

## Rejoicing in the Lord Philippians 4:4

*Rejoice* is from the Greek word *chairō* (**khah-ee-ro**) and is defined as “to enjoy a state of happiness and well-being,” Louw-Nida. However, the ability to *rejoice* is not overtly dependent upon personal circumstances themselves, but rather upon how one chooses to view them, and the attitude one chooses to maintain in them, cf. Col.1:24 and 2Cor.6:10. Thus, *rejoicing* is *choosing to be glad or happy*.

Etymologically, *rejoicing* (*chairō*) is closely linked to *chara* (*joy*), Phil.1:25; Gal.5:22, but still yet is somewhat different also. While *chara* is *joy*, it is often so by occasion or circumstance, *rejoicing* (*chairō*) is a *choosing to be happy or glad*- regardless of the circumstances, or at least *choosing to be happy or glad* by looking at circumstances in a way that *allows or produces joy*. Let’s take a little closer look at *rejoicing* from Philippians...

**1:12-18**; Paul was imprisoned *for* preaching the gospel; and yet he *chose* to be *glad/happy* about it because:

- His imprisonment yielded greater opportunities to preach the gospel, vv.12-13;
- It also *emboldened* others to “take up the sword” and preach in his absence who might not have done so otherwise, v.14; and,
- Even though some were preaching from *impure motives*, the gospel was still being preached, and could therefore do its work of saving souls, vv.15-16. So,
- Instead of *mourning* about his *personal circumstance*, he *chose to be happy* about Christ being proclaimed, vv.17-18!

This is both the *essence* and the *epitome* of *rejoicing*!

However, this is not to say that *rejoicing* is completely disconnected from circumstances, but as we saw above, it is choosing to find occasions for rejoicing in what may seem otherwise difficult or dark circumstances. Note in this connection:

**2:12-18**; Remember that Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel (*i.e.* doing the *right* thing); and yet, he was able to *rejoice* in and through:

- At the Philippian’s previous faithfulness, v.12;
- At God’s continued work within and through them, v.13;
- At the opportunity to write and give them further instruction, vv.14-15;
- At the prospects of their further faithfulness and ultimate glory, v.16; and therefore,
- At being *poured out as a drink offering and sacrifice* to the *service of their faith*, v.17a.
- Also note that his ability to *rejoice* in these things, despite his immediate circumstance, would enable *joy* in them, and vice versa, vv.17b-18; see also vv.25-28.

This is an example of how *choosing to rejoice* in what seems like dire circumstances can be infectious, and produce *joy* in others.

**3:1** and **4:4-7**; Paul’s personal circumstances certainly have not changed by this point in the letter, but he has *laid the foundation* for how to *rejoice*! It must be “*in the Lord*”- but what does that mean?

In each of our previous passages considered (1:12-18 and 2:12-18), we saw how Paul decided and chose to put the *Lord’s concerns* over his own personal circumstances. That is, that the Lord’s interests and the furtherance of spiritual well-being in others took precedence over his own circumstances and situation. This enable him to *rejoice* in what outwardly seemed like dark situations (this wasn’t the first time he had done this with regard to the Philippians, cf. Acts 16:25ff). Now note some other factors that are closely linked with this ability to *rejoice in the Lord*:

- *A forbearing spirit*, v.5; this is translated from *epiekes*, and refers to a *gentle* and *mild* spirit which allows for *moderation* and *patient forbearance*; one cannot decide

to be *joyful* in otherwise dark circumstances with a *rash*, *vengeful*, and *self-absorbed* spirit.

- A not *anxious* but *prayerful* spirit, v.6; these are closely interrelated; one is freed from *anxiety* and *worry* when concerns are expressed to God in faithful prayer (cf. Jas.1:6), and *trusts* God; such allows such a person to then *rejoice* regardless of physical circumstances and outcomes *knowing* that God's will has been done- even if in ways and for reasons that are not personally seen or understood at the time.
- A *peaceful* spirit, v.7; this is a direct result of the previous; a *peaceful* spirit is one which is *at peace* with God's will being done, and prefers it over his own will. The *peace of God* is destroyed by continuing to be *anxious* regarding things that have been *turned over to God* (through *faithful prayer*), or refusing to *trust* God's handling of them according to His will rather than our own.
- A *contemplative* spirit, v.8; this is *mind/thought-control*; a forcing out and refusing to readmit thoughts that steal our ability to *rejoice*. For instance, consider the effect of the *opposites* of each of the things listed occupying our thoughts: the *false*, *dishonorable*, *wrong*, *impure*, *lustful*, *ugly* (the opposite of the marginal rendering, *attractive*), *lowly*, and *despicable*- could one be a *rejoicing* and *joyful* person with such thoughts? Certainly not! So we see the importance of controlling and concentrating our thoughts on the good things of this verse! It is *choosing* to think on the good things, which enables us to see and *rejoice* in them!

#### **Conclusion:**

**God loves you, and wants nothing but the best for you, even though "bad" things may happen to you in life. But, you get to *choose* how you react in these circumstances, and how you *think* and *feel* about them. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, rejoice!"**