



We are starting Chapter 3 of Philippians. Let me give you a quick reminder of the story so far. The Philippians have received this letter written by the apostle Paul, and carried by a member of the church called Epaphroditus. They have read Paul's reassurances that his imprisonment was working out for the good of the gospel. They have heard his plea to have love for one another and to get along with each other. They have received an explanation of Epaphroditus' illness that nearly took his life, Timothy's immanent visit, and Paul's desire to get to Philippi soon as possible. This morning we pick up the letter in chapter three, verse one. *1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*

Paul says "finally." Is it that he thinks that he is finishing up the letter with a last point, but in reality, the letter is only half finished? After writing another 27 verses, he will say, "Finally," again. This is a characteristic of preachers, apparently, Dr Rodgers, my minister when I was growing up in Dungannon used to have three "finallys" in all three of his points! And, like a preacher, Paul says, "To write the same things again is no trouble to me..." We preachers do have a tendency to repeat ourselves, don't we?

Although we have covered this topic of Joy when we started Phil.1 I confess momentarily thinking to myself, "I wonder how much they remember from the first time I preached this?" Dare I preach the same sermon again? All joking aside, Paul is repeating something for a purpose. He is repeating the exhortation to rejoice. He has talked about joy and rejoicing eight times already in just the first two chapters. He commanded them in verse 2:18 directly to rejoice and to share their joy with him. He encourages them directly again, is this a command that we need to hear more than once, because we don't seem to get it the first time? Rejoice in the Lord, not in your circumstances. "Easier said than done," you might respond. "What do I have to rejoice about? I can't make ends meet, my kids are sick, my neighbour hates me, and my car won't start, my boss has it in for me!" I'll be the first to admit that this world can be a hard place. But if you're looking for reasons to rejoice on this earth, you're going to be disappointed - most of the time. However, Paul says to rejoice - "in the Lord." So what do you have to rejoice about?

The New Testament tells us to rejoice in the Lord in relation numerous things. For example,

- * When we hear the message of God's free gift of salvation (Acts 13:48)
- * When we are saved (Acts 8:39)
- * That our names are recorded in heaven (Luke 10:20)
- * That we have a blessed hope (Rom. 12:12)
- * That we have a reward waiting in heaven (Matt 5:12)

The world goes up and down, but God's salvation and love for us is a constant. It's no wonder, then, that David wrote, *Ps. 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation.* This is something the Satan wants to steal from us daily, the joy of our salvation. He can't touch it however so he throws up smoke screens to blind us to this eternal truth. The troubles of each day cloud our vision so that we take our eyes off what God has achieved for us in Jesus. The pleasures of each day also distract us from this eternal joy because Satan lies to us as he says this is great, who needs anything more than you have at the moment, eat, drink and be merry!

We who are saved have so many reasons to be joyful.

- * We may be cross about the high price of living, but our salvation is free!
 - * We may be upset that we have lost something "precious", but we have been found by God!
 - * We may be disappointed that some special person didn't know who we were, but God knows who we are.
 - * We may have lost hope that things will get better, but we have a blessed hope in heaven.
 - * We may be discouraged that the promotion or pay rise went to someone else, but we've got treasures waiting in heaven.
- It's all in how you approach life. Is this world the most important thing? Is it the thing that is going to dictate your emotions and feelings? Or are you a citizen of the kingdom of God?

Someone has said, "Joy is like the hidden note in the glass. Joy is tuning in to what God is doing around you, seeing the world through his eyes, picking up on his delight in us as his children. Anyone can find happiness for a while... Happiness depends on what is happening to you. Joy is different; joy goes deeper. Joy is when your whole being sings because you have caught a glimpse of God at work. Joy can creep up on you and surprise you in unexpected places."

Let me read something for you taken from the BBC Black box found at Nepal plane crash site Investigators searching the site of a plane crash near Nepal's capital Kathmandu in which 14 people died have found the plane's black box data recorder, a civil aviation official said Wednesday. "I can confirm that the flight data recorder of the crashed aircraft was

found on Tuesday," the head of the civil aviation authority Ram Prasad Neupane told AFP. "Police are still searching for the cockpit voice recorder and the government investigation team has started its work." Reports said the black box was found buried around 25 metres (80 feet) under a crater formed when the plane crashed into a field last Tuesday and smashed into small pieces. Manufacturers build black boxes (more formally, Flight Information Data Recorders and painted orange for visibility, not black) from three boxes: a hardened stainless steel or titanium box, an insulation box, and a thermal block. Producers put the boxes together like Russian dolls: one box is inside another box and that box is inside another box. They make it to last. It can survive a plane crash and function almost forever after that. The brains of the box is the data storage unit, which is a magnetic tape or a memory board similar to the one in your computer. The armor resists destruction by crushing, tested by applying 5,000 pounds of force (22,000 N) for five minutes. The combination of armor, insulation, and thermal block protect the brains of the black box from flames and temperatures of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1100 C) for 30 minutes-- the temperature and duration of a jet-fuel fire. It can also survive lying in the smoldering wreckage for ten hours, withstanding 500°F during that time. It is one of the most secure things man has made.

But it is **nothing** compared to the safety and security of God's love for you. Paul urges the Philippians to Rejoice ...in the Lord. Not to rejoice in their money, not to rejoice in their marriage, in their job, in their car or house, not to rejoice that their banks security system or to rejoice in the economic climate of the day but to rejoice in - the Lord! Nothing is more sure and certain than God. Nothing is more secure to rejoice in than in his son Jesus.

Let me give you a final thought as to why we can rejoice in the Lord.

Romans 8:28-39: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, Paul writing to Timothy says in 2 Timothy 1:11

And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

This sermon should lift a massive weight of your shoulders as you realise that although stuff happens in this life and although pressures and pain will come to us all in varying amounts, there is NOTHING that can touch the eternal you that is secure and anchored in Christ. If you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you have not accepted this amazing invitation then, I'll be honest with you, I don't know how you sleep at night because you are living a life with no eternal security but it doesn't have to be this way. Today you could know the peace that passes understanding by realising that God does not want you to live a life of fear or wondering ... "what if..." This very day God is extending the same words to us as He did to the children of Israel through Moses:

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Let's pray together.