

## **Rejoice!**

### **AN AFTERNOON MESSAGE BY THE EDITOR**

#### **Stenographically Reported**

I want to address you today from words that are found in the fourth chapter of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians. The fourth verse of this chapter contains the text that should be stamped indelibly on every heart, and find expression in every true Christian life: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." It is the will of God that we should rejoice. Nowhere in the Word do we find that the Lord has promised us that our pathway would not be beset by heartache and anguish, and sorrow and pain, but we do find that we can rejoice in our sorrows, glory in our infirmities, and be happy in our tribulations. The Lord has very clearly told us that all along the pilgrim pathway, numerous trials would beset us and as we climb the mountain steeps, oft times the way would be hard and the road would be rough. No matter how heavy the burden, there is grace sufficient; no matter how dark the night there is the pillar of fire to guide us through; no matter how strong the temptation there is always a way of escape; no matter how fierce the storm, there is always the presence of the Pilot of Galilee. The secret of rejoicing in the Christian life is that we rejoice **IN THE LORD**. Yes, my friend, when your life is hid with Christ in God, when you realize that all your help cometh from the Lord, when you know that you are deriving all your strength and power from the Divine presence, then you can rejoice in the Lord.

What a mistake we make when we rejoice in circumstances: what a tragedy when we rely too much upon our feelings and not upon the faith we have in the integrity of His word. If we were to rejoice in circumstances, most of our lives would be spent in unhappiness and misery and sorrow, for the circumstances of life themselves often contain no cause for rejoicing.

This epistle was written by the apostle Paul, to the church in the town where he had once been a prisoner. He conducted a divine healing meeting on the street one day, and incurred the displeasure and antagonism of the crowd. A little while later the apostle and his co-worker Silas were in the stocks in the Philippian jail, their backs sore and probably bleeding from the scourging that they had received, and it was drawing on toward the midnight hour; no cause for rejoicing there. How could they rejoice doubled up like a jackknife, hands, feet, and neck fast in the stocks in a

dungeon in a foul loathsome Philippian jail, and the hour midnight? They could not rejoice in the stocks, they could not rejoice in the scourging, they could not rejoice in the jail, but they did rejoice IN THE LORD.

I could imagine Paul turning to Silas and saying: "Silas, we are in an awful mess." "We surely are, brother Paul, and it's all your fault. Why didn't you use discretion, why in the world didn't you exercise a little diplomacy? Shame on you holding a healing meeting right out in public where everybody can see you." Paul might have shook his head disconsolately and replied: "Well we are in an awful pickle, an awful scrape, and what I cannot figure out is why the Lord ever let us get here!" If that had been the tone of their conversation they would still have been in the Philippian jail, but instead of that they commenced to SING. Yes, my brother, one song in the night is worth two in the day. They commenced to praise and then to pray. It was more than God could stand. Instantly the powers of Heaven were loosed, the stocks fell off, the prison bars were drawn, and they stood on their feet freed by the power of the Lord. If they had rejoiced in circumstances they never would have been liberated, they never would have been free! So my friends rejoice IN THE LORD in spite of circumstances and praise Him in the darkest hour of the darkest night. You can never grumble your way out of a difficulty, but you can sing your way through; you can never criticize your way through a perplexity, but you can praise your way out. Faith is the nightingale of the Christian graces. It can sing in the darkest hour of the night, and can praise the Lord when the sun has gone down.

A very common mistake that we make is that we rejoice only when we feel like rejoicing. If that is our experience, we are not much consecrated to the power of the Lord; we should be living witnesses of the presence of Christ. To rejoice when we feel like it is to rejoice when the people of the world rejoice, but the Christian should go deeper than that. You remember once Jesus said to the disciples: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth was the system under the Mosaic Law." "I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to those who despitefully use you. Bless the man who would curse you." Such an attitude is not possible to the natural man. Such an attitude is impossible unless Christ be in you, the hope of glory. To rejoice in feeling and to praise the Lord when we feel like it does not mean very much after all. The time to praise and the time to rejoice is when we do NOT FEEL LIKE IT. No man ever praises the Lord in the hour of his sorrow, but what the sorrow will soon depart. No man will ever trust the Lord in the hour of his difficulty but what the difficulties will take the wings of the morning and soon will have gone.

Do we not often times rejoice in earthly gains, and judge our success by statistics and gauge our prosperity by material measures? I believe that a young man should be ambitious, that a young woman should do diligently the trivial round and the common task of the every day life. But how many men have discovered that there are things in this world that money can never buy? It can never heal a broken heart,

cannot purchase the saving grace of the Lord, cannot take the stain from Macbeth's hand, or cleanse the guilty heart from the result of its iniquity. Ambitions should never die, and worldly success is something that should be desired, but towering over the material peaks of our passing life, the Matterhorn of divine grace should rise in majesty and glory and splendor. The first thing is, "Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Many a man is happier by far in the cottage of a peasant, than others who are clothed in fine raiment in the palaces of kings. Rejoice when prosperity comes, but be sure to sing in times of adversity. Worry is a sin; it is a boomerang that reacts in your own soul with multiplied force. To fret when you should trust proves that you have no confidence in the divine promises. If the burdens of life are heavy, don't carry the load, but leave them at the feet of the great Burden Bearer. If the troubles of life seem more than you can stand, commit your ways unto the Lord and he will direct your path.

I have often noticed in testimony meetings that people will say "Praise the Lord, I am so happy because something happened to me to make me happy, I am glad because I received a special visitation from the presence of the Lord. My soul is filled with joy today because the Lord Jesus Christ in His mercy has wrought some work of grace in my heart; I am living on the mountain."

If it were possible I should like to call that indomitable little soldier of the cross, the man who wrote the words of our text to the platform this afternoon. "Give your testimony, Paul, let us hear what you have to say." He starts, this man with the marks of the Lord Jesus on his body, and says: "Therefore I will rejoice." "What in?" we interrogate. "Why are you happy this day and wherein do you rejoice?" Like a flash comes the answer, his voice vibrant with power, his heart filled with the presence of the Spirit. "I rejoice in infirmities, I glory in tribulations," and there is laughter in his tone as he continues: "These light afflictions which are but for a season will work out for me a far more existing and eternal state of glory." Yes, my brother, there is the secret, that is what the light afflictions will work out. It is not always the blessings, but the infirmities and the difficulties that are the messengers of God, the ambassadors of the divine power that will bring the greater state of glory to our hearts in the sweet bye and bye. So rejoice in your test, and praise God in your adversities, for do you not know that "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord." "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge." He tempers every wind that blows, and if He calls on you to carry the cross you will discover that it is never heavier than His grace.

So, as over life's pilgrim pathway you go, REJOICE, REJOICE, REJOICE, not in the material things of life, not in earthly gains, not in feeling, not in circumstances but rejoice IN THE LORD, and again I say REJOICE. And you will find that when the sun sets in the Western skies, and you say "Good-bye" to the things of earth, there will be rejoicing in the twilight hour, there will be gladness as the

day of life draws to its close, and you will sup through the gates into the City not made with hands, to continue your rejoicing around the throne.

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