

TALKING POINTS

JOY - REJOICE ALWAYS

LEANING IN

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was in jail - isolated and alone. Much of the New Testament is Paul writing to a church which is scattered and meeting in homes. Paul is writing this letter so the people would know and be reminded to have *joy* in all things, to rejoice in all things. Paul is reminding the Philippians - I can be locked up, isolated, even imprisoned, but because God is *with* me, I can have joy.

Joy is a safeguard for us - for our faith. It is the thing which is going to keep you safe spiritually, whatever happens.

In Ephesians, Paul talks about putting on the armor of God and the shield of faith so you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. In old warfare, you released arrows not to destroy the opposing army, but to *confuse* them. When we're wielding the shield, our focus is not on ourselves. It's on the shield. We are united in our focus on Jesus. Paul reminds us again and again - we have our shield of faith. We have the joy of the Lord. We take action and move forward.

There are things which can rob us of our Joy. Paul in Philippians is warning us about one of those things - a harsh reference to the troublemaking legalists (Judaizers) who attempted to deceive the Philippians by telling them they had to adhere to the Jewish law in order to truly be saved.

In this day, so much of Paul's message is simply Christ alone. Jesus plus *nothing*. Paul is constantly fighting against this legalistic mindset, but some couldn't accept it and wanted to add their own rules above and beyond the gospel.

Read 1 Philippians 3:1, Ephesians 6:13-17, Philippians 3:2-4

Why are we prone to add more to the gospel - things we think we must do *beyond* what Jesus has done for us?

LIVING IT OUT

We must remember the core message of the gospel is God's *grace* - what *He* has done - not what we *must do*. Trying to put additional rules and tasks on people as a requirement and adding it to the Gospel could make us accidental pharisees. Here are three keys to remember:

Good works is a by-product of Salvation NOT a basis for Salvation - grace is unmerited, undeserved favor of God granted to us by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Grace empowers us to do good works. Jesus said, "It is finished" - so if we have to work in any way to be made right with God, then Christ's work on the cross *isn't* finished.

Read Philippians 3:7-11

Why do we often feel we have to work to be made right with God?

Joy Is Jesus Generated - true and lasting joy is only found in Jesus. It's a relationship with God where we get to *meet* with Him and lean on Him.

Read 1 Peter 1:8-9, Romans 15:13

Can you share an event in your life where God moved and you experienced joy?

It's Not About Performance, It's About Proximity - it's not what we do, so much as that we draw closer to God, which puts us more in line with His power. Joy isn't in anything this world can offer you. Joy is *only* found in Jesus.

Read James 4:8, Hebrews 4:16

How do we keep our relationship with Jesus from falling into a performance-based one?