

Study 8

REJOICE IN THE LORD



Background

There is no perfect church. But of all Paul's epistles, most often occasioned by problems, his epistle to the Philippians was not occasioned by a problem. It was by far his most positive epistle. The mutual love between Paul and the Philippians is obvious in this epistle as evidenced by Paul's thankfulness for them and his encouragement for them to *rejoice*. As we have seen, the Philippian church was not immune from the threat of heretical teachers. But Paul was confident that they could withstand this threat. In the meantime, there was something he needed address that had been simmering with the potential to cause much damage. It seems that even *near* perfect churches still have something they need to work on.

1. Based on Philippians 4:2 what was the simmering problem that needed to be addressed?
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Euodia (“You-oh-dee-ah”) and Syntyche (“Sin-tick-ay”) were quite possible sisters who served as leaders within the Philippian church. Euodia means *good* fortune and Syntyche means *brings* luck. Commentators generally consider that they names after Greek goddesses. That the Philippian church should have had female leaders should not surprise us. We recall from Acts 16 that when Paul and Luke arrived in Philippi that they met a group of God-fearing (Gentiles who worshiped the God of Israel) women who were meeting at the riverside (Acts 16:13).

The Need For Pastoral Mediation

2. What does Paul urge his “true companion” and “fellow worker” to do to help these women? (Phil. 4:3)
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It is almost as if the entire epistle has led to this appeal. Paul has described his sufferings, how others had betrayed him, how there were many preachers who ridiculed Paul and preached from impure motives, how Christ had also endured suffering and ridicule, and yet despite all this Paul could *rejoice* that the gospel was being preached and Christ was still being proclaimed as Lord despite some mocking him and the gospel.

3. What message throughout this epistle might Paul had been sending to these two ladies? Discuss.
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Gordon Fee suggests that Philippi must have had a registry of Roman citizens which would have verified someone's claim to the privileges of such citizenship.

4. Note Philippians 4:3 and note which registry Paul describes as granting even greater privileges than Roman citizenship -
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To “stand firm in the Lord” is not just a word for the individual believer, as such words are so often taken, but for any local body of believers. The gospel is ever and always at stake in our world, and the call to God’s people, whose “names are written in the book of life,” is to live that life now in whatever “Philippi” and in the face of whatever opposition it is found. But to do so effectively, its people, especially those in leadership, must learn to subordinate personal agendas to the larger agenda of the gospel, “to have the same mindset in the Lord.” This means humbling, sacrificial giving of oneself for the sake of others; but then that is what the gospel is all about in any case. So in effect these exhortations merely call us to genuine Christian life in the face of every form of pagan and religious opposition.

Dr. Gordon Fee. 1995. *New International Commentary on the New Testament, Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Rejoice in the Lord Always!

5. Is there a connection between a person’s ability to participate in congregational worship, including the important aspect of such worship - *rejoicing in the Lord* - if there is some unresolved conflict with another congregational member? (Note Phil. 4:4, and Matt. 5:23-24) Discuss and defend your answer.

To r _ _ _ _ _ e is to be: g _ _ d , h _ _ _ y , d _ _ _ _ t . In Greco-Roman times this word was associated with *greeting* another person. It was the practice of the early church to have a time of *greeting* in their fellowship meetings - and most of Paul’s epistles allude to this practice (note Phil. 4:21-22).

6. If Christian *rejoicing* is associated with greeting our brothers and sisters during our church gathering to cheer them, what does this mean for how we should approach fellowshiping with each other in our church services? (Phil. 4:4-5)

7. What further reasons does Paul give for rejoicing in Philippians 4:6-7? List them:

8. What 8 things does the New Testament command believers to continually think about? (Phil. 4:8)

In Philippians 4:9, Paul indicates that these mental exercises are l _ _ _ _ _ d and r _ _ _ _ _ d - because the Philippians had *heard* and *seen* Paul model them. He also reminded the Philippians that these things take p _ _ _ _ _ e.

9. What did the Philippians do that caused Paul to rejoice according to Philippians 4:10?

10. Despite this act of kindness, what had Paul learned to do? (Phil. 4:11-18)

11. Because of their generosity toward Paul, what principle and promise did Paul share with the Philippians? (Phil. 4:19)

As we have seen throughout Paul's epistle, *rejoicing* is not merely a matter of enjoying favourable circumstances - because Paul certainly was not enjoying favourable circumstances when he wrote to the Philippians. Throughout this epistle the apostle has pointed believers to focus on Christ and to seek to emulate His attitude especially when he was persecuted and eventually crucified. His concluding appeal to two women whom he cared for deeply present us with the challenge to learn how to forgive and to be reconciled with those we have hurt or offended. May we apply each of these lessons and learn how to truly *rejoice*.