

Spiritual Joy

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord always, even in hard times, and provides practical tips on how to do so.

Duration: 28:49

Scripture: Psalm 98:4, Luke 6:38, John 13:34, Philippians 3:1, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Topics: "Joy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord. He points out that the Apostle Paul mentions this multiple times in his letter to the Philippians. The speaker encourages the audience to reflect on past experiences where God came through for them and lifted them up. He reminds them that they should not dwell on the past, but rather focus on the present and trust that God will be with them in the future. The speaker also highlights the contrast between rejoicing in the Lord and the anger and bitterness that is prevalent in the world, urging believers to shine like stars by rejoicing in the Lord and avoiding grudges.

Transcript

I started last week something, I'm gonna just start calling it now, Vital Truths for the Believer. This book is inspired by God. How many believe it? Say amen.

Amen. It's infallible, it's our rule of doctrine, our only rule of doctrine. You never believe what any preacher tells you, starting with this one, unless it's backed up by the word of God.

You never believe anyone who says, you know an angel appeared to me last night and told me such and such. You listen, then you find out if that's in the Bible. God has no new truth that will contradict this truth.

You never believe any evangelist, televangelist, any prophetess, prophet, or anyone who goes around, thus saith the Lord. You listen, it could be from the Lord, but it could be from left field too, right? Haven't you heard some bizarre things in your life? I heard a televangelist, one of those people on one of those networks, I gotta stop watching those things, they either depress me or get me upset. But send your seed gift to them, of course, not to God, not give it to God, it has to go to them.

That lets you know it's a con, right? It's always a con when the money has to go to them. Always remember that, that's a swindler. Always remember that.

Because if seed faith was the key to whatever they're promising, you could give it to a missionary you know, or to your local church, how many say amen? You're giving it to God. If it has to come to them, you know, hey, we're from Brooklyn, we know, right? That's a con. But this person said something blasphemous, said now when you send it and we get the money, now your wayward daughter will come back.

Now you will be healed, but not until you give the money. How many know that's a lie from the pit of hell? How many know we don't have to give anything to get our prayers answered? Can we say aloud amen? So these are vital truths, although all scripture is inspired by God, the qualifications for a deacon or deaconess is not as vital as for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. They're true, but they're not as vital, foundational.

Last week we started and we did the first passage of what I call the most important verses in the Bible, most important truths, was therefore let us come boldly to the throne of that we might receive mercy and grace just when we need it. And we talked about the ever-present availability of mercy, that's pardon, forgiveness, and grace, that means God's help. I don't believe 1% of us here realize how vital this truth is.

We like read it and we go, yeah, that's nice, but I know the Holy Spirit has confirmed this because of what my wife said, what the choir was singing, and everything that's happened so far. This is a day that God wants us to focus on this truth. It's been mentioned, but you didn't pick it up probably, it's been mentioned over and over and over again.

Let's look at Philippians chapter three, verse one. Very short verse. Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

It's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it's a safeguard for you. Just read the first sentence with me, ready? Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice. Now, same letter.

Later on, what we call chapter four, verse four, listen. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice.

Now read that whole verse with me, ready? One, two, three. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice.

In the scripture, especially in the Old Testament with the Hebrew text, repetition is the way of doing italics or underlining. When a thing is repeated and duplicated like that, rejoice in the Lord always. And now I'll say it again, rejoice.

But he already said it earlier in the letter. Rejoice in the Lord always. That emphasis is seen by the repetition of the command.

Notice it's a command to all of us. The same God who says give and it shall be given. The same God who says love one another says to rejoice in the Lord always.

That's a command for all of us. And the value of that command, the power that's in that command, as I said, I don't believe 1% of us understand its importance. And yet it's found all the way through scripture.

Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice. I will sing with joy to the Lord.

I will joy, joy, joy. So let's look at just that sentence. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Say that with me. Rejoice in the Lord. The verb is rejoice.

You is assumed, you now rejoice. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? Notice it's not rejoice, it's not just a glib, be happy now, smile, look great. It's rejoice in the Lord.

What does that mean, to rejoice in the Lord? Because it's a command. Anyone who's not got a spirit of joy and happiness is out of the will of God. Oh, see, that hits us different, doesn't it? Anyone walking around depressed and negative and sour, looks like they've been baptized in lemon juice instead of water.

Anyone living like that is out of the will of God. And I'll go further from my own life and my own shortcomings. People who are not rejoicing in the Lord and can't rejoice in the Lord, that's many times a sign something's up.

Some sin has come and got lodged in their life. Some negative attitude, some unforgiveness, some bitterness, some lack of faith. But something's wrong when we can't obey God's command to all of us, which is for all time.

The verse is rejoice, and that's in the present continuous tense, so it doesn't mean get up tomorrow morning. You can only get up once tomorrow morning. This is rejoice continually, all day long.

All day long, in the morning, at noon, at night, be rejoicing in the Lord. To emphasize that further, Paul says, the apostle Paul who wrote it says, rejoice in the Lord always. Not only continuous present tense, but now always, every day.

Sunny days, cloudy days, rainy days. When you get a raise, rejoice in the Lord. When you have a new baby or a new grandchild, rejoice in the Lord.

When you get laid off, rejoice in the Lord. When you lose a loved one, underneath the tears which were all cry, be rejoicing in the Lord. Oh, that's powerful, rejoicing in the Lord.

I remember that disillusionment I had in the church that I went to as a little kid, Sixth Avenue and Second Street, pastored by my to be future father-in-law. There was a lady who came in that church and she was sometimes used in the gifts of the spirit, it seemed, but she would come in, she was dressed in black, had black shoes, had black stockings, wore a little black hat. She had black hair.

She never wore makeup. She never had any rings on. She came in, she never said hello to anyone.

I never saw her smile. All the years she came to the church. She just sat there, no one sat near her.

She just sat near. You wouldn't want to sit near her if you saw her, trust me. And she just would sit there.

And I remember as a little boy saying to an adult, why is that lady like that? They said, oh, her? She's close to God. She lives close to God. That's why she's odd that way.

Well, when I analyzed that, then I said, I don't wanna ever be close to God because if it's gonna make me like that. But that's part of what we call church culture, Pentecostal culture, that you act weird and you're mean and you're not happy and that means, oh, she's deep in God. She's deep.

He's really deep in God. Look at that. He doesn't have a friend in the world.

He's so deep in God. He's so close to God. Rejoice now in the Lord, not rejoice.

Rejoice in the Lord. That means celebrate what Jesus means to you in your life and what he's done all day long. Not just on Sunday morning in a euphoric moment when the choir's singing and Carol says, come on, heck, come on, we are so blessed and everybody, no, all day long.

Tomorrow, Tuesday. The sign of immaturity are people who live on highs and then go to lows. Then they're in the valley for three days.

Then they get high and euphoric. Then they're low. What kind of advertisement is that for Jesus? Rejoice in the Lord.

Celebrate and find your happiness, not in the world, but from him. I say this carefully, not even from your family because your family can let you down. Find your happiness and your joy, your ultimate joy.

We enjoy family. We enjoy, we love all those things. They're blessings from God.

But the Bible says now, rejoice in the Lord always. Find your happiness in him because it then won't be fluctuating. If you find your joy in money or your happiness in money, you can lose your money, then you lose your joy.

If it's in friends, friends can disappoint you. How many have ever been let down by friends? Don't get your joy from your job. Thank God for your job, but get your ultimate happiness in the Lord because then you won't be fluctuating.

If you wanna shine like stars in a dark night, which is found in Philippians, same letter, then be contrast yourself to the world, right? The world is filled right now, especially, just turn on the TV and you'll see it, filled with anger. Bitterness and anger like I've never seen. It's the worst I've ever, ever, ever seen and justified sometimes even by believers, which is so shameful, so shameful.

To be angry and fighting and justify it. When you're a Christian and God's word says, rejoice in the Lord always. How, if we're rejoicing in the Lord, how could we possibly be fighting with someone? Show me one person who rejoices in the Lord, I'll show you with someone who cannot fight with another person, they can't.

You can't be rejoicing in the Lord and have a grudge against someone. It can't coexist, it's impossible. To rejoice in the Lord and all he's done for us, to think how sweet Jesus is and then stop and start fighting with somebody, impossible.

So the anger that characterizes the world, we overcome it and we show the contrast. No, I don't live like you because I have Jesus in my life. I'm happy all the time, I'm just happy all the time because he's with me all the time and he never changes so I can rejoice.

Come on, let's say amen. I can rejoice always in the Lord. Depression, think of all the meds that will be bought yesterday and today just to combat going down.

People are just down. I want to be careful about that because depression is a many-sided thing but a downcast, negative personality should never be on a Christian because the Bible says rejoice in the Lord always. It says rejoice in the Lord always.

How could you be negative and downcast? You know, sometimes during the day, just keep a little pad and listen to how people talk around you. I did it the other day but I didn't let anyone know I was doing it and

just mark down every sentence that you hear and categorize it like complaint, regret, anger, gossip. Oh, he did that to me, I'll never forget.

I was once taking care of Carol's grandmother in the house and she was 96 at the time and one day, just out of nowhere, I was just sitting with her reading the Bible, she brought up a girl who offended her when she was 19. But it's true, some people live in the past with all the hurts and have we not all been hurt? How could you live back there if you're rejoicing in the Lord always? It's impossible. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.

Celebrate him. This is the mark, it seems, in the New Testament. This is the mark of how Christians were.

In one trip that the apostles in the Book of Acts, they left and they came back to a certain city and the Bible describes the church this way. So different than the way we describe churches. How do they do PowerPoint? Who does praise and worship? It says this, and the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost.

When you're truly filled with the Holy Spirit, you're filled with joy. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. That's why you see a non-joyful believer, something's up, that's in all of us.

And I'm gonna say a couple things here that will help you. This is the command. It seems like the normal Christian life is supposed to be happy and joyful all day long, no matter what happens around you.

And that's how we contrast the world. Just looking how many smiles are on the faces of the outer section. Everybody in the building, just turn to your neighbor and just smile and say, I'm happy in Jesus.

Just say that right now. Smile, show them those teeth. Show them that Hollywood mouth that you got.

It seems, listen, just saying, that Scripture seems to indicate not how you grew up, not how I grew up, but the Scripture. Not what you call church, Baptist church, Pentecostal church, Church of God in Christ, none of that. Just what the Bible shows us as a model Christian.

Paul just doesn't mention it there. Look what he says here in another letter, 1 Thessalonians, one of the shortest verses in the New Testament. Oh, this is a good one.

If you wanna memorize a verse real quick, let's say it, one, two, three. Rejoice always. That's it, say it again now.

Rejoice always. Don't look at the screen, I know you can do it. Come on, rejoice always.

Always, always be rejoicing. You know, my wife said to me, mentioned the name of a missionary to Africa that we met and we knew before we went in the ministry, but he actually once stayed in our house when we lived in Maplewood, New Jersey. When I first went in the ministry, we were pastoring in Newark before we even came to Brooklyn.

His name was Brother Dodds-White, Arthur Dodds-White. And I can see him now, right Carol? He come down from the second floor where the bedroom was that we gave him. We only had Chrissy then, my daughter.

He'd come down the steps and I could see him looking up, you know? Here I was not even in the ministry, six months, and here was this man who affected hundreds of thousands of people in Africa, Uganda. He

would come down, he'd go, hallelujah, Jim, praise God. Hallelujah, Jim, I wonder what Jesus is gonna do today.

Praise God, he's been so good, hasn't he? And I was like, eh, you know. Like, I didn't know what was going on. I was just trying to get through week by week, day by day, right? It was like a bubble of joy.

You know, it's nice to live with someone who's a bubble of joy. Other people, you're just with them for 45 minutes and you wanna go to intensive care immediately, right? Just to get away from the downwardness. No, no matter, I never saw him.

Carol, did we ever see him unhappy? I can't remember, and he went through a lot. He went through a lot, just so happy. He was rejoicing always.

In fact, the Bible says more. In 1 Peter, it says this. Peter puts it this way.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. That seems to be the sign of a really deep Christian.

Because you love him and you worship him and because you think about him and all he's done, you are filled with a joy unspeakable and what? That's better, though, inexpressible and glorious joy. Notice, it's a supernatural, heavenly joy. It's not the joy the world gives.

The world gives happiness based on a short period of time from a stimulus. You know, you go to a club, you see a movie, you go to a party, you go to a wedding, and you're happy. But then boom, when that's over, you go right back down to whatever your living condition is.

But this is, no, you're filled. No, it's not a little, you're filled. You're filled.

I wonder how many sopranos here are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. People remark to me who visit here, they say, you know, the choir, when they sing, they sing with such joy. And I was watching them.

And then Carol started off on this whole joy thing. And they're swaying, and you see their happy faces. And she's doing, did you see what she was doing today? She was doing this.

No, she had a thing going. No, she had a whole, how many noticed it? Lift your hand if you noticed. Come on, lift your hand so she'll know.

Do you think she teaches the choir to smile? She doesn't. They're happy. They're happy in Jesus.

Isn't it shameful? Look, and if you're visiting here today, maybe you think we're like emotional fanatics. But we're not. I'll tell you why.

You go to the Olympics, you go to just the Super Bowl tonight. Whoever's rooting for New England or for Atlanta. And whoever wins, loses, and all that.

There's all kinds of emotion. It's natural, over a football game, right? Isn't it something that in church, we have now gotten cool, where no emotion is allowed, because we're either stodgy and organized, and that's all we know about church. No natural emotion, no rejoicing.

Why? You're in church. You mustn't rejoice. You mustn't be happy.

You're in church. Is that sick? Or we have worked up frenzied joy or noise instead of just the natural joy of rejoice in the Lord always and you will be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And you know what? Even when things go bad, the Bible indicates in both Old and New Testament, because it says rejoice always.

Look at this famous passage from a book hardly anyone reads, Habakkuk, Habakkuk 3. Though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vine, the farmer's in trouble. Though the olive crop fails, wool, and the fields produce no food, nada. Though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will be joyful in God, my Savior. I can't rejoice in the fruit that I was looking for. I can't rejoice in the cattle and the sheep.

They're all gone. But you know what? He never changes. I can rejoice in him.

So the excuse that things are hard, so that's why we can be bitter and negative and unjoyful, did you know that hurts God? You know, when you love someone, they're supposed to give you joy. How must God feel the way some of us walk around? No, be honest now. I'm speaking to myself.

How must God feel when he sees the way some of us walk around bitter, unhappy, and all of that, and yet we say, oh, Jesus lives in my heart. Like, oh wow, what an advertisement. What a bad advertisement for Jesus.

Remember, to rejoice, you have to now move your mind to thinking about Jesus. Listen now, you wanna get something helpful today? Listen, one of the three most important things maybe I've learned ever once I've become a Christian is you have to think about Jesus to be able to rejoice in Jesus. Think about your past.

Every sin has been forgiven. Listen, just think about that every day about five times. Everything you've ever done wrong, every word you've ever said wrong, every secret thing no one knows about, it's been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Listen, you're not only pardoned, it's been cleansed, and there's no record of it in heaven. And God will never bring it up to you, ever. If you ever hear someone bringing up your past sins to you, that is not God.

It might be the devil impersonating the Holy Spirit, but trust me, it's not God. Because God says, and their iniquities, I will remember no more. Think about that.

Can't you rejoice in that? How many are happy every single sin is gone? Come on, let's rejoice in the Lord. Come on, we can always do that. We can rejoice in the Lord.

How about another thing? How many can look back in your past? Not that negative things, but how many can look back like I can? Where you were back up against the wall, you didn't know where to go, and God came through. And God came through. And you didn't know, and it almost seemed like an accident, but then it all worked out, and God came through.

And he met the need. And instead of you going in a pit, he lifted you up into the clouds. Come on, how many can remember that and rejoice in the Lord? But I don't want you to live in the past.

Only, God says, think about the present. We can think about the Lord in the past, and we can always rejoice in that. Sometimes I'll remember a blessing from years ago that I must have filed away and hadn't thought about it.

Oh, thank you, Jesus. I can think of some right now, just thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

Every time I go down to Atlantic Avenue, and I think that time when God supplied four \$50 bills or two hundreds, I can't remember, someone slipped it under the door my first two weeks at the Brooklyn Tabernacle with an \$85 offering, and we didn't have enough money to pay. The bank for the mortgage, \$232, those were the good old days, right? And had no money, and put my head on the desk and just wept, and then went into the foyer, and there was an envelope unmarked with \$200. To this day, I don't know, an angel? I don't know how God got that to me.

But he saw the church was in need. He saw that the devil wanted to kill the baby when it was young, like they did Jesus. God comes through.

But not just that, how about present? Listen to this, look at me and repeat after me. He loves me. He loves me.

Say it again, he loves me. Today, I don't care what you've done. Today, he loves you.

He is for you, he is not against you. He will bless you, he will bring you through. Everything you need, he will provide.

That's right now in the present tense. Listen, I don't care about ISIS, I don't care about the economy, I could care less about the White House or anything else. God is on our side, can we say amen? God is on our side.

God is on our side. Come on, rejoice, God is on our side. He's for us.

My granddaughter Claire got decisions to make about college and all of that, and her past doesn't matter so much now. She can rejoice, God's blessed her, but she can know now today, right now, God is gonna lead me. God is gonna guide me today.

And now how about your future? Everybody else is biting their nails. They're afraid about the future and about dying and about what 2017 will bring. And we already know what's following us in 2017.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life. Come on, is the Lord gonna be with us? Is he not going before us? Oh, Pastor Cimbala, but you don't know what I'm facing. Yeah, but you gotta be able to say I can do all things through Christ.

Strengthens. Past, present, or future. I don't care where you go, if you focus on Jesus, you'll be able to rejoice.

Last sentence. You know why this is so critical and I list it as one of the vital truths? Because if Satan takes away your rejoicing or if the world distracts you or circumstances or you grew up in a negative house, I feel so bad for people who grew up in a negative, complaining, gossiping, negative, sour puss family. I feel so bad because we naturally duplicate what we grew up around.

That's just natural psychologically. Only God can break that cycle. When we're not rejoicing, we become vulnerable to the enemy because in the Old Testament, we find the verse where Nehemiah said to the people, oh look, God's convicted you, you see where you've been wrong, but after you cry and after you say you're sorry, you gotta come back to a place of rejoicing.

Nehemiah 8, 10. Nehemiah said, go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord.

Do not grieve for the joy of the Lord is your strength. It's when you're rejoicing and you're happy in the Lord and you're deriving your joy from your relationship with Jesus, that becomes your strength. When we're negative, we become weak.

When we're not happy in the Lord, we become vulnerable. So that's why I wanna help some of you. If you're here today, everyone close your eyes.

And you say, pastor, that was for me. I wanna start rejoicing in the Lord like never before. Right now, ahora.

No mañana, ahora, now. This is for every day of every week. But if you're here today and say, pastor, I wanna begin thanking, celebrating.

I wanna be happy in the Lord. I wanna cast off these garments of mourning. I wanna get rid of this stuff that's in me, just pulling me down all the time.

I wanna have joy unspeakable, full of glory. I'm gonna remember him, how good he is, what he's done in the past, what he's promised for today, what he promised for the future. Get out of your seat and come right to the front right now from the balcony.

Come down, come on, we have time. Two of you come, 200, what does it matter? Just come if the Spirit is calling you. The Spirit's calling you, come.

Lord, we rejoice in you today. Forgive us for being not as joyful as we should be. It's our fault, Lord, not yours.

You've done everything. You've been everything. You're always there.

We rejoice in you today. Give us the grace of thinking more about you and less about what's happening around us so that we can be rejoicing evermore in the Lord. Thank you for all your blessings.

Send us all home with a smile as we greet each other in Jesus' name. And everyone said. Amen.

Everyone turn around and hug somebody with some joy. I love you.

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