

REJOICING IN TROUBLED TIMES

Philippians 4:1-5a

Parts 1-2

5/18/03

5/25/03

Philippians is a book of joy.

Joy 7X

Rejoice 6X

Rejoiced

It repeatedly encourages us to rejoice.

2:18; 3:1; 4:4

But how can we rejoice when life is hard.

It is easy to become discouraged and disheartened as we encounter the realities of life.

When facing reality of death and human suffering.

When encountering rejection and loneliness.

In the midst of personal struggles with temptation.

When you are the victim of dishonesty and corruption.

When struggling with health issues.

When finances are tight

When encountering divorce or the death of a loved one.

When encountering problems with your parents or children.

The adversities of life are difficult even when we know God is in control of our circumstances.

In fact, that knowledge tends to aggravate the pain.

“If God is in control, why did He allow this to happen?”

Paul was fearful that all of the difficulties the Philippians were facing might discourage them and cause them to loose heart.

Paul loved the Philippians. Note how he refers to them in 4:1.

my beloved brethren whom I long to see

my joy

my crown

1. Rejoicing in Troubled Times Requires That We Stand Firm
In The Lord. 4:1

a. Standing firm in our faith in the Lord. cf 1 Corinthians
16:13; Colossians 1:23

- The Bible constantly calls for us to be spiritually stable.
 - ♦ 1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on the alert, **stand firm** in the faith, act like men, be strong.
 - ♦ Colossians 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.
- When our faith falters we become spiritually unstable.
 - ♦ Spiritual instability leads to disappointment, doubt, discouragement, and an ineffective witness.
 - ◇ Unstable people are crushed by their trials and susceptible to temptation.
- A stable faith requires a:
 - ♦ Confidence in the love of God
 - ◇ Demonstrated at Calvary
 - ◇ We are secure in that love.
 - ♦ Confidence in the power of God
 - ◇ Over circumstances, people, nations, nature, and the forces of darkness.
 - ♦ Confidence in the wisdom of God
 - ◇ God is infinitely wise. He always knows what is best for us and He knows the best way to bring it about.

- Our loving God always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.
 - ♦ Whatever our particular calamity or problem may be, we may be sure that God has a loving purpose in it.
 - ♦ Hezekiah in Isaiah 38:17 “Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.”
 - ♦ Genesis 50:20
- It is often difficult to reconcile God’s loving sovereignty in the face of widespread tragedy and personal adversity.
 - ♦ In times of heartache, anxiety and grief it is hard to believe that God is really in control in our lives.
 - ♦ We must learn to trust Him one circumstance at a time.

**b. Standing firm in our faith in the word of the Lord.
cf 2 Thessalonians 2:15**

- Confidence in the word of God
 - ♦ **2 Thessalonians 2:15** So then, brethren, **stand firm** and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.
 - ♦ Satan’s strategy from the beginning was to get us to question God’s word.
 - ♦ The same is true today. (gender roles, child-rearing, sexual orientation, parenting, that Christ is the only way to heaven, etc)
- **Stand firm on what the Bible says about who you are and what your future holds. cf 3:20-21**
- *Standing firm in our faith in God’s word allows us to rejoice in times of trouble.*

c. **Standing firm in the Lord against the allurements of this world.** cf James 4:4; 1 John 2:15

- This world provides all kinds of temptations and enticements.
 - ♦ Materialism, sensuality, rebelliousness, pride
 - ◇ Too often we want what this world has to offer.
 - ◇ We want to be a part of it.
- **James 4:4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- **1 John 2:15** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
 - ♦ *We will never experience lasting joy when we fail to stand firm in the Lord but seek happiness and fulfillment in the things of this world.*

d. **Standing firm in the Lord against the lusts of our flesh.** cf James 1:14-15; Galatians 5:16-17; Matthew 26:41

- **James 1:14-15** But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.
- **Matthew 26:41** "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- **Galatians 5:16-17**
 - ♦ *When we fail to stand firm in the Lord and yield to the lusts of the flesh we end up with lives of misery and guilt.*
 - ◇ *Lasting joy only comes by standing firm in the Lord and trusting His word.*

e. **Standing firm in the Lord against the schemes of the devil. Ephesians 6:10-17**

- He constantly tries to entice us through the world and the flesh.
 - ♦ He constantly appeals to our rebellious side.
 - ♦ If that doesn't work he will often use fear and persecution, or false teaching
- **Ephesians 6:10-17** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**. 14 **Stand firm** therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

f. **Standing firm in the Lord will result in earthly service and heavenly rewards. cf 1 Corinthians 15:58**

- **1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.
 - ♦ *Standing firm in the Lord results in lasting eternal joy.*

You and I can rejoice in troubled times because:

God is powerful enough to control the future.

God is wise enough to even take the bad things in life and use them for our good.

God is loving enough to come and die on a cross to pay the penalty for your sins and to save you from eternal judgment.

- But you and I can only have the peace of God if we have peace with God.

♦ **Romans 5:1-5**

♦ **2 Corinthians 13:11** Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in **peace**; and the **God** of love and **peace** shall be with you.

♦ **2 John 1:3** Grace, mercy *and* **peace** will be with us, from **God** the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

2. Rejoicing in Troubled Times Requires That We Stand Firm In Unity. 4:2-3 cf 1:27

The importance of unity between Christians is repeatedly stressed in the Bible.

- **Philippians 1:27** Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing **firm** in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
- **Psalms 133:1** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!
- **Ephesians 4:3-5** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.
- **Romans 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

There were conflicts in the church at Philippi. cf 2:2-4,14

4:2-3 There was an ongoing conflict between two prominent women in the congregation.

- Most likely they had become critical, bitter, vengeful, hostile, unforgiving and proud.

Paul exhorts them to be reconciled to one another.

- KJV- be of the same mind
- NIV – agree with each other
- NAB- live in harmony
 - ♦ A high school orchestra was preparing for a concert that featured a pianist in a rendition of Grieg's A-minor concerto. Before the performance, it was customary for the orchestra to tune up with an "A" sounded by the oboe player. But the oboist was a practical joker, and he had tuned his instrument a half step higher than the piano. You can imagine the effect. After the pianist played a beautiful introduction, the members of the orchestra joined in. What confusion! Every instrument was out of tune with the piano.
- In the church at Philippi, some of the members who were "out of tune." with each other.
 - ♦ Euodia and Syntyche were spiritually "off key."
- They were saved.
 - ♦ Their names were written in the book of life.
- They had shared with Paul in the struggle for the cause of the gospel.
 - ♦ Yet they were now at odds with each other.
 - ♦ Jealousy?
 - ♦ Power struggle?

- ◇ Harbored slight or hurt?
- ◇ Personal ambition
- ◇ Pride
- ◇ Stubbornness
- ◇ Both wanting recognition or preeminence?

- The tragic conflict between Euodia and Synteche shows that even the most faithful and committed people can become so selfish as to be embroiled in controversy if they are not diligent to maintain unity.

You will never have peace and joy in your heart while there is ongoing conflict between you and another Christian.

A conflict between two Christians affects many other people.

- the church (here Paul and the Philippian believers)
- the unsaved John 13:35
 - ◆ Including family members
 - ◇ Greg and Judy Busch
- Christ- John 17

There will never be joy in your life or in a church where there is conflict and strife.

- **Matthew 6:14-15** "For if you **forgive** others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also **forgive** you. 15 "But if you do not **forgive** others, then your Father will not **forgive** your transgressions.
- **Matthew 18:21-35**
- **Colossians 3:13** bearing with one another, and **forgiving** each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

An on going conflict may require that others help them to reconcile.

- Not to fight or flee. (Avoidance)
- Not to gossip and slander
- Not to gather followers.

The mark of community--true biblical unity--is not the absence of conflict but the presence of a reconciling spirit.

Joseph McKinney: Anyone can love the ideal church. The challenge is to love the real church.

- *But in order to rejoice during troubled times we must be committed to stand firm in unity.*

3. Rejoicing in Troubled Times Requires A Humble And Gentle Spirit. 4:4-5a

gentle spirit- gracious humility

- Kindness, forbearance, patience
- The opposite of a contentious self-seeking spirit

A proud person will seldom be joyful.

- You and I will always have trouble rejoicing when we are trying to promote or protect our pride.

Pride always results in conflict and strife.

- both internal and external

We are called upon to follow the example of Christ.

- Philippians 2:2-8, 14-15

We can rejoice in troubled times when we stand firm in the Lord.

You and I can rejoice in troubled times when we stand firm in unity.

You and I can rejoice in troubled times if we maintain a humble gentle spirit.

- Joy and peace come only with a humble gentle spirit.