

His Praise Shall Continually Be in My Mouth

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord always, even in the midst of trials and difficulties, by keeping our hearts with Him and trusting in His power and presence in our lives.

Scripture: Philippians 4:4, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Joy in Trials", "Peace Of God"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the spiritual energy found in Philippians 3, illustrating how believers can rejoice in the Lord despite life's trials and tribulations. He reflects on the life of Paul, who, even in prison and facing abandonment, maintained a spirit of joy and service, demonstrating that true joy comes from a deep connection with Christ. Darby encourages Christians to rise above their circumstances through faith, focusing on the peace of God that surpasses understanding, and to cultivate a heart that seeks the good in others. He reminds the congregation that the power of Christ enables them to endure hardships and serve others, urging them to rejoice always in the Lord. Ultimately, he calls for a life of faith that is rooted in the peace and presence of God, which empowers believers to navigate the challenges of the world.

Transcript

In the third chapter of Philippians we find the spiritual energy which carries the saint onward in the race to Christ in glory. This chapter treats more of the power which gives him complete superiority over all the circumstances through which he has to pass, not as making him insensible to their sorrow, but able to "rejoice in the Lord always."

Nothing is more instructive, or humbling in this way, than the life of Paul. Cut off from the ministry which he loved, shut up in prison at Rome, where he had laboured "more abundantly than they all"; finding, at the end of such glorious effects as his ministry produced, the result was "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me"; and "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; yet he can say, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." You will find plenty of trouble, plenty of conflict, for Satan is not bound yet. The more we go on, the more we shall know the opposition - sorrow in the Church - saints individually going wrong; all these ought to press upon our hearts; but we ought to have the power which lifts the heart totally above it; the communion and faith which links up the heart to Christ, and walks with Him - the power, too, to serve others, come what will.

Christ - the "Man of Sorrows," was the example of this: who so ready to serve as He? "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" were His words. Even Martha, whom He loved, tried to get Mary away from listening

to His words. The disciples sought to turn Him aside when He told them of His death; all showed a misapprehension of what He had come for - to "give His life a ransom for many"; yet in the midst of it all, He can ask that His disciples may have His joy fulfilled in them!

If we really have this joy of Christ, we can "endure all things for the elect's sake," because we are in spirit with Him, and He with us in it all; and He did endure all things for the joy that was set before Him - even the cross. It is not the mere buoyancy of a heart ignorant of the power of evil, or of the opposition of Satan. There is a great deal of this superficial joy, this floating over the surface of things, with many. But it is the real power, where the depth of evil and opposition is apprehended, and the power of the Lord is known and trusted in as above it all!

What is working now is, "the power of good (of God Himself), in the midst of evil"; and it is paramount to the evil in the midst of which it works. True, the evil is flowing in like a mighty stream which, if not stemmed, will flow on to the ocean to judgment, unless the Lord interfere, as He does in goodness and in mercy, or in judgment, or a scourge. But the character of the world until Satan is bound is this, that he is its god and its prince; and, in the midst of a world where Satan is prince, the power of Christ has come in above it all.

If my soul is living in the immediate centre of this power, it will feel the pressure of the evil, but will not be depressed - "In nothing terrified by your adversaries." The practical daily supplies of strength depend upon the heart's being with Him who has overcome it all; who has all power in heaven and on earth. Then we know the sure and certain resting-place in Himself, which nothing can touch. True, we have to labour on; as it says, "Labour to enter into His rest"; but if the heart is with Him who is in that rest, it has a power which nothing can reach; and the first mark of this power, when the tide of evil is present, is patience. That which "endures to the end" is better than a miracle! Thus we learn the graciousness and power, that keeps the heart free to think of what Christ has wrought in others; free to be occupied with the whole Church; and yet which can think of every state, even of a slave with his master (Philemon). Paul's affections were fresh for each "true yoke-fellow," as though all had not "forsaken" him; and though all sought their own, it did not hinder the going out of his heart.

Are our hearts living enough with Christ to think of a brother thus? Paul's heart was so with Christ, in the consciousness of what it is to be His, that when he thinks of a brother, it is as one whose name is "in the book of life"! In another place, he says, "I stand in doubt of you," but in the next chapter, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

"Blessed is the man in whose heart are thy ways." The secret of all was, he made wells of the sorrows. Going through the valley of Baca, it was turned into a well - the blessing from on high, where Christ was, fills the pools.

The history of the apostle is very important in connection with this. In prison, chained between two soldiers, cast, of course, more than ever on the Lord - the Lord was very gracious to him - but he learned, come what will, to "rejoice," not in the prosperity of his work, or in the prosperity of the Church, or of the saints; but to "rejoice in the Lord always"!

What holier, deeper, truer, Christ-like feeling is had in these trials! As the Psalmist says (34), "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." How did it come about? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." The Lord was his shepherd, therefore he can say, "I shall not want"; not, "I have gotten green pastures." "I shall not want," but because the Lord was his shepherd. "He restoreth my

soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." He spreadeth "a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies." He anointeth "my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," Psalm 23.

Paul, standing before King Agrippa, says, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He does not say, "I would you were all Christians," but "such as I am"! There is a happy man! So conscious of the blessedness he had in Christ; so full of the love of Christ, that he could wish you were as he was! The heart's complete, internal happiness in Christ, so that the trials - trials even in the Church, which are much more deep and real - only carried him to Christ!

Are we so conscious of this blessedness in Christ, that we can say to others, "I would you were as I am"? Do you say, "Only an apostle could say this"? Nay, it is what every Christian, old and young, is called to! The only difference is, that a young Christian rejoices more in himself and his blessings; he has a blessed comfort in himself. The fathers more simply in Christ, they have got to know Christ, they have a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in intimacy with Him. The young rejoice in the first blush of feeling. It is good and true, what God has given; but in the "pull," going through the world, we find that there is nothing positively to rejoice in but Christ.

The power for this consists in that, the nearness to Christ, that when the evil springs up - the power of Satan present - the heart has to do with Him in resurrection, who has destroyed him who had the power of death; with Him whose mighty, holy arm hath gotten Him the victory; He says, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." He starts us with this testimony, having gone Himself into a place where evil cannot reach; and we have got Him there, the immovable source of blessing, and rejoice in Him there. He has not taken us out of a world governed by Satan's power, but He keeps us from evil, because we are not of the world, as He is not of the world.

The saints too, when running the race, are to look away unto Jesus, who has begun and ended this whole course of faith; who has met the power of Satan in the beginning, and in the end; tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He overcame him who had the power of death (that is, the devil), and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high - the victory won. We are to enjoy Him now, high up above, and independent of the things we are passing through. Do not let any present circumstances occupy you. Do not look away from Him to them - but rejoice! Not in yourself in any way, but in Christ always!

You must be with Him in spirit for this, because He alone is out of the evil, and is the centre and fountain of good; and what should be seen in you down here is, your "moderation," your yieldingness. Suppose I am happy in Christ, am I looking for my rights in this world? Christ had none! Oh! no, my treasure is elsewhere; I am going out of this world;

I can wait for my rights till Christ has His. Let our hearts be weaned from things here, let us pass through the world as weaned children. Christ passed through it, leaving all to go its own way. In the presence of unrighteousness, the spirit is apt to rise; but let us cultivate the subduedness that yields. The Samaritans would not receive Him, and He turns aside into another village. Oh! what a lesson that is! Because He had steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem! The half-hearted would not receive Him, because He was doing the very thing that marked His devotedness to His Father. And so it will be with you; the religiously half-hearted will not want you, if you set your face steadfastly to go right!

"The Lord is at hand!" He has taught us to wait for Him - to be always "like men that wait for their Lord."

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." His peace is better than cares. We have cares and sorrows, true, and we should have more, if we were living more as servants among the sorrows of this world. Not indifferent - Christ was never that. But there is a getting away from Christ in my own heart - a tendency to make one anxious even in caring for others. But I must go and tell God, and this carries me so above the cares that I can rejoice in Him.

What does God give to the heart that has given all its cares to Him? An answer? No (though we know He does answer): but His peace! Is God's heart taken up with circumstances? troubled by them? Is His throne shaken by the folly and the wickedness of the world; or even the failure of the saints? Never! Put your cares, then, on God, and He will put His peace into your heart - the ineffable peace of God! He who knows the end from the beginning - the peace He is in, shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. There is no indifference, carelessness, or coldness, but supplication, earnest entreaty, and all with thanksgiving.

A man whose heart is filled with thanksgiving, reckoning on God, goes to Him with prayer and supplication, and the soul, having left all on God, feels His hand under the trouble, and can say, "It is His affair; not mine." He is a happy man. He goes through this world in this blessed fellowship with Christ; in the power of the Spirit of God for inward joy, and for outward circumstances; his affections free to go out to his brethren.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Hearts free to find the good in people. Jesus could find the least bit of grace in a poor soul; His heart was ever ready to enjoy it; "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"; "Mary hath chosen that good part"; "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." There is always this perception when the heart is kept free to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit in others, as being occupied with what is good!

You cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and there is a great deal of pitch in these days. Thinking with the world, talking like the world, then the heart gets into the colour of it. It is not Christ! The heart set free, lives in the thing that Christ's heart delights in. Oh! it makes such a difference; living in the atmosphere where Christ's heart dwells, instead of being dragged after ten thousand other things.

"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." Not only His peace, as in verse 7, but Himself.

What blessedness in that name God constantly gives Himself! He is never called the God of joy. Joy is an up and down thing that may be disturbed; there may be cause for joy, yet trouble may hinder the heart enjoying it. Peace is what nothing can disturb; it is calm as the throne of God! "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen," Rom. 15. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom. 16. "The God of peace shall be with you," Phil. 4:9. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," 1 Thess. 5:23. "The God of peace . . . make you perfect," Heb. 13:20.

Peace is the effect of a full and perfect work. He has "made peace through the blood of His cross." Why? Because He has gone through everything that was contrary to God - has borne the wrath (the very

opposite of the peace) of God; and the instant He is risen, He comes into their midst and says, "Peace"! And now to us God takes this wondrously blessed name of "the God of peace."

Do your hearts possess that peace? If God rises up with every attribute that He has, can anything disturb it? I can say before God, I am in the light, even as God is in the light, because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses me from all sin. I may have conflict with self, with the world, or with Satan; but He sets me in that peace which nothing can disturb. Your peace should flow as a river.

Faith is needed to be able to rejoice always in the Lord, the feet going where God would have them go, not avoiding evil merely, but walking where He would lead us in every detail of life - in our habits, dress, conversation, intercourse. Nothing tests the condition of soul more than everyday habits.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It is a different thing to say, "Christ strengthens me," and to say, "I can do all things." Paul had learned it. Blessed thing to find that Christ was sufficient for him; he had learned how to be abased, and how to abound (more difficult, for abundance has the tendency to draw the heart away from the Lord - He had kept him from that twice). If he had want, He had Christ; if abundance, it was Christ. This was not joy in circumstances, but moral power rising above circumstances, but he had learned it; looking at Christ all through; finding it out all the way along. It was true when he began his course, but Paul did not know it then as he did at the end, when he could speak of it to others as that which he had learned. Just as He says, "My God" - blessed word! well known in all sorts of circumstances. "In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," he could say, "My God shall supply all your need!" I know Him, and, if you ask me what is the measure, it is "according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ"! I guarantee to you all that. Paul found that all sought their own, but it only enabled him to say more completely, "My God."

What reality there is in the life of faith - walking in secret with God. Poor hands we are at it; but it is that which no world can touch, no Satan can rob of, and the trials that come out in that path only prove us superior to every circumstance through the power of His grace! God grant that we may know it and Him in it. Amen. J.N.D.

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