways are perfect.

And that he's up to something good in my life. And so often our disappointed dreams and desires are made to do us the unmistakable good of redirecting our joys.

Away from the broken cisterns of this world that can hold no water. And into the fountain of living water. As I thought about this command, I thought, isn't it a bit strange that God would need to command us to rejoice in the Lord?

[36 : 53] You need a command to enjoy your favorite meal. Your favorite ice cream. Kids, before you go on a wonderful vacation, does dad sit you down and say, now kids, I'm commanding you to enjoy this vacation.

Now you rejoice in it. Always. Always. Always. Now he may give you some rules to make his vacation enjoyable. But you get the point.

We don't usually need commands, do we, for things that are enjoyable. We don't need commands to rejoice in that which, and what is more enjoyable than Jesus?

And yet we have this command. Rejoice. In the Lord Jesus. Always. Always. You know, it wasn't a problem rejoicing in the garden.

Rejoicing in the Lord always. His voice was the sweetest voice in the garden as he came to speak with them in the coolness of the day. And they rejoiced in the Lord always.

[37 : 57] And then there was another voice heard in the garden. And Eve started listening to that voice. And that voice said, do you mean to tell me, Eve, that you're not free from every tree in the garden?

Do you mean that your God is putting rules on you and cramping your style and holding back something good for you?

He doesn't want you to have it? I never thought of it that way before. Of course you hadn't. This is a lie from hell. You're listening to the devil.

Whereas you were listening to the Lord, who is your good, kind, heavenly Father. Do you see, sin is what we do when we lose our joy in the Lord.

We're vulnerable then to any whispering demon, to any voice in the alluring world. Here's where joy is to be found. It's to be found in this forbidden thing, in that thing.

[38 : 58] And when we're not finding our joy in the Lord, we're very susceptible to temptations to find it. Where it's promised but cannot give it.

Not lasting, enduring joy. So this is not a small thing, this idea of joy in the Lord. It's the difference many times between whether I find God so enjoyable that any command that would jeopardize that sweet relationship I'm enjoying.

Forget it. This is too good. To trade it for this. So keep your joy in the Lord. There's enough reasons there, so keep it there.

It's important. That's why it's not just a command, but an important command. And we don't make our joy the end all of this command.

We don't make our good feeling. We say, well, good feelings are better than bad feelings, so I guess I'll pursue joy in the Lord. No, that's to make yourself again the end of all things.

[40 : 05] No, our end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And do you know that your constant joy says something about your God? Says something about Jesus?

Something about your Master? It's saying to a world without joy. My Master is good and gracious and kind. That there's no better Master to serve in the universe.

There's joy in serving Jesus. There's joy in knowing Jesus. There's joy in Jesus' presence. He is the true joy giver. And that's a message our Christless and joyless world needs to hear and needs to see in the joyful people of Christ.

So you see, our joy in the Lord is related to our mission to the world. We're wanting to commend this Jesus to the world. And joy commends Him. I close with a few observations I've made over nearly 40 years in the ministry.

The first is the holiest people are usually the happiest people. When Adam and Eve were holy, they were happy. When they sinned, instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable.

[41 : 21] And I've observed that. The most joyful Christians are those who know the Lord best. The most joyful Christians tend to be the most useful Christians.

Because the joy of the Lord is their strength. Strength to serve the Lord. Strength to do the will of the Lord. Strength to suffer the will of the Lord. Strength to persevere and endure patiently and joyfully in the midst of trial.

A word for you who are outside of Christ. An observation that I've been making this month as I'm reading through the book of Acts. That wherever the gospel went, joy was the trail left behind.

So it's a wonderful thing. Next time you're reading through the book of Acts. See where Christ sends His gospel. What is the gospel? It's good news about Jesus. And wherever the gospel goes, there's a wake like a boat.

It just leaves a wake of joy behind. So Philip goes down to Samaria and preaches the joyful sound that Jesus saves. And there was great joy in that city.

[42 : 28] That's the last word. And then Philip's told to join himself to a chariot. And there's an Ethiopian eunuch in the chariot. And he preaches Jesus to him from Isaiah 53.

And the Ethiopian believes and is baptized. And as they're coming up out of the water, suddenly the Lord took Philip away. And the eunuch didn't see him again, but he went on his way rejoicing.

And then there's that jailer in Philippi. When Paul was there ten years before writing the letter. And he's ready to fall on his sword and kill himself. Paul says, wait, we're all here.

He says, what must I do to be saved? And Paul says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And he believed in the Lord and all his household believed on the Lord at that time in the night.

And it says the jailer was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. He and his whole family. You see, wherever the gospel goes and is heard and believed and embraced and Christ is received.

[43 : 38] Joy is the result. And if you're without Christ, I'm inviting you to this Savior. The gospel is good news for sinners because he doesn't treat sinners like we deserve.

He is willing to receive sinners. He is so willing. He delights to save sinners and to forgive wickedness, rebellion and sin. Come to him and taste that joy that can be found in Christ alone.

Because only Christ can forgive us and make us the children of God. Amen.