

I. INTRODUCTION

Christians are supposed to have joy in their hearts. But many do not seem to show it. They feel happy when circumstances seem favorable, and sad when difficulties arise. Today let us study two passages that show how we can be joyful always.

II. BIBLE READING

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (NIV)

Acts 16:22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, don't harm yourself! We are all here! 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (NIV)

III. DISCUSSION

A. How To Be Joyful (Philippians 4:4-9)

1. When the apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord always" (v.4), what part of man was he appealing to emotions, mind or will? Explain your answer. Why is there a need to exhort us to be joyful?
2. What is the difference between being happy and being joyful?
REFLECTION: Am I usually joyful or not? Why am I this way?
3. Cite instances in our life wherein we find it difficult to rejoice. What are the causes? How can we rejoice regardless of circumstances? What is the remedy for our anxieties? (v. 6) What result can we claim when we do that? (v. 7) What is the "peace of God which transcends all understanding"? What does it mean? Have you experienced it? Share experiences. Why can we have this peace of God when we bring every thing to God in prayer with thanksgiving?
4. Aside from dealing with the negatives (not being anxious, committing our problems to God), what are the positive things we can do so that we can be joyful? (v.8) Give at least one example for each phrase of this verse. Why think about such things?
5. What is the final exhortation Paul gives in this section? (v. 9) Let us take Paul at his word and look at an incident which happened in the city of Philippi during one of Paul's visits. Let us now study Acts 16:22-30.

B. Paul Practicing What He Preaches (Acts 16:22-30)

1. Read Acts 16:16-21 for background. Summarize the incident that caused the mob action against Paul and Silas. What were the sufferings and discomforts Paul and Silas endured in the hands of the officials? (vv. 23, 24) Imagine yourself to be in their situation. What would be your mood and feelings?
2. Despite the above, what was the mood of Paul and Silas, and how did they show it? (v. 25) Why were they able to respond that way?
3. What unusual incident took place? (vv. 26-28) Why do you think it happened? What do you think the jailer saw in Paul and Silas that prompted him to ask them about salvation? How has my attitude (being joyful, lack of it) influenced the lives of people around me?

REFLECTION: How joyful am I?

IV. CONCLUSION

Being joyful comes from within. It is not a state which is influenced by our surroundings. Rather, it comes from the knowledge that God loves us and is in control of our lives. When we cast our anxieties on Him, He gives us the peace that transcends all understanding. As we set our minds on the positive side of everything, we can truly be joyful.