

Rejoice Sermon

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James 3:1-12, Romans 12: 1-2

(Prescription: Read this sermon out loud **enthusiastically** 3x/day for 30 days.)

My soul shall continually rejoice in the Lord and in His salvation. First, **the joy that I have in Jesus is free.** God commands me to “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice” (Phil 4:4). God doesn’t command me to do anything that he does not give me the power to do. To illustrate, it would have been an insult for Jesus to command the man who’d been crippled for thirty-eight years, to “rise, take up your bed and walk” (John 5:8), unless he had, at the same moment, infused that cripple with healing power to do so. Likewise, Jesus has commanded me to rejoice in him always. All of His commands are laced with grace. Since He has made me a “partaker of the Divine nature” and “given me all things pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3-4), I can now say with the apostle Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Therefore, I am free from sin to live righteously; I am free from despair to live victoriously; and I am free from depression to live joyfully. I am free to choose happiness in the Lord.

Not only is the joy that I have in Jesus free; **the joy that I have in Jesus is forever.** My happiness is not built upon the sinking sands of temporal circumstances like friends, family, finances, fame, or fitness, for all of these things are fickle. Instead, my joy is built upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ who is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Therefore, I am free to choose happiness today; I’ll be free to choose happiness five days from now; and I’ll be happy five billion years from now. The joy that I have in Jesus is free and forever.

The joy that I have in Jesus is also fortified. My happiness is well protected behind the walls of God’s covenant love. As Satan throws his poisonous darts of despair at me, the darts will bounce off those protective walls, for the Lord is my fortress and my shield. The reason that I am happy is because God loves me. God’s love for me is unconditional; i.e., His love for me is not based upon my performance, but upon a covenant agreement between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I’ve entered into that agreement by faith. God the Father agreed to send His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. Jesus agreed to lay His life down as a sacrifice to pay for my sin and the Holy Spirit convinced me of this truth. Now, God promises that if I believe in Jesus, I will have everlasting life and be adopted into His family. I do believe. Now God has adopted me into His family and He loves me with an everlasting love which is unconditional. Nothing can separate me from the love of God, “for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). The joy that I have in Jesus is free, forever, and fortified.

The joy that I have in Jesus is also full. It is not the shallow joy experienced by those coming out of their pleasure houses of sin. Though they may have laughter and gaiety; in the morning there is an ache in their head, emptiness in their heart, and grit in their teeth. Instead, the joy that I have in Jesus is full, radiating from deep within, coming out with a smile on my lips, a glisten in my eyes and a kick in my heels. Jesus said, “These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). The joy that I have in Jesus is free, forever, fortified and full.

Finally, the joy that I have in Jesus is fearless. Fear could keep me from experiencing a high level of joy. It could cause me to leave my joy in the closet like an unworn garment, and not put it on for full enjoyment. Nevertheless, “God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2Tim 1:7). Therefore, I am not afraid of losing my family, friends, finances, fitness, or fame. I don’t need those things to be happy anyway!

There are several things that I will do to maintain my joy at a high level. First, **I will resist sin.** Sin always leads to death, but I am dead to sin and alive to Christ (Rom 6). Second, **I will render unto Him thanks.** The Bible says, “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). That means that I will give thanks to the Lord for everything that happens to me, even the bad things that I can’t understand. I can do this because God is working everything out for my good (Romans 8:28). I will resist murmuring and complaining. The Bible says to “do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2: 14-15). Finally, **I will renew my mind.** The Bible says, “Do not be conformed to this world (i.e., don’t be like everybody else), but be transformed (radically changed from the inside out) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (actually live out) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). The Bible also says, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). God has given me the power and the way to change my life so that I can be happy and free of anxiety, and that is by changing my thinking.