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Rejoice in the Lord

3: 1

Rejoice in the Lord DIG: Does Paul seem to be ending his letter here? How do we know that he is not? What is Paul's negative example? Why use himself as a positive example? Is joy the same thing as happiness? What three clues does Paul give us to help us rise to the level of obedience in praising the Lord in difficult circumstances? How can the Gospel a safe harbor?

REFLECT: Why would we even consider turning back to the flesh when we possess such spiritual realities? How are you a positive example in Messiah to those whom you come into contact with? In what ways do you rejoice in the Lord? How do you know that you will not be at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive? How are you demonstrating your joy today?

We cannot allow our circumstances to steal our joy.

In **his** effort to present **himself** as a model of a **Messiah**-shaped life, **Paul** begins with a negative example. After an initial call to **rejoice in the Lord**, the apostle warns **the Philippians** about the danger posed by **the Judaizers (3:2)**. All that **they** claim comes through obeying **the Torah**, believers already experience by virtue of being **in Messiah (3:3)**. To show the futility of putting **confidence in the flesh**, **Paul** beats **them** at **their** own game by showing that on **their** terms, **his** spiritual resume far surpasses anyone else's **(3:4-6)**.

Regardless of whether **confidence in the flesh** rests in our pedigree or our performance, it denies the reality of what **ADONAI** has done for us **in Messiah**. As members of the B'rit Chadashah, we have **circumcised hearts**, worship **God** in the power of **the Spirit**, and glory **in Messiah Yeshua**. Why would we even consider turning back to **the flesh** when we already possess such spiritual realities?¹¹⁹



Finally, my dear brothers and sisters, **rejoice in the Lord (3:1a)**. **Finally** is better rendered *so then, furthermore, or now then*. What it meant here is exactly what it meant in **First Thessalonians 4:1** and **Second Thessalonians 3:1**, *as for the rest, meaning, or as for what remains to be said*. It is a word of transition, not conclusion, since half of **Philippians** follows it. And as in previous cases, **Paul** adds: **my dear brothers and sisters**.¹²⁰ **Rejoice (joy)** is an important theme, both in **Philippians (1:4, 18, 25, 2:2, 17-18, 28-29, 4:1, 4, and 10)**, and in the rest of the B'rit Chadashah, where it appears in its noun form and verb forms about 150 times. Here, as in **4:4** and **10** (cf. **Luke 1:47**), **Paul** connects **rejoicing** to a relationship, commanding believers to **rejoice in the Lord**. In other words, the sphere in which **their joy** exists is in **their** relationship with **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**.

The **joy** of which **Paul** writes is not the same thing as happiness (a word related to the term “happenstance”), the feeling of exhilaration associated with favorable circumstances. In fact, **joy** persists in the face of unfavorable circumstances: weakness, pain, suffering, even **death (James 1:2)**. Biblical **joy** produces a deep confidence in the future that is based on trust in the purposes and power of **ADONAI**. It results in the absence of any ultimate fear, since the relationship on which **it** is based is eternal and unshakeable (**Psalms 16:11; John 16:22**). Nor is it a humanly produced emotion; that **Paul** commands it shows that **rejoicing** is an act of the will in choosing to obey **God**. The result is a supernaturally produced emotion, the fruit of **walking in the Spirit** (see **Galatians, to see link click [By - Walk by the Ruach, and Not the Desires of the Flesh](#)**). As a result, true believers demonstrate **joy** (cf. **Psalms 9:14, 13:5, 32:11, 33: 1 and 21, 35:9; 40:16, 51:12, 70:4; Luke 10:20; John 15:11 and 17:13; Romans 15:13; First Thessalonians 5:16**).¹²¹

Dejected believers who have read **Paul's** command to **rejoice in the Lord** sometimes struggle to do so. Yet **Paul** gives us three clues to help us: first, the fact that **Paul** expresses this as a command suggests that we are to strive to **rejoice** even in the face of challenging circumstances. Secondly, **Paul himself** is under house arrest with a possible death sentence as **he** wrote (or dictated) these words, yet **he** chose to be **joyful (1:4 and 18, 2:2, 17-18, 4:1 and 10)**. Thirdly, the Gospel itself provides the grounds for faith's obedient **joy** irrespective of circumstances: **our citizenship is in heaven** (see [Bj](#) - **A Tale of Two Citizenships**).

Perhaps sensing that **his** repeated calls to **rejoice** might lose their punch on **the Philippians**, **Paul** continued: **I never get tired of telling you these things. He** didn't hesitate because **he did it to safeguard** (Greek: *asphales*) **[their] faith (3:1b Greek). Safeguard** here refers to *the certainty or stability* of a thing. In **Hebrews 6:19** it refers to a sure **anchor**; in **Matthew 27:64-66** it refers to **the grave** of **Yeshua**; in **Acts 5:23** it refers to **a securely locked jail**. By using the Greek word *asphales*, **Paul** wanted to ensure that **the Philippians** would remain **anchored** in the safe harbor of the Gospel, rather than being **tossed about by the waves and blown along by every wind of teaching, at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive (Eph 4:14b)**.

Whereas today repetition in writing is largely frowned upon, in the ancient world it was a recognized way of emphasizing important points. But given the repeated mention of **joy** in the letter, even **Paul** may have worried that **he** would be perceived as belaboring the point. But **he** assures **the Philippians** that **he** will not hesitate to do so because it was for **their** own good. Reminding **them** of the necessity of **rejoicing** and reminding **them** of **their** grounds for **joy** in the Gospel of **Yeshua Messiah** provided a firm foundation for **them** to face whatever circumstances came **their** way, even if it involved the challenges of false teaching. What a comfort to know that the grounds for our **joy** are not based in circumstances, which are often beyond our control, but rather in **the Person** and work of **the Master**. Such indeed is the firm foundation of the believer: **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary (Hebrews 6:19).**¹²²

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so wonderful! Having a relationship with **You** is such **a joy** even when circumstances are tough. When **trials** come, **You** use them to mature and polish me. **These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by***

fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua (First Peter 1:7). Joy was still in **Paul's** heart as **he** was under house arrest as **he** wrote the letter to **the Philippians**. **Your love** for me is eternal. **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).** What a great **joy** it is to know **You** and to have **You** as my awesome, loving heavenly **Father!** In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen.