

Rejoice in the Lord Always by James Jennings

by James Malachi Jennings

The sermon emphasizes the importance of continually rejoicing in the Lord, regardless of circumstances, as a fundamental aspect of the Christian life.

Duration: 50:42

Scripture: Isaiah 61:10, Luke 10:17, Luke 10:20, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 2:12-13, Philippians 4:4, Philippians 4:8, Philippians 4:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Topics: "Joy In Christ", "Assurance Of Salvation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord always, highlighting the need to find supreme joy in Christ regardless of circumstances or personal achievements. It warns against finding joy in ministry success or personal works, urging believers to focus on the unchanging source of joy found in Christ and the assurance of salvation. The sermon encourages a deep, continual relationship with the Lord, rooted in gratitude for His salvation and faithfulness.

Transcript

Now, throughout this letter, Paul instructs believers to rejoice in the Lord. Again and again. He did it in 3.1. Rejoice in the Lord.

He does it here. Rejoice in the Lord. In v. 10, he says, I rejoiced in the Lord.

He commands this again and again. Now, though Paul is being repetitive in this instruction, we do not want to disregard or overlook it. Paul often commands it for a reason.

His purpose is not for it to become so common that when we hear it, it has no effect upon us. It's definitely not Paul's intention. The frequency of this command communicates to us, I think, the importance of it.

It's so frequent, which says it's important don't miss this. It's important for us to rejoice in the Lord always. All the time.

24-7. So rather than become commonplace and have no effect, it should have a profound effect upon our lives. Don't miss this basic aspect of the Christian life.

The Christian life is one where the Christian is always rejoicing and finding in Christ their supreme joy. It's so important that we not miss this, that we need reminders again and again and again. And I'll say to you

again, rejoice.

Rejoice in the Lord. Now, Paul is not just instructing them to rejoice in anything, but to rejoice in a specific object. And the specific object is a person.

It is the Lord God. And specifically in Philippians, when he says, Lord, it's constantly referring and designating Jesus Christ. Yes, rejoice in the Father, the Spirit, but specifically in Philippians, Paul's emphasis is I count all things lost for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

He's going back to Christ again and again. Sadly, what do we often rejoice in? We only rejoice if our circumstances go well. Or we rejoice when we do well and perform in a way that gains the approval of man or makes us feel good about ourselves.

We just rejoice when that happens. I got approval from that brother. I rejoice.

It makes me feel good. Or, for example, say if you go downtown to evangelize on Friday night, and you leave, are you leaving rejoicing no matter what happened? What if you got rejected? Spit on? What if you did not evangelize as well as you had hoped you would? Do you rejoice? Is your joy at that moment in Christ? Or is your joy in your performance? Paul is commanding us to rejoice always, no matter the circumstances, no matter the performance, no matter your works, rejoice in the Lord always. Now, in context, is there a specific reason that Paul is repeating this command right here? He had a reason for giving it in chapter 3. If you remember, Paul gave it in chapter 3 as a safety reminder.

If you're rejoicing in the Lord, it's a preventative to keep you from going and rejoicing in the Lord's fains and giving in to false teaching. And so he says it in 3.1 with that being one of the reasons. But what about here? I was trying to think.

Is it just one of these exhortations he's putting here? Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. Let your reasonableness, your gentle spirit be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious. Can we take these individually? And I believe we can.

But is there a reason in the context? Now obviously, part of the reason in the context is the circumstances the church found themselves in. They had opponents. Paul himself had opponents.

He was in prison. And he's rejoicing always. And he's telling them, the Philippians, to rejoice who have opponents.

But in the ESV, if you forget about this paragraph indention, that is not actually there, and you look at v. 3, how does he end v. 3? He says, "...whose names are in the book of life." So Paul just told them, the Odiian Syntyche, their names are in the book of life. Is Paul spontaneously after thinking of that glorious reality saying, rejoice in the Lord always? Again, I'll say rejoice. I don't know.

I don't think there's proof there that that's what's leading him to say this again. Whether it is or it isn't, our salvation is a reason we should always rejoice in the Lord. Isaiah 61.10 says this, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall exult in my God. Why? Because He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

Why will my soul greatly rejoice in the Lord? Because of His salvation. Here I have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed, accredited to my account. So, no matter your circumstances this morning, Paul says rejoice in the Lord.

And whether he's spontaneously saying this because he just talked about whose names are in the book of life, that's absolutely one reason to rejoice in the Lord because of His salvation. Now what does it mean to rejoice? In that text in Isaiah, he just said it's his soul exulting in my God. He mentions rejoicing in the Lord and that's what takes place.

There's this inwardness in the soul of exulting. And that word sometimes is even rendered joyfully. Enjoying, boasting in God.

So when you think about rejoicing, it's this inward gladness, exulting and worshiping in the Lord. Worshiping in Him. Rejoicing in the Lord is not just some emotion that comes upon you.

We know this. Why? Paul commands us to rejoice, to exult in God. Paul is not commanding us to feel a certain way this morning.

When I say rejoice in the Lord this morning, that doesn't mean you need to feel a certain way this morning. That's not always connected with true rejoicing in the Lord. Paul is commanding us to rejoice in a person.

The Lord. We're to rejoice no matter how we feel. And we can.

I can rejoice this morning no matter how I feel. Because my feelings, they don't have to be connected to what true joy is in the Lord and true worship in God. You're able to rejoice no matter the state of your feelings.

You don't have to feel a certain way. That doesn't mean there are not feelings connected with rejoicing. Now Paul, rejoice in the Lord.

How often? For how long? How long can this be sustained? I mean, just an hour, right? Two hours? Just until 1 p.m. when our meeting ends today? Then we can stop rejoicing in the Lord? No, Paul doesn't say that. How often? How long? Always. Now I'm very encouraged he says that.

Because it shows us that Paul's view of the Christian life is it's one of unceasing joy in Jesus Christ. And he doesn't paint that reality as some false thing that cannot be obtained. He paints that reality because it is a true reality.

As a Christian, we can have a life of continual rejoicing in the Lord always. And as you read the writings of Paul, you see Paul had that. He's in prison and he rejoices.

People are out there seeking to afflict him through their preaching while he's in prison. He rejoices. He's facing martyrdom.

He rejoices. Paul is living out this exhortation, this command to us this morning. But how? How can continual rejoicing be possible? Because it's rejoicing in who? In the Lord.

And what's true of our Lord? Our Lord never changes. He's continual. He's consistent.

There are times I don't rejoice in my kids and they are a great grief to me. There is never a time the Lord is a grief to me. There is never a time the Lord lets me down.

Therefore, there is never a time that it is not perfectly right and correct to abound in joy and rejoice in the Lord. He never gives us a reason. The Lord has never given you one moment in your Christian life by which it would not be proper for you to rejoice and exult in your soul in Him at that moment and worship Him for who He is and what He has done.

Now, Paul says rejoice always. That means even when there are big trials, rejoice. Even when there are the small ones, rejoice.

Even in the small things. And I was talking to my wife about this and she was mentioning sometimes the hardest times to rejoice are in the small things. The big trial comes and it's so big, you're automatically just rejoicing in the Lord and trusting Him and thinking, Lord, I cannot get through this without You.

And You've brought this. But the small things, sometimes we let those steal our joy. Mothers, happy Mother's Day.

But, how many of you are going to have your kids be a grief to you today? And even if they are, rejoice in the Lord. Do you live a life of rejoicing in the Lord even when your kids are not that much of a joy to have around? Always rejoice in the Lord. Even when your kids are being a grief to you because the Lord is never for a moment letting you down, forsaking you, being a grief.

He is altogether lovely. He is perfect. There is no flaw in Him.

Someone may say this, if always, then explain the unceasing anguish Paul had in his heart in Romans 9. Was he rejoicing in the Lord right then too? I mean, Paul, you said to always rejoice in the Lord, but in Romans 9 you had unceasing anguish in your heart and you wished you could be cut off and cursed if possible for the sake of these Jews that they might be saved. Paul, were you rejoicing in the Lord at that moment? Yes, he was. Suffering and anguish of heart are not to take us out of the realm of rejoicing in the Lord.

Again, joy in the Lord is something that does not have to mean a smiling face and laughter. I can be in anguish over the lost and at the same time, still have supreme joy and gladness and worship and praise be to Jesus Christ. And I can be completely thankful and joyful in that moment.

Because true joy, it's not referring to a feeling, though feelings may be there. It's something beyond that. It's in a person in Jesus Christ who does not change.

And we must assume this even, that part of Paul's joy in Christ, because he was living this life of rejoicing in the Lord, that's even what led to him feeling in his heart that he could be accursed and cut off for the sake of his brethren. How do you think you get to the point to have such love to wish yourself cut off, if possible, for the lost? It's because you live a life rejoicing in the Lord. And you're willing to endure any circumstances because your life isn't about your circumstances, it's about Christ.

You don't express such love unless your life is one of always rejoicing in the Lord. And we see this in a way in Acts 5.41. The apostles were flogged. And how did they leave getting flogged? They got flogged and they left rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name.

They counted it an honor that God put them in those circumstances to be beaten. They were not grumbling or full of unbelief because of being flogged. They had joy.

And their joy, get this, they left rejoicing and what did they do when they left? Go hide in a room? No. They went out there and evangelized all the more. You see, true joy in Christ leads to evangelism.

It leads to proclamation of the Gospel. It leads to filling unceasing anguish inwardly for the lost in the world. You don't leave your joy to be burdened for the lost.

You have your joy in the Lord, and that's part of what leads you to evangelize and be burdened for the lost. So Paul believes in continual joy in the Christian life. And he's calling us today.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And he's doing that not in a sarcastic way, not as a joke, not to trick us, but because he himself is even living out this life of continual joy in Christ. Exalting in his soul.

Rejoicing in the Lord. And this is possible because we have a continual and unchanging Source, our Lord. Now think how important this is in Paul's mind.

I realize I've been going over Philippians for three years now. And the sermons in chapter 1, I don't even remember some of what I shared. I had to go listen to some of those to remember they were so long ago.

But if you remember in chapter 1, one of the key reasons that Paul did not want to die yet, but wanted to continue and leave, what was one of those reasons? For their joy and progress in the faith. For their joy and progress in the faith. So Paul clearly saw this as essential if it was one of the motivating factors that he wanted martyrdom to be postponed, that he might remain with you all for your joy and progress in the faith.

Your progress and joy in the faith. This is a big deal in Paul's mind. Joy in Christ is essential.

You see, we can't read over this verse. I wanted to move on and go to v. 5 and 6 as I was studying, and I just thought about v. 4 and I thought, that would be a shame if I did that. That would show that I don't understand that verse.

Now, here's another thing to realize as we think about this. To rejoice in the Lord is not limited to just rejoicing in His attributes and His work on the cross. Let me say that again.

To rejoice in the Lord, when Paul says that, it doesn't mean just rejoice in the cross. Just rejoice in the attributes and what is true of God. It doesn't just mean that.

It does mean that. But, we also rejoice in the works He works through other believers. And we find this in v. 10.

Look at v. 10. You want an example of what it looks like to rejoice greatly in the Lord? Well, what does Paul do? Paul says this, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. Why? In an attribute in the cross? No, in a work.

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that now at length you, the Philippians, have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me. But you had no opportunity.

And he goes on, and what did they do? They gave money. So Paul rejoiced in the Lord because he received care from the Philippians. And part of the care from the Philippians was receiving what? Money.

That makes you ask this question. Is this not him rejoicing in his positive circumstances? Boy, Paul, you just said rejoice always in the Lord. And verses later, you receive money from the Philippians and you rejoice, but he's not rejoicing in the money.

He is rejoicing in the Lord. What does the text say? I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. Now, he rejoiced in the Lord that the Lord brought something about.

So Paul is not being a hypocrite here. There is a big difference between rejoicing in money itself compared to rejoicing in the Lord when He provides for a need of yours. You see, there's a difference.

I'm not just rejoicing in money. Paul is rejoicing in the fact that the Lord revived their concern for him. Yes, that concern being revived led to them giving him money.

But Paul isn't all of a sudden rejoicing, well, I've got money now. I'm rejoicing in money. No, no, no.

That's not Paul. Paul's joy in the Lord was from their concern being revived. And his focus is not on the money.

He even says in v. 17, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. So he was even wanting them to have fruit to their credit and their joy to increase. And we also need to ask this question.

Would Paul have been content if the Philippians did not revive their concern for him? Was Paul's joy hinging entirely on whether or not the Philippians revived their concern for him? No, because look at v. 12. What does Paul say? I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty in hunger, abundance in need. Need. He faced need when the Philippians' concern was not revived.

And what does he say? I'm content. I'm content. I've learned in all circumstances.

So Paul here, he is living out v. 4, but he's rejoicing in the Lord for a work the Lord brought about. And it is wrong for us to have an understanding of rejoicing that leads us to fail to rejoice at the kindness that the Lord brings about through others. That's a failure.

If the Lord brings about a kindness through a church and you don't rejoice in the Lord for doing that, that right there is a sin. And so Paul is not saying only rejoice in God and His attributes and the work of Christ. No, rejoice in the things that God is doing and the works.

Paul even was wanting to send Epaphroditus back to them that they might rejoice. So, yes, rejoice in circumstances the Lord brings about. But if you're rejoicing always in the Lord, you'll rejoice whether that circumstance gets brought about or not.

If it does, you're thankful. But your joy is not hinging on that. Paul even says in v. 19, my God will supply every need of yours.

And no doubt, Paul saw the Lord as the One who provided for him. God's supply. It wasn't really the Philippians.

They were the means. I was even thinking about this. Recently, someone mentioned to me, they said this, they said the Lord brought almost \$4,000 of unexpected money in a single day.

Now notice how they did not say people brought almost \$4,000 in a single day. They said the Lord brought. And that's how we speak.

Because as Christians, we realize it's not ultimately the people. It's the Lord working through means to provide. So we don't rejoice necessarily in the means, but in the Lord.

It all points back to the Lord. I was thinking about this. I mean, when any other believer is concerned for you, rejoice in the Lord.

Just the fact a Christian is concerned for you should cause you to rejoice in the Lord. Because we read in Philippians 2 that God works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure. God works in us the desire to have concern for other Christians.

So when another Christian has revived concern for you, rejoice in the Lord who worked in them to have that concern for you. And their concern for you communicates the Lord's concern for you. The Lord reviving their concern for you is communicating to you the Lord's concern about you.

That He led someone to give you money. Or that He led a person to pray for you. Or He led a person to call.

So don't rejoice in the person who calls you and bears your burden. Rejoice in the Lord who, Paul says, worked in them to desire to work for His good pleasure. It all points back to the Lord.

So my point is this. Rejoicing in the Lord is not limited to rejoicing in the cross, rejoicing in the attributes of God, we do. But we rejoice in the works of God that He works through the church.

We rejoice in the Lord for doing those works. With all this said, we also must not forget to rejoice in the midst of our trials. Paul said in Philippians 1.29, those sufferings and trials have been graciously given to you by God.

So rejoice at the good God brings and at the suffering, because they're both from the same hand. You see, rejoice always. Again, I say rejoice.

Now, another question. We could think of this and we could feel how on earth Paul lived a life rejoicing continually in the Lord. He calls us to do that.

He commands us to do that. Where does this power come from? To rejoice in the Lord like this all the time. Where's the power? I want this.

I want this. More. Where does it come from? Well, you don't have to think too long.

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5 says this is obviously something the Holy Spirit works in us. We just quoted Philippians 2 that God works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure.

So where does the power come from? From the Holy Spirit. We don't go and rely on our own power and our own strength and try to work this up in us. We rejoice in the Lord.

We ask for more of the Holy Spirit. We believe His promises. And we go in faith and do as He has commanded.

And because the Holy Spirit has such power and might that one can never ask too much, you could say this endeavor is fully possible. This should not intimidate us. So what about you? Do you tend to have a negative attitude towards the bad things that happen to you? Is that the response? Or is it a response of rejoicing in the Lord? Think of the times you do the opposite of rejoicing.

You moan, you grumble, you complain, you're unthankful, you're depressed, you have a self-pity party. Think of those times. And look, those times are depressing.

Who wants that? And Paul offers a way of escape. He says you can rejoice in the Lord always. Yes, even right there.

Even in the midst of the trial, you can rejoice like those in Acts 5 who left rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer. You see, their perspective was beyond this world. They looked in deeply into God's ways and said, God found us worthy to suffer? You see, they weren't looking in the physical realm.

They were looking at what was going on in heaven. That the Lord allowed this to take place. And they're sitting there rejoicing.

If He allowed it to take place, He knew it wouldn't be too much for us to bear. Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, the Lord won't give us more than we can bear. So that means we've grown enough to bear this trial.

And you just rejoice. Find your joy in the Lord and not whether your circumstances fit your approval or not. Are you mainly overflowing with joy when you have accomplished something that gained the applause of man? It's very easy to have joy at that point.

You do a work. People really praise you for it. It's very easy to have a false joy at that moment.

We may call it joy. It may be a feeling where you feel good about yourself. That may just be a bunch of fleshly pride.

And we call it joy. True rejoicing would be gratitude and thankfulness to the Lord for being an unworthy servant used in the Master's hands. What if your performance of a certain task is considered a failure? Would that lead you to not rejoice? Often, that's what happens.

We do something. We wanted approval. We don't get it.

We don't rejoice because our joy was based upon whether they patted us on the back and said we did a good job or not. And then some go get depressed. They have a self-pity party.

Their joy is not in Christ. It's in their performance. Brethren, we've got to rejoice in what Christ has accomplished.

That's not changing. His work is worthy. Just ask yourself today, up until this point, have you obeyed this command to rejoice and be glad in the Lord? Remember, it's not a feeling.

He's commanding us to rejoice in the Lord always. You can rejoice in the Lord, and that doesn't necessarily mean there'll be a smile on your face. But it will mean your soul is exalting in the Lord and you're looking to Him.

And there's a similarity even with being thankful. You're going to rejoice in what you're thankful for. If you're thankful in God, you're going to be rejoicing and exalting in Him.

Or do you only rejoice when your circumstances are well? Or do you rejoice no matter your state of affairs? And this kind of reminds us of Paul's similar instruction. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Paul views Christians as people who are rejoicing always and giving thanks always in every circumstance.

That's a high bar that's been set. But he gives us the power. And if you really love Christ, and God keeps showing you, you've got to look to My Son.

You've got to look to the Father. Look to the Son. Look to the Son.

Look into Jesus as you run the race. You're going to have joy. It's going to grip your heart.

It's going to make you worship. Think of this. To rejoice always is to prove that you believe that God is always in control.

You hear that? If I rejoice always, I'm proving that I believe something. And that something that I believe is that God is always in control. The opposite though.

If I refuse to rejoice and give thanks, that reveals I don't believe God is in control or I do believe God is in control, but I'm just going to refuse and have an outright disapproval of what the Lord has allowed. Whether we rejoice or not communicates something deeply about what's going on internally in our hearts. Communicates that to our kids about what we really believe.

Communicates that to the lost world who are trying to shine His light and be a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of our salvation as Paul says. Let's ask this question. Do you lack this constant rejoicing in the Lord in your life? Do you lack it? What are some reasons? Some lack it for an obvious reason.

They lack it completely because they're lost. They're not saved. If that's you this morning, look what Paul said in v. 3. He said there's some whose names are in the book of life.

The fact that God is willing to put your name in a book of life. The fact that God is willing and made a way to blot out all of your sins and remove them as far as the east is from the west. That's something to rejoice in.

When I was a kid, I rejoiced. I got happy when I got a new video game. That's stupid.

Compared to Christ. It doesn't last. And I got happy when I got my 50th new video game.

And then I got 70 video games. Why didn't I just need one? Why did I need 70 video games? Because it didn't last. It didn't satisfy.

It left me empty crying out for something more inside. But with Christ, that's not the case. Paul says you can rejoice in Him always because He's always going to be the same and He's always going to be

supreme and He's always going to give you pleasure and He's never going to run out.

He's an infinite Source. He's not going to let you down. So some lack it because they're lost.

But for the Christian, you know why some lack it? Undealt with sin. You think David had a lot of rejoicing in the Lord in Psalm 32 after adultery with Bathsheba and God's hand was pressed heavy upon him and his strength is being dried up as by the heat of the summer? What did he pray in Psalms 51? Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. See, he wanted it back.

Undealt with sin. Not having a clear conscience this morning will strip you of your joy in Christ until you cut that arm off and cleanse yourself from it. Why do some lack this constant rejoicing? Some lack joy because of anxiety from prayerlessness.

You won't be rejoicing in the Lord if you're not taking every care to Him in prayer. Paul deals with this in v. 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. If you don't obey that, you won't be rejoicing always in the Lord.

If you've got a bunch of cares that you're not taking to the Lord in prayer, you're not going to rejoice in the Lord. But in everything by prayer, everything, if there's one thing, you don't take it to the Lord in prayer, you don't take it to Him in thanksgiving with supplication, you're not going to go on rejoicing in the Lord, believer. You've got to take it to Him.

Often, Christians are stripped of rejoicing in the Lord because they hold that one thing back and they fret over it. Is there anything you're anxious about that you're not taking to the Lord in prayer? That will steal your joy in a moment. What's another reason some Christians lack this consistent, stable joy in Christ? Some lack it because of their thought life.

Where's your mind? Are you thinking on what Paul says in v. 8? What does he say? Finally, brothers, whatever is true, honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, think about these things. You know one reason Christians are not rejoicing always in the Lord? Because their mind is not on the things in v. 8. There are things that have nothing to do with excellence that consume the mind. You can't go on rejoicing in the Lord if that's the case.

Strips you of that. Dwelling on the wrong things, it steals your joy. Now, turn to Luke 10.

Luke 10. There is something here that I believe is applicable to this point of Paul's. Luke 10.

17. The 72 return with joy, saying, Lord... They return with joy. Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.

And He said to them, well, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt you. And look what Jesus says.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you. Jesus says don't rejoice. So I'm telling you to rejoice in the Lord.

And here Jesus comes along and He says don't rejoice in something. And He then says something to rejoice in. But rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Rejoice. So here they are. They came from casting out demons and rejoicing in the authority they had to do such.

In summary, what's Jesus saying to them? Jesus in a way is saying to them, don't rejoice in your authority over the demons. But rejoice in My authority to forgive you of your sins. Rejoice in that authority that can have your names written in heaven.

Why not rejoice in authority and power? Well, that's pretty simple. There's a lot of people who have authority. There's a lot of people who've got power and they're in hell.

And there's people who cast out demons in Christ's name. And He says I never knew you. And so rejoice in authority and power.

But His name is not written in heaven. He's going to be in the lake of fire. So don't rejoice in authority and power and ministry success.

You get back from a good evening of evangelism and you're rejoicing in that and that's a rejoice in Christ. Paul says no. Or Jesus says no.

Not Paul. Christ. Do not rejoice in this.

Even in this passage, you think about the timing in which the disciples fell into rejoicing in the wrong thing and making something an idol. What was the timing? It was just after they did a lot of active ministry. They just returned from evangelism and activity.

And they had success. Everything went as they planned. And at that moment, they were the most vulnerable in some sense.

And they rejoiced in the wrong thing. And Christ says don't rejoice in that. And sadly, that's how it is with us at times.

After a successful performance and busyness in the ministry, one can easily fall into rejoicing in the wrong thing and idolizing their works over Jesus Christ. One can fall like King David and have many victories, and then you start taking a census to number how many men you have. There was a place for censuses.

God did those. But David's heart was wrong and it wasn't the Lord leading him to do it. So believer, having all power over the enemy is nothing compared to the glory of having our name written in heaven.

You want something to rejoice over this morning? It's not power. It's not whether you cast out demons. It's not a miracle that happened.

It's the greatest miracle that your name is written in heaven, that there's forgiveness in Jesus Christ, that there's full atonement. How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? That's the thing to rejoice in. And that's what Paul says.

Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always. Your salvation never changes.

It's a constant source of joy no matter your circumstances. Now, I want to give an example of how subtly you can go wrong from rejoicing in the Lord to just rejoicing in something else in your circumstances. I mean, that biblical example right there in Luke 10, that's the best one.

It's right in the Bible. They did active ministry, all of that, and they were rejoicing in that in Christ's name, rejoice, your name's written in heaven. But here's an example that never left me from my own life.

On my wedding day, I drove to the place of the wedding with, as many of you know, my father-in-law. He was dying of pancreatic cancer at the time. He was in the final stages of dying of cancer.

And I remember we left their house to go to the building for the wedding. And on the previous day, it seemed like he wasn't even going to make it. He had talked to one of his sons about walking his daughter down the aisle.

It looked grim that he was going to make it. And in that car ride with Bob, I obviously had a whole lot of reason to rejoice. I was so thankful he was coming.

But you know what happened? On the car ride, it seemed he detected in me an improper rejoicing. I was too focused on the occasion of the wedding and him making it. So focused on this is happening, this is happening.

And he detected. I was more rejoicing over all of that than over Jesus Christ. And I remember in the car, he was kind of quiet after I went on this and said different things, and he looked at me and he said something to the extent, James, this wedding and me being here, it's not the big thing.

Christ is the big thing. Christ is. And I needed that.

That's a good way to go get married. Getting rebuked by your father-in-law in the car to realize. And he did it so graciously.

But to realize, do not rejoice that Bob made it to the wedding. That Bob's going to get to speak at the wedding. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven.

That's the big thing. Yes, Isaiah 62 says the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. And I should go to my wedding rejoicing over my wife.

And I did. And I should go rejoicing and thankful in the Lord that Bob was able to make it and preach. But don't do it at the cost of that event moving to the top of the pedestal and replacing Christ in the heart.

Don't let it surpass Christ. Don't let it become the thing. The works that God does are not to make us so focused on the works as it is on the One who's doing those works.

Yes, rejoice in what God did, but rejoice in the Lord, Paul says, just as he did in v. 10. He rejoiced greatly in the Lord at what had happened. He wasn't just rejoicing greatly in what happened.

He was rejoicing in the Lord who brought it about. We should have a healthy fear of not falling into wrongly living on joy from work and ministry and not from Christ. And I've only been saved a small ten years, but I keep coming back.

A fear. Lord, am I in any way living off of ministry instead of You? And it's good to have that fear. And I've been reading multiple different books that deal with Lloyd-Jones, one on preaching called The Sacred Anointing, his biography, his Philippians commentary, and I ran into three different things from those three different books that I thought are very helpful for this.

Lloyd-Jones said this, a man may live on his preaching instead of Christ. Just as a man can live on his business. But when old age has come, he cannot do these things.

His powers are failing him. And he cannot appreciate the things of the world. And there he is left to himself.

And Lloyd-Jones says that's the test. When he's left to himself. That's the test.

That's the test. He can't preach. He's just left to himself.

That's the test. Lloyd-Jones in the closing part of his life, he said this, our great danger is to live on our activity. Elsewhere, he said this, I've seen men who have been persisting tirelessly in the work of the kingdom, and suddenly, they were laid aside by illness, and they scarcely knew what to do with themselves.

They didn't know what to do. The author, Tony Sargon, he says this, these statements are revealing. They demonstrate his inner convictions.

The preacher should be engaged in an ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. When he has chances to be able to function as a preacher, he will still go on enjoying the fellowship of the One whose company he has sought down the years. You see, it's one of these differences.

Martha, Martha, anxious and troubled about many things. But Mary chose the good portion to sit at the feet of Christ. Now this made me think, okay, these things Lloyd-Jones said when he was healthy.

What about when he was at the end? What happened? What about Paul? I mean, this is great in theory. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. But what about at the end? D.A. Carson commented on Lloyd-Jones at the end in a sermon, and I wrote down what Carson said.

He said, when Lloyd-Jones was dying of cancer, one of his friends and former associates asked him, in effect, how are you managing to bear up? You have been accustomed to preaching several times a week. You have begun important Christian enterprises. Your influence is extended through tapes and books to Christians on five continents.

And now you have been put on the shelf. You are reduced to sitting quietly, sometimes managing a little editing. I am not so much asking therefore how you are coping with the disease itself, rather, I'm asking, how are you coping with the stress of being put out of the swim of things? And you know what Lloyd-Jones said? Lloyd-Jones responded in the words of Luke 10.

Do not rejoice that the Spirit submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. You see, he lived out what he believed. His life was built on Christ.

Not ministry. Not success. Christ.

T.A. Carson said, it's so easy to rejoice in success. Our self-identity may become entangled with the fruitfulness of our ministry. Of course, that is dangerous when the success turns sour.

Lastly, something Lloyd-Jones said in his commentary on Philippians. I thought it was helpful. Some people are foolish enough to find their joy in their work.

I know many lost people who do that their whole life. But you know what? I've seen Christians, and I, I know specifically as a new Christian, fell into that category for a season. Some people are foolish enough to find their joy in their work.

As far as it goes, that's alright. And apart from the Gospel, it is not a bad thing. But my friend, a day is coming when you will lose your work, you will become old or ill.

What a tragic thing it is to see such people. They were so happy when they were working. But when they're laid aside, they do not know what to do with themselves.

They have been dependent for joy and happiness upon their own efforts and exertions. Then think of the men and women who are only happy when they are successful. You may be successful, but look at that other person who's coming up fast and who will soon beat and excel you.

You'll become tired, your powers will fail, and somebody else will take your place. They have been happy in the days of their success and achievement. They are joyful as they reach the summit of their profession.

But when they begin to come down the other side, and it is much more difficult to come down than to go up, circumstances are bound to let you down sooner or later. Do not depend upon them. But Christ, He will never let you down.

He is unchanging. His perfect righteousness is imputed to your account, believer. You have confidence to go before the throne of God boldly.

He's going to supply every one of your needs, even in old age, even when your mind will fail. So what neither you or I want to do is to have our source of joy be our own efforts in what we do and how we exert our energy. We don't want to be anxious and troubled with many things like Martha.

We want to find the one thing in Christ consistently. Not for the first ten years of our Christian life, but to the end. So like Lloyd-Jones, we can quote Luke 10 from our deathbed and say, I do not rejoice in that.

So, I exhort you, I command you, as Paul does. And again, I say rejoice always in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always.

This is a big deal. This is not some minor thing. This is so important that if Lloyd-Jones would have missed it, he would have been in misery as he was dying.

You see? Don't just think of the here and now. Think of the end. And yes, think of what true Christianity is.

This is eternal life, that they may know Me, the one true God, and Jesus Christ Whom I have sent. True Christianity is knowing Christ. I want to know Christ more.

I want to exalt in my soul in the Lord Jesus more. I want to be able to not have ministry and all these other things. And you know what? Yes, we need to do things, but we can't let those consume our hearts and take the place of Christ.

Father, it is so easy for me to preach on this verse, but to live it out, that's where it feels more difficult. But Lord, in the same way, it shouldn't feel as difficult as the mind makes it to be. Because this isn't a feeling about how happy we are inside.

Lord, it's more than that. Lord, we're rejoicing in You, being grateful, thankful for You. Lord, we do.

We rejoice. We exalt, we praise, we thank You. We worship You this morning for who You are.

Lord, we're thankful that You're unchanging, that You're the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. We're thankful that You who began a good work in us will bring it to completion. We're thankful You left men like the Apostle Paul to remain with us longer for our joy and progress in the faith.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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