

“How Rejoicing in the Lord Keeps Us Safe From Religion and Self-Righteousness”

Philippians 3:1-3

“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.” (3:1)

Question: Why do we as Christians need to be reminded again and again to “Rejoice in the Lord”?

First: We were made for joy. The question is not whether you will seek joy but whether you will find true and lasting joy.

Second: If you don’t find your joy in a relationship with the resurrected, triumphant, and ascended Jesus, you will seek it somewhere else.

Paul in Philippians 3: I have the made the radical life decision to abandon myself to Christ. The goal of my life is not to see what I can do for Christ but to follow Christ and see what Christ can do with and through someone like me. ***“I want to know Christ!”***

Christianity is at its essence an adventure into the joy of discovering the glory of knowing Jesus’ grace, love and power through a life abandoned to Him. It is not seeing what I can do for Him. It is seeking to find my joy in the Lord by following Him wherever He leads me. First, through baptism and beyond, through life and death, to glory.

Why do we need to regularly remind each other to rejoice in the Lord?

I. Personal Safety: Reminding each other to rejoice in the Lord keeps us from stumbling not just into sin but our own personal propensity to fall into joyless religion and toxic self-righteousness. (3:1)

*“To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is **safe for** you.” (3:1)*

*“Grace and forgiveness is a gift that we are forever trying to turn into a deal.”
(Robert Farrar Capon)*

*“The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’”
(Luke 18:11-13)*

The joy of the Christian life is the great discovery that from beginning to end, it is all of grace. The danger is to think that your joy depends upon your ability to secure your own standing with God.

*“The Reformation was a time when men went blind, staggering drunk because they had discovered, in the dusty basement of late medievalism, a whole cellar full of fifteen-hundred-year-old, two-hundred proof Grace—bottle after bottle of pure distillate of Scripture, one sip of which would convince anyone that God saves us single-handedly. The word of the Gospel—after all those centuries of trying to lift yourself into heaven by worrying about the perfection of your bootstraps—suddenly turned out to be a flat announcement that the saved were home before they started...**Grace has to be drunk straight**: no water, no ice, and certainly no ginger ale; neither goodness, nor badness, not the flowers that bloom in the spring of super spirituality could be allowed to enter into the case.” (Robert Farrar Capon)*

II. Spiritual Vigilance: Rejoicing in the Lord allows you to recognize that the enemy of God often appears as “an angel of light” (vs. 2).

“Look out ... look out... look out!” (Philippians 3:2)

- ***Look out for the “dogs” – Religion doesn’t make you clean it makes you unclean if it keeps you from trusting in Christ alone.*** Only Christ’s blood can make you clean.
- ***Look out for the “evildoers” – Religion doesn’t make you a doer of righteousness but a promoter of wickedness if it points you to trust in yourself rather than in your Savior.*** Only faith in Christ, can make you righteous.

- ***Look out for the “mutilators”:* Religion doesn’t actually make you stronger. It makes you weaker by causing it to attempt to do for itself what can only do in Christ. It makes the flesh proud, paranoid, or paralyzed. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Thus says the LORD:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man
and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the LORD.

⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.

He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.

⁸ He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

¹⁰ “I the LORD search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds.”

III. Strong Assurance: Reminding one another to rejoice in the Lord always helps us to remember what true Christianity

looks like. It doesn't look like spiritual strength but absolute dependence.

“For we are the circumcision” = Those who have been truly marked out as belonging to God.

How do I know that I am genuine follower of Christ? How do I know that I am saved from mere religion into a real relationship with Christ?

- **You live in deliberate daily dynamic dependence on the Spirit of God.**
- **You are take continual great delight in Christ.**

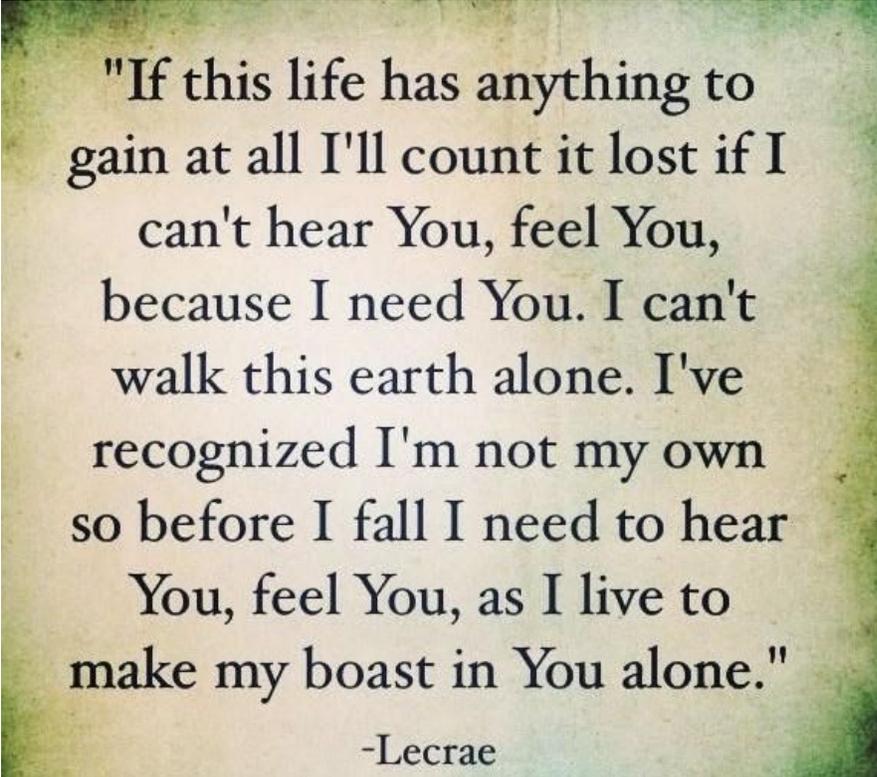
"This reality that we find in the pages of Scripture—that God responds to our sin with reassurance instead of shame, kindness instead of punishment, mercy instead of judgment, and love instead of abandonment—presses us to consider why we would ever want to continue sinning." – Scott Sauls

Authentic Christians aren't those who glory in their religious achievements but they glory in Christ:

- Christ's life was lived for me. He fulfilled the laws demands for me.
- Christ's death was died for me. He satisfied God's justice for me.
- Christ's resurrection was life to me. Because Christ lives, I can live a new life.
- Christ's ascension was my ascension. I am seated and secure in the heavenlies in Christ.

- Christ's session is my reign. I no longer live but Christ lives and reigns in me and over me.

You are absolutely decisive about never trusting your own spiritual self again.



"If this life has anything to gain at all I'll count it lost if I can't hear You, feel You, because I need You. I can't walk this earth alone. I've recognized I'm not my own so before I fall I need to hear You, feel You, as I live to make my boast in You alone."

-Lecrae