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REJOICE ALWAYS!

Greetings, Resurrected Church!

We pray that you all experienced a wonderful celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior on the 1st of April!

Church, I believe this should be the most celebrated day of the year for the born-again Christian! Why? It is because if it were not for Jesus' being raised from the dead, we would still be lost in our sins and without hope. Yes, even the Cross of Christ would have been for naught if there was not a Resurrection to follow! So, praise God for what transpired on the Cross, but more than that, praise God for what happened on the Third Day! This is the Day that the Lord has made; we should rejoice and be glad in it!

But how many of you know that Resurrection Sunday is not the only day we ought to be rejoicing? We are commanded in the Bible to rejoice always! So, this is exactly what I want to talk about this month- Rejoicing in the Lord always!

Let's begin in one of my favorite verses in the entire Book of Philippians (and, in my opinion, one of the most important)- Philippians 4:4.

SAY WHAT!?!

In the beginning of chapter 4, after giving a couple of brief exhortations to certain women in the church (verses 2-3), the Apostle Paul now changes gears and begins giving some very general exhortations to the church body as a whole. And in the beginning of Philippians 4:4, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always..."

Now when some believers read this exhortation, their immediate thought is- "You can't do that! You can't rejoice all the time!" Of course, this negative response comes out of their own, personal experience. Therefore, because these individuals have had many days where they have been depressed, downcast and discouraged through the difficulties of life, they think that there is no possible way that one can rejoice on the days when life deals them these negative circumstances.

So, I am sure the Apostle Paul heard the grumblings of this crop of Christians out there who would respond to his exhortation so negatively; so, guess what he did? He said it again! Yes, he went on to say in the second half of verse 4: "...Again I will say, rejoice!" So, in case they did not get it the first time, Paul repeated himself by basically saying, "And in case you did not hear me the first time, I will say it again, 'Rejoice!'"

In fact, this was not the only time that Paul gave this, what many consider to be, unreasonable and outlandish directive (I speak as a fool). In 1 Thessalonians 5:16, he worded it to where even a kindergartener could understand it. Yes, lest they misinterpret what he was saying, he said to the church of Thessalonica, "Rejoice always." **Do what always? Rejoice! Rejoice when? Always! Yes, rejoice always!** (And for all you word nerds out there- save yourself some time- because the Greek language says the same thing.)

Now lest we be deceived into thinking that times have changed and this exhortation is no longer practical

for us, we need to remember that these are not just the Apostle Paul's words. No, they were given to him by inspiration of God as he was moved by the Holy Spirit to pen them. Therefore, Paul would still be exhorting us today through the Holy Spirit even in this 21st Century to rejoice in the Lord always. Amen?

WHAT IS REJOICING?

Therefore, since there is no room for dispute- we are most certainly called to rejoice in the Lord at all times- we need to find out specifically what it means to "rejoice." So, let's begin answering the question: What is rejoicing?

The dictionary defines the word "rejoice" as "to be joyful, to feel or express great happiness and to become cheerful." Some synonyms used for "rejoicing" are words like "gladden, revel, exult, glory, delight, celebrate, and triumph." However, as I studied this word and the contexts that it is used in, I saw how "rejoicing" is easier to describe than it is to define. And the greatest description that I could find of what it means to "rejoice" is in the example of a dedicated and enthusiastic sports fan. Yes, the way that some of these "fanatics" act when their favorite team is victorious describes this word "rejoicing" to a tee.

So, let's consider some of the characteristics of a "fanatic": What do many of these fans do when their team triumphs? They will clap their hands, pump their fists and even throw their hands up in the air! Yes, they might jump up and down and even dance! Others will shout at the top of their lungs and will high-five and hug even complete strangers in those exciting moments! Saints, these joyful reactions by the "fanatic" describes what I would call, "radically rejoicing."

You see, rejoicing is what one does at the height of their positive emotions: Simply stated- rejoicing is being excited! It is showing great enthusiasm and expressing it in some demonstrative way! So, no, rejoicing is not quite and passive; it is loud and expressive!

Now I do understand that people are wired differently and express their joy in different ways. For example, some of these very passionate fans are not demonstrative at all even though their devotion for their team runs just as deep. Therefore, rejoicing is not demonstrated the same way by everyone. However, the bottom line is that whatever way one of these devoted fans acts at the height of their excitement is a good description of how they rejoice. Now to some, that might just be getting a big smile across their face and lightly clapping their hands. To others (like myself), that might be absolutely losing themselves and screaming at the top of their lungs in excitement. To each their own. But, again, my point is- **to rejoice is to celebrate in the most radical way that each person tends to.**

WHAT ABOUT EMOTIONALISM?

Now this leads me to another point: I have always been perplexed at how there are Christians who do not believe in showing any emotion when it comes to the things of God. For example, there are many Christians out there who believe that it is irreverent or even unspiritual to show emotion during times of praise and worship. Where they get this from, I do not know- because if you consider the various Hebrew words used to describe how God's people are to praise the Lord, they are extremely demonstrative in nature. Some of these words translated "praise" describe "an extending of the hands, clapping, shouting, kneeling, etc." But someone will say, "Well, that was the Old Testament, brother. Now, we are to worship in spirit and truth." While I certainly agree that we are now called and equipped

to worship God in spirit and in truth, that does not mean that we are to automatically disregard the large list of examples we have in the Scriptures of the more radical and demonstrative forms of praise and worship either.

Now do not misunderstand me: I am not advocating “emotionalism.” I realize that there are many Christians out there who are doing many of these demonstrative forms of worship in the flesh; but do not throw the baby out with the bath water! **While we do not want to be driven or led by our emotions in how we praise and worship the Lord, we do not want to be so bound up that we never express any emotion for the Lord either.** Saints, there is a place for expressing our joy to the Lord. The problem come when we cater to these emotions and are led by our feelings.

But herein lies the problem: Many of these same people who do not feel we should get emotional in worship, go to something like a ball game and show all kinds of emotion for their favorite team. I mean, what are they more excited about- God or their sports team? Now, I know I am meddling right here, but shouldn't we be celebrating God and all that He has done for us more than we celebrate the temporal things of this world? Sure, we should! So, all I am saying is that our hearts should express far more excitement and passion for the things of God than the things of this world. No, nothing else should rival our enthusiasm for the Lord.

But I believe one of the reasons why many Christians do not express any enthusiasm or joy for the things of the Lord is not because they are not wired that way, but because they lack a revelation of who God is and what He has done for them. For example, say we were being charged with murder and were on trial, being sentenced to death. Then, when all seemed lost and hope is gone, we are miraculously shown great mercy by the judge and released with a total absence of charges.

Friends, I do not care what your “personality” is, you will certainly express some excitement in that courtroom! Now you might not run around, jump up and down or fall to your knees in gratitude, but I can guarantee you that you will not look like you have been sipping on lemon juice either!

My friends, our revelation of who God is and what He has done for us will naturally produce this genuine expression of joy. Yes, when we realize the magnitude of the grace and mercy we have obtained, it will touch our emotions too. Again, **I am not advocating being emotion-led or emotion-ruled; but I am advocating letting our emotions serve the Lord through learning to rejoice in Him.** Let's look into this further, shall we?

REJOICE IN WHO?

In looking at the many verses in the Bible that speak of rejoicing, you will find that there are a few that specifically refer to what we are to rejoice in. Can you guess what is referred to the most? You got it: The most popular object of our rejoicing is found in the same phrase that we are studying here in Philippians 4:4- “Rejoice in the Lord.” Yes, the Lord Himself is specifically mentioned or implied as the object of our rejoicing some fourteen times in the Word of God- by far, the most common. What this means, therefore, is that the Lord Himself should be the primary driving force and motivation of our joy and rejoicing.

Friends, this is a powerful truth to understand because it teaches us that the primary reason why so many people find difficulty rejoicing is because they are focused on the wrong thing. What I mean is that, while they might be trying to remain joyful, they are looking at the winds and waves of life.

A good example of this is the story of Peter walking on the water (see Matthew 14:22-33). If you recall, when the Lord called for Peter saying, "Come!" Peter supernaturally walked on the water. I see this event as symbolic of how we are called by the Lord to walk in supernatural joy. You see, while it may seem impossible to rejoice at all times, we can supernaturally walk in this consistent joy just like Peter supernaturally walked on the water. But where he "missed the boat" (pun intended) was when he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to see how frightening the wind and the waves were. This is when the negativity set in; but as long as he was looking to the Lord, he walked in the supernatural. Yes, those negative emotions only rose up in Peter's heart when he took his eyes off of the Lord and began focusing on the circumstances surrounding him.

And, of course, we know that this was when he began to sink, right? Likewise, saints, our joy will sink when we take our eyes off of the Lord and His promises and become focused on our circumstances. This is why we are told over and over in the Scriptures to "rejoice in the Lord," and not "rejoice in our problems." The reason for this is because if we try to rejoice in our problems, our joy can never stay afloat. That is the fact, Jack! However, if we will look away from the winds and waves of life and learn to fasten our eyes upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we can genuinely rejoice all of the time and in any situation. Amen!

So, to rejoice in the Lord is to rejoice in all that He is, all that He has done, and all that He has said. Therefore, what we are rejoicing in is the fact that our God is Lord over the storm and He reigns over the winds and waves of life! What a blessing, my friends, to know that our God is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! When we truly come to see Him, as He is in truth, and then keep our eyes on Him, our mountains will become like mole-hills; all because we have made the choice to magnify the Lord and not our problems.

Yes, church, **when He is our focus, we can supernaturally walk in joy over our negative circumstances because our rejoicing is found in Him and not "in them."** This is what will enable us to consistently walk in the joy of the Lord until we have passed through the storm and crossed over to the other side. That is cause for some serious rejoicing right there!

REJOICE IN WHAT?

Now this leads me to the second most used object that the Scriptures teach us to rejoice in- His salvation: There are seven verses in the Bible that specifically refer to "rejoicing in His salvation." And while there are also many other verses that allude to this, they do not specifically mention the word "salvation." But, needless to say, our "salvation" is something that we should constantly keep before us and rejoice in.

So, what does this mean to "rejoice in His salvation?" To rejoice in God's salvation refers to rejoicing in "the redemption, deliverance, and freedom" that the Lord has provided for us by grace. Now, in the Old Testament, this meant one thing, but in our new and better covenant, it means far more than we can possibly imagine. The Book of Hebrews calls what we now have- "so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3). It goes on to describe this great salvation as "a new and better covenant established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). Friends, eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9); and our glorious salvation certainly falls in this category!

Isaiah 61:10 stands out to me as a wonderful example of rejoicing in our salvation: In it, Isaiah gloriously

reports- "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in My God. (Why?) For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Beloved, we have been clothed in the most beautiful and glorious garments of His salvation, and do you see what comes with these stunning garments? A robe of righteousness! So, as the Prophet Isaiah goes on to say, we are beautifully adorned as the beloved bride of Christ with both clothing and jewels. Glory!

Saints, when we truly begin to see this and let what the Lord has done for us capture our hearts, we will find it easy to rejoice. Why? It is because **we are rejoicing in His salvation and not trying to rejoice in our situation.** Amen! Yes, the Christian is to greatly rejoice in the bountiful salvation that Jesus bestowed on us through His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead. Amen.

Now to rejoice in His salvation can mean more than simply rejoicing in what the Lord has already done; it can also refer to us rejoicing in any future or subsequent "salvation" that the Lord has promised us as well. You see, the New Testament specifically mentions five times another object that we are to rejoice in- our hope. Our "hope" is a reference to our confident expectation of the salvation that awaits us. It can describe everything from His promise to deliver us from our adversaries now on this earth to those exceedingly great and precious promises that lie beyond our life on this earth. This hope of what the Lord has promised to do for us gives us yet another reason to rejoice exceedingly.

Either way, whether it be the "salvation" that the Lord has already provided us with by His grace or the "salvation" that He has promised to give us in the future, it all comes from the same free package. **Therefore, to rejoice in the Lord's salvation is to derive our joy from all that He has done, all He is doing, or all that He will do in the future.** My brothers and sisters, when these spiritual realities are living in our hearts, we will live the lifestyle of continual rejoicing that we are called to. Yes, our rejoicing will not be forced or ingenuine; it will simply be the overflow of a heart that has had these truths poured into it. Amen.

REJOICING IN LOVE

The Apostle Peter said something similar in his first epistle: After exhorting his readers to rejoice amid their various, grievous trials because of the praise, honor, and glory that they would receive for successfully enduring those temptations (1 Peter 1:6-7), Peter then focuses on their love for the Lord Jesus. He said in verse 8, "whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

So, what we see described here is an exceedingly, abundant level of rejoicing. The Apostle Peter first uses the word "inexpressible" to describe this high-level of joy and rejoicing. This word describes a joy that impacts the heart so greatly that it is at times "unspeakable." In other words, it is a joy that sometimes leaves us speechless to where no words can adequately convey the joy we feel on the inside. But Peter goes on to describe these feelings of joy as also being at other times "full of glory." Throughout the New Testament, the Greek word that is translated "full of glory" almost always describes something that was expressed in word or deed. Therefore, it was as if Peter was saying that while this rejoicing can at times leave us speechless, at other times, it can be extremely demonstrative.

But I want you to notice what the Apostle Peter said is the key to living this life of rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory: It is love. Notice that he said in verse 8 that it was because of their love for

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the Lord Jesus, whom they had not seen, that they now rejoiced with this exceedingly great joy. In other words, their love for the Lord was what produced this lifestyle of great joy.

Saints, did you know that one of life's greatest joys is to be in love? When a man falls in love with a woman or vice-versa, there is an unspeakable joy that accompanies that experience. This couple is consumed with one another and they find themselves the happiest when they are together. Well, since Jesus has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, when we fall head over heels in love with Him, we too can possess a consistently, abundant level of joy. Friends, being in love equals being in joy. Therefore, when we fall in love with Jesus, we will in turn be filled with this joy that words cannot fully convey, yet with actions that are "full of glory."

So, how does one fall more in love with the object of their joy, you ask? Let me conclude this edition of the Living Logos by sharing with you how the Lord answered this question for me:

Early in my Christian walk, I was reading a book of a particular woman's testimony. And in this book, she continually made reference to how much she loved the Lord. Now as I read her words, I knew my love and passion for Jesus was not anywhere near the level that her love was apparently at. So, as I read this, it sparked in me a desire to love the Lord even more. So, I asked the Lord to help me to love Him the way that she did, and I will never forget the Lord's response to me; He said to me- **"To know Me is to love Me."**

Now we hear people use that phrase in a prideful way; but the Lord, with His great sense of humor, was teaching me an invaluable truth. He was saying that when we, as His children, come to truly "know" Him- knowing Him through personal relationship and by coming to know His true nature and character- we will automatically fall more in love with Him. Why? It is because to truly know Him is to truly love Him! And, church, seeing and knowing Him- all that He has done, all that He is, and all that He will do- is the source of our rejoicing as well. Yes, to know Him results in loving Him, and loving Him results in rejoicing in Him. Amen.

Until next month... Maranatha!

Victoriously,

