

# THE BENEFITS OF REJOICING IN THE LORD

Philippians 2:16-24

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## STATE OF AFFAIRS

It will seem a wrong timing for a lesson like this considering our country's (Nigeria) current state of affairs:

- An economy with a weak capacity filled with corrupt practices (*producing hunger, hardship, debts, loans, depression, suicide, frauds, etc.*)
- Poor security of lives and investments (*kidnappings, inter-state conflicts, etc.*)
- Recurring protests and strikes
- Election frauds

Who would want to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of these trying times? This question may have been asked in the days of Paul and the Philippian brethren. They faced same situation – oppression, brutality, imprisonment, death, hunger, sickness, separation, wars, grief, etc.

## WHAT'S OUR VISION OF CHRISTIANITY?

Unfortunately, some of us see Christianity as a joyless existence - without joy, without enjoyment, without victories, and without successes. It is one reason some struggle to be happy or to rejoice even in God's presence.

We are often inclined to ask, "What's in it for me?" "What has the Lord really done to make me come into His presence with happiness or to rejoice in Him?" "Why should the Omnipotent God, the God of Providence be there while we languish in pain, difficulties and hardship?" "Can't He, with a spoken word, wipe away these troubles, even now?"

We need to re-vision our concept of Christianity. Despite the trials of life, Christianity is a joyful reality. In **Matthew 5:10**, Jesus joined happiness and persecution. Phillips' translation puts it like this: *"Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs!"*

Christianity is filled with happiness. It is the manifestation of the joy of the Lord and this **"joy of the Lord, is our strength."**

As we bear the pain of these current difficulties facing our nation, I appeal to everyone to have a patient mind to understand the concept of Paul's letter to the Philippian congregation which applies to us, to enable us to appreciate the benefits in rejoicing in the Lord.

## THE PHILIPPIAN BRETHERN

Paul and the Philippian congregation never allowed distance or circumstance to define how they demonstrate the love of Christ to each other.

They tried to discern what was lacking for Paul and sent support to him irrespective of his location, they shared in his distress, Paul had a strong love for them, and he would go out of his way to visit them to know their state and encourage them. He made plans to send Timothy and Epaphroditus so that they all would be encouraged (**Philippians 1:5; 4:14-18; 2:19-30**).

They were eager to see each other as it gives them cause to rejoice that God has sustained and brought them back together.

The joy of the Lord also comes from the fellowship of His people in His presence. The Israelites in **Deuteronomy 16:11** were

commanded to be joyful in the presence of God and of fellow worshipers: *You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His Name abide.*

**Thompson says**, in God's presence, the worshipper becomes aware of His past mercies, of His present forgiveness and of the prospect of His future blessing, the expression of deep joy seems to be natural and spontaneous.

To know that you are in the presence of the Awesome God of the universe should always be a living and moving experience for us. To walk away from a worship assembly and be able to say, *"I have been in the presence of God today."*

When the Philippian brethren come together, and a need is identified, within their capacities, with humility, without grumbling, without being coerced, without an eye service attitude, they gave themselves unselfishly for others' need. So there is always a gathering and they knew that by gathering they would find encouragement since Christ will always be there (**Matthew 18:20**).

They also felt the 'burden and vacuum' of not being together - this resonates with the hymn *"Blest be the tie that binds (verse 4)."*

*When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain; but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.*

By obedience to God's word and by faith in the word, they always saw Christ before them. So, by accepting Christ as their perfect example, and working on themselves not to be restricted in their practical love towards each other, and their joy in the Lord kept on increasing.

Some key question to ask ourselves is *"has Christ become almost unnoticed before us?"* If we could barely see Christ, then how can we learn of His perfect exampleship?

Sadly, some of us make ourselves, *"the perfect example,"* trying to find happiness in

our own way and end up finding and creating misery for ourselves.

This misery comes from our *"actions of love"* that are based on:

*\*Competing with one another to either to prove our superiority, wealth, or importance (by envy, afterthought, backbiting, isolation, etc. {2 Corinthians 10:12}\**

Being miserable, we will always reflect arrogant pride and disobedience. It is this misery which we have created within us that makes it difficult for us to encourage one another to unity because what will hold and strengthen the unity is lacking – *humility and obedience to Christ's exampleship.*

Back to the Philippian brethren, all they did was for the cause of Christ. Persecution, trials, distresses, challenges, and circumstances were always present side by side their actions of love but they made strong efforts to press on, with strong focus on imitating Christ.

They understood their different backgrounds, views, and opinions but were willing and determined to align all with Christ's example of humility, obedience and practical love. As they do this, they find encouragement from one another, and they were determined to continue.

Hence Paul encouraged them to continue to *hold fast the word of life – keep practising the example of Christ; do not let go of this example; you must not discard this example for another; it is worth imitating all the time; be motivated and be eager to serve the cause of Christ; keep looking unto Jesus, who remains the real, complete, perfect and holy example; He endured, so you must do; in enduring, he obeyed without grumbling, so you must do; He is a lifetime example to make our faith complete, preserved till judgment day. Once this is accomplished, all our labours of encouraging one another, meeting genuine needs, and demonstrating love would be worth it all because we will have an eternal flow of rejoicing (Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 12:2-3).*

Same God's words which Paul spoke appeals to us today.

Here the benefit of rejoicing in the Lord is that it ***we are motivated to continue the journey of humility, faith and obedience, in expectation of the highest and eternal joy in heavens.***

Do we have this expectation in our hearts?

### **A UNITED FRONT (Verses 17-18)**

*Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.*

Paul made reference to ***Exodus 29:39-41***, which specified that a drink offering was to accompany the lamb offering and grain offering. The pouring out of drinks was associated with giving something to God that was of value.

Paul presented a united front – I am ready to do whatever necessary, as acceptable to God, to make your *sacrifice of support for me and your service of faith* be a great value to and accepted by God, even if it means for me to die for your sake. I know you are willing to do same for me. This understanding makes them to be happy and to rejoice in the Lord.

How do you feel when you know someone has your back?

Paul and the Philippian brethren were affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another (***Romans 12:9-16***).

Are we willing to sacrifice for others what we want them to sacrifice for us?

Here the benefit of rejoicing in the Lord is that it ***makes us to find good in any situation, it strengthens our fellowship bond, and assigns value to others.***

### **THE SELFLESS CHARACTER (Verses 19-24)**

*<sup>19</sup>But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. <sup>20</sup>For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. <sup>21</sup>For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. <sup>22</sup>But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he*

*served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup>Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. <sup>24</sup>But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.*

It is no longer news that Paul and the Philippian brethren had strong love for one another. They were willing to make the right sacrifice to support, encourage and see one another. They were serving one another's interest not for what they will get in return from the person being served but wholly for the interest and sake of Christ, for Christ's love to be demonstrated, for the cause of Christ to continue its spread, and for Christ to be glorified.

Again, we are often inclined to ask, "What's in it for me?" Sadly, some of us serve others because of what we are going to get out of the service. We serve with a motive of receiving something from the one we serve. If what we expect to receive does not come, then we withdraw or limit our services.

For instance, you support a minister, deacon or bishop, because he prays for you and visit you; you reach out to a brother or sister to know his or her state because he or she gives you financial support

Consider, the youth ministry, we do raise support to meet the needs of ourselves. Someone may contribute not because of the need to be met but because of what he or she stands to get when it comes to his or her turn of need, or a close friend or sibling or relative's need.

Imagine that such person is found in need, and was neglected, ignored or forgotten (which is not justifiable anyway) – would such a person be willing to contribute to a need of another person?

Others contribute to needs and at same time play the role of observing those who do not seem interested in contributing and mark such person for "tit for tat." So when it comes to the marked person's turn, they refuse to contribute.

This mind-set and style of love applies to visitation, home fellowship, marriage events, and birthday celebrations, etc.

Paul was genuinely concerned for the Philippian brethren. He knows for a fact they care for him. He knows some brethren

either do not genuinely care for others in the congregation or for himself.

Knowing their progress in the Christian life would be a source of encouragement to him and a source to keep rejoicing in the Lord, he sought for someone who has same selfless attitude to go and visit the congregation.

He found *Timothy, a like-minded brother, who will sincerely care for your state of the Philippian congregation. Timothy has a proven character of diligence, fellowship and selflessness.* Timothy put the interests of others ahead of his own. This is the mind of Christ which is the mind of humble, and obedient self-sacrifice.

Paul would continue to rejoicing in the Lord for finding someone to do a selfless service he could not offer at the moment due to his chains.

The Philippian congregation will also be happy and continue to rejoice in the Lord for hearing from Paul, and expecting Paul's son (*like-minded brother*) to come and fellowship with them.

Here the benefit of rejoicing in the Lord is that it ***opens the nature of our service to others and creates new doors to further the cause of Christ.***

## CONCLUSION

The joy of the Lord is made of God's peace and contentment (*that which partners with godliness - 1 Timothy 6:6*); a type that manifest in good times and in hard times; a type that strive to be patient and make efforts to understand what God is saying in challenging times; a type that directs us to God who has solutions to all problems; a type that tells us we must keep trusting God and keep thanking Him regardless of what see around us.

Pauls says "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*" (***Philippians 4:4***).

## REFERENCES

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