

It's a Choice to Rejoice!



TEXT: Philippians 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

THESIS: To reveal the secret of Christians learning to **REJOICE BY CHOICE** in spite of circumstances.

INTRO.: A. In India cows are worshipped & it is believed that they are the highest form of life. Thus they believe that to be reincarnated as a cow is the ultimate! (Religion is stupid. People are starving to death in India while all that beef-on-the-hoof runs around.) Perhaps someone contemplated the life of a cow & decided that it would be wonderful to be so serene, calm & apparently satisfied!

B. The good news is that Christians can be serene, calm & satisfied without being reincarnated as a cow! The Apostle Paul while in prison, awaiting his execution, wrote the book of Philippians which contains the words “rejoice” & “joy” some 17 times in 4 short chapters. He learned to “**REJOICE BY CHOICE!**”

I. REJOICE REGARDLESS OF FRIENDS! v.10



A. Contentment Is Not Contingent Upon Friendship:

1. Here Paul thanks the Philippian church for their recent love gift.
2. He mentions that they did not do so earlier, due to a lack of opportunity (the Lord doesn't expect a struggling church to give beyond its means to the pastor, staff or missionaries, but there is no excuse when the church is prospering).

ILLUS.: Paul knew that friends can be fickle & his contentment didn't depend upon whims of friendship. Earlier in the epistle (1:13-18) Paul speaks of “friends” who attempted to “*add affliction to (his) bonds,*” be he *rejoiced by choice*, because regardless of the motive by which they preached the Gospel, they nevertheless did so. Paul could be called “The Happy Prisoner,” or “The Optimistic Apostle.” He turned opposition into opportunity, rivalry into rejoicing.

Learn to live above the attitude, actions or stinging words of your “friends.” Also realize that just because you & someone do not get along, they are not bad people. Other good folks seem to get along w/them just fine. Maybe you were not meant to be best buddies or maybe they are just backslidden or “broken.” Continue to be their friends, in spite of how they may treat you & don't retaliate. “*heap coals of fire*” on them. As Jesus taught us: “*Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*”

3. The words “flourished again” mean “blossomed” or “sprouted” - speaking of the new life of a dormant plant.
4. He knew that their giving to him would result in blessings for them & would renew their interest in his ministry. *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

II. REJOICE REGARDLESS OF ‘FATE’! v.11



A. Contentment Is Not Contingent Upon Conditions:

1. This is no doubt one of the greatest statements in or out of the Bible on the secret to spiritual peace & maturity.
2. Paul’s contentment was not determined by whether or not the Philippians sent him a love gift, nor whether or not his body was in prison.
3. Paul says he has no “want” - Christ is supplying what he didn’t have.

ILLUS.: This didn’t mean he didn’t get cold or hungry or uncomfortable. (In 2 Tim. 4:13 Paul asks for his cloche or coat because of the cold, and for his books to make life a little more enjoyable, but he was at peace inside, regardless of his state out-side. He had learned to **“REJOICE BY CHOICE.”** You can too!

4. The word “content” here means “soul-sufficient.”

ILLUS.: Paul didn’t laugh when the Roman whip tore the flesh on his back & his feet were placed in the stocks & he sat on the damp floor of the prison. The pain was there, but inside the Lord was ministering to his soul’s needs & Paul found His grace sufficient.

Acts 16:22-25 *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

III. REJOICE REGARDLESS OF FAME! v.12a



A. Contentment Is Not Contingent Upon Popularity:

1. Whether humiliated or exalted, Paul was content.
2. Paul had experienced both abundance & abasement.

ILLUS.: No doubt the devil taunted Paul w/thoughts of his former wealth, popularity & position. Before his salvation he was rich & comfortable & now he is poor & miserable (as far as his conditions were concerned). But he had *“learned”* (v.11) & had been *“instructed”* (v.12) to be content. Paul had earlier listed his pedigree, popularity & prestige & said he counted it all *“dung”* for the

“excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (his) Lord.” Paul compared his circumstances down here w/his future w/Christ in glory & the rewards for faithful service & it brought him contentment. (I have never met a Christian who wishes they hadn’t gotten saved, even though they have suffered some losses down here. Paul said he had the best of both worlds: *“For to me to live is Christ, & to die is gain!”*)

IV. REJOICE REGARDLESS OF FAMINE! V.12b



A. Contentment Is Not Contingent Upon Satisfaction Of Appetites:

1. Paul said he had been “instructed” (i.e., learned the secret - the word deals) with the initiatory rites of the pagan mystery religions) so he could be content whether full or hungry!
2. Paul had experienced physical satisfaction & physical deprivation & neither had any impact upon his maturity or his joy in the Lord!
3. Paul could **“REJOICE BY CHOICE”** because he had “meat to eat” that others knew nothing of, just like His Savior.

Jn.4:31-34 *In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

V. REJOICE REGARDLESS OF FORTUNE: v.12c



A. Contentment Is Not Contingent Upon Creature Comforts:

1. Paul speaks of having more than he needed: **“to abound.”**

ILLUS.: Most of us fit in this category. We not only have food, clothing & shelter, but we have tasty & abundant food, nice & even expensive clothing & a nice home w/wall to wall carpet, perfumed tissue paper(!), microwaves, dishwashers & vacuum cleaners! American Christians think they are “suffering for Jesus” if they have a day w/out running water, no electricity, their clothes dryer breaks or car doesn’t run!

It may be harder to stay close to the Lord in abundance or prosperity than in time of hardship or poverty. “In order to carry a full cup one must have a steady hand.” Paul had been schooled in abundance as well as want. Neither state affected his spirituality or walk w/the Lord.

2. Paul speaks about lacking even the necessities, “to suffer need.”

ILLUS.: Most of us “suffer wants” not needs! If we don’t get what we want we feel deprived. Many of us have never one time in our life suffered a genuine need! If you have you are in good company.

B. Contentment Is Contingent Upon Christ’s Sufficiency: v.13

CONCL.: Paul’s secret source of satisfaction & strength is the formula in v.13. This is how to be “anxious for nothing,” “in everything give thanks,” to “rejoice in the Lord always,” to “do all things” He requires or requests. Learn to **“REJOICE BY**

CHOICE!” Paul learned the secret & it is available to you.

Have you been complaining instead of praising? Griping instead of thanking? Do you depreciate what you don't have instead of appreciating what you do? Do you focus on your wants instead of on your needs. Are you discontent or content, in whatsoever state you find yourself?

As a believer you have heaven as your home, the rapture as your hope, the Bible as your guidebook, the Holy Spirit as your companion, the promises of God as your assurance and the opportunity to serve & please Him Who saved you w/the prospect of rewards when you finally face Him! So **“REJOICE BY CHOICE!”**