**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Rejoice***

**Philippians 4:4-14**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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Paul concludes his letter to the Philippians by calling them to mend disputes between them of which he addressed in the previous verses and then in reflection of their, and his, life-circumstance, he says, “Rejoice in the Lord always”.

**4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

And what is the first thing they are to do in rejoicing in the Lord? Paul tells them to let their **gentleness** be known to all people.

**5** Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

In addition, Paul adds that “the Lord is near”. Paul, previously the schooled Pharisee, without a doubt reflects upon Moses’ words.

14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it **(Deuteronomy 30:14).**

And in Romans, Paul cites the same passage from Deuteronomy.

8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED" **(Romans 10:8-11). (From Isaiah 28:16).**

From these observations, we can see that Paul is calling upon them to witness the Lord by sharing their “gentle” manner, way, spirit to all people who will notice a difference in them as compared to the non-believing society. They have this gentle way about them because the Spirit of the Lord guides their life in pursuit of the maturing peace with God and their neighbor. Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls us to be a Light to the World.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven **(Matthew 5:14-16)**.

Following Jesus’ lead, Paul calls the Philippian church to be a “light to the world”. In being the “light” God calls us to be, Paul provided a “go-list” to encourage their pursuit of the good-life, the overcoming life, the victorious life. Paul addresses key “light-up-my-life-freeing elements” in verse 6-8. The key points are. . .

**1.** Anxiety to be addressed in prayers to God.

**2.** Guarding their hearts and minds with the peace of God.

**3.** Dwell and practice the positives in life: truth, honor, right, pure, lovely, good repute, excellence, praise.

**6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

**7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

**Hear-Receive-Learn**

In verse 9, Paul points to himself to make the realization of the power of all these “light-up-my-life-freeing elements” that they, too, can elevate their lives above the challenging circumstance they face. If the Apostle-Missionary Paul relies upon these life-freeing elements to carry him through all his hardships. . . then they, too, can join Paul in the victory-life regardless of their circumstances.

**9** The things you have

learned and received and heard

and seen in me,

practice these things,

and the God of peace will be with you.

There are major components to verse 9 that are worthy of observation. The goal is to have God’s peace operational in you. We hear the word of God and then we are challenged to make a decision to receive His Word. . . taking it into our hearts and minds learning its value in application for our lives. This process is a practice in life to which God has called us.

Paul points to himself as the example of how God can work to change and work through a person’s life. Looking back on the account Paul had with the risen Lord in Acts 9, we see this same pattern God used to turn around Paul’s life.

In this life-transforming event, God flashed a light from heaven around Paul and he fell to the ground. After falling to the ground, Paul “heard” a voice, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Wanting to “learn” who was speaking to him, Paul asked, “Who are You, Lord”? Paul used the name “Lord” in his question showing submission to the authority that flashed the light from heaven. The voice responded “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do”. Paul then had to make a decision to “receive” the word of Jesus being spoken to him. By “receive”, Paul had to humble himself to Jesus’ plans for his life. So, Paul had to “hear, receive and learn” to live the Word of God in application to his life.

Paul calls upon the Philippians to “practice” the things they have heard, received and learned from him. The end result of this “victory plan” is that they will have peace and the God of peace will be with them.

For us today, this means we, too, can have peace in our hearts and minds and that God will be with us. We, too, have the same opportunity to hear, receive and learn from God. By going through this process, we can overcome whatever the fallen world throws at us and achieve God’s plan for our lives.

**The Source of Rejoice**

In the next verse (10), Paul says, “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly”, because of his knowledge of the Philippian’s concern for him.

**10** But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly,

that now at last you have revived your concern for me;

indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

By saying “in the Lord”, Paul points to the source being rejoiced. It is my observation in life that there cannot be any greater rejoicing, happiness or joy in life unless God is the source. We may be impacted by other factors in life, like money, events and people’s actions, but the source, the Creator of our opportunity, our choice for happiness is God the Father.

**Products and Benefits of Rejoicing in the Lord**

Considering who is writing the letter to the Philippians (Paul), the impact of the words carries the weight of experience through the most difficult circumstances in life. I have observed that Paul is not an academician, writing pontifications from the safety and security of a tenured professor in an ivory tower. No. Paul is writing from a state of incarceration with great uncertainty about his temporal life to soon be weighed by the Roman Emperor’s scale of power. Under these conditions, Paul “rejoices” about the Philippians.

In addition, Paul paints his circumstances in the context that he is content in whatever circumstance he is in.

**11** Not that I speak from want,

for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

Paul is alive and fulfilling the mission that Jesus commissioned to him. Remember that Jesus told Paul that he would suffer for His name-sake (Acts 9:16) in bearing Jesus’ name to the Gentiles, kings and sons of Israel. We know from reading the New Testament of what Paul endured to carry-out his commissioning. So, the fact that he fulfilled Jesus’ commission brought contentment to Paul, regardless of his current circumstances.

**12** I know how to get along with humble means,

and I also know how to live in prosperity;

in any and every circumstance

I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry,

both of having abundance and suffering need.

What a declaration! Again, stated by the Apostle Paul who gives an account of his journeys for Christ in 2 Corinthians 11.

23 I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Knowing the journeys of Paul for Christ brings a light to the following verses that would otherwise be incomplete to say the least.

**13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

**14** Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

In verse 14, Paul acknowledged the shared afflictions of the Philippians with him. Remember that they, too, had suffered and would continue to be under social persecution for being followers of Jesus Christ.

**The Cost/Price of Discipleship**

Many are familiar with the book “The Cost of Discipleship” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed by the Nazis during the last days of WWII. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran Pastor who was in opposition to Hitler and the Nazi Party. Standing for God and His plan for people was obviously in opposition to the Nazi Party.

Living, working and serving God while under a government that is in opposition to God and His Word. . . sooner or later challenges Believers to speak publicly and take a stand for God’s truth, justice and peace. We are not at the level of persecution experienced by Believers during the time of Nazi Germany. Therefore, we are to rejoice in the freedoms we have. There are not any restraints on us to witness the Lord in America.

The Great Depression that began with the Stock Market crash of 1929 eventually created an unemployment rate of more than 20%. These were some of the most challenging times in American history and called for leaders to come forward to lead the country from their suffering. Most Americans who are ‘of age’ remember FDR’s speech at his first inauguration as the 32nd president of the United States held on Saturday, March 4, 1933, at the East Portico of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. This was the 37th inauguration and marked the commencement of the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president and John Nance Garner as vice president.

“So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life, a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. And I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days”.

We have nothing to fear but fear itself. God’s Word says:

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

AND

"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.  "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! (Luke 12:4-5)

With this said, we Christian Americans are in our place in world history to move forward advancing the Gospel Message knowing that we are in the strength of the Lord. And in His strength, we REJOICE! **AMEN**