Rock Valley Bible Church (www.rvbc.cc)

2013-035

September 15, 2013 by Steve Brandon

Rejoice In The Gospel

Philippians

1. Rejoice
2. Gospel

About five years ago, I was facing one of the most difficult periods in my life. Until that point in my life, I had known very little relational conflict. But, due to my leadership here at Rock Valley Bible Church, relational conflict was all around. And it was painful.

Many in the church were not happy with the way that I was leading the church. And they told me so in no uncertain terms. Discontent was spreading throughout the church. Friendships that at one time were flourishing with strength and commitment had deteriorated, where it was painful even to speak with each other.

I wasn't blameless in these problems . There are many ways that I didn't respond rightly. I confessed my sin to many. I sought reconciliation where I could. And yet, nothing seemed to help. As a result, almost half of the church left to worship at other places. Things were so bad that one woman said that church each Sunday felt like a funeral.

I remember preaching one Sunday and in the back were two men who were most vocal against me, were standing and talking with each other, not interested in what I was saying, but very interested in the problems we were facing as a church. It's very difficult to preach when you see others in the back who are scheming against you.

All this to say that it was a very difficult time in my life. At the time, I was preaching through 1 Peter. The theme that we used as we worked through the book was, "Suffer Now, Glory Later." Peter was writing to those who were experiencing great suffering. He was calling them to endure their suffering. He was calling them to look forward to the glory that awaited them in the life to come. 1 Peter 5:10 says, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called

you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself, perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

I do not believe that it was an accident that I was preaching through this book during this time. Peter's message was being filtered through my own suffering as the Lord was doing His work in me. I was being greatly humbled during those days. I learned a lot about myself in those days. I learned a lot about ministry and leadership in those days. I am very thankful for the Lord's care for me through those days.

Our struggles at church went further than me. It was a difficult time for Yvonne as well. You can't be married to a pastor and not feel his pains. She felt my pains. And she had pains of her own. We had many discussions in those days of what was happening. We had many discussions of what to do. We shed many tears together.

I remember having conversations with her about the book of Philippians. We found so many encouraging things in the book, that we thought it would be good to spend some time in Philippians We agreed to work on memorizing it. And so, 5 years ago, our family began memorizing the book of Philippians. It took about a year for us to do so. And it has been on my mind ever since.

In fact, I remember having conversations with others about our struggles as a church. When those outside the church would ask how things were going at Rock Valley Bible Church, I would often use this metaphor. I would say, "I recently preached through 1 Peter, the theme of which is 'Suffer Now, Glory Later.' It seems as if that's where the Lord has us at the moment. I long for the day when I get to preach through Philippians, the theme of which has something to do with 'Joy.' Perhaps the Lord will bless us someday with a healthy and happy church."

Well, the day that I have longed for has come. Today, this morning, we begin our exposition of the book of Philippians. And the timing couldn't be any better.

We are far from the days of 1 Peter. If you were here for our praise and prayer service last week, you know how far we have come. The testimonies that were shared demonstrated our love for one another. They demonstrated the unity that we are currently experiencing. They demonstrated how the LORD is working among us.

There were times in the service last week when tears of joy welled up within my eyes, as I heard testimonies of how this church has been a help to others in their life. I was moved by the prayers of some of you. I was encouraged by your heart to worship the Lord. I would argue that, in many ways, we are the church in Philippi.

Things are going well for us. There is a joy in our midst. We have a vision for the gospel. We have a vision to see it spread.

I invite you now to open in your Bibles to the book of Philippians. Philippians was written by the apostle Paul when he was in a Roman prison, for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Timothy, his faithful laborer in the gospel was at his side. It was a letter written to the church at Philippi. Paul was sending this letter to the church in Philippi by the hands of Epaphroditus, who was originally from the church. In fact, he had brought a financial gift from the church to help Paul in his trials in prison.

The letter is essentially a "Thank You Note" to them for this gift that they had sent to support Paul (4:18). Our best guess is that this book was written somewhere around 60 A. D., some thirty years after Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. Some ten years after Paul first planted the church in Phillipi.

What's special about this church is that the book of Acts records its beginning, in Acts 16. Perhaps you remember how it was started? Paul was travelling with Timothy and with Silas, bringing the gospel for the first time to Macedonia. While in Macedonia, they came into Philippi. Being a secular town, with only a few Jews in the area, there was no synagogue to visit, to share the news of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

And so, on the Sabbath they went "outside the gate to the riverside," where they had heard to be a "place of prayer." They met a few women there and shared the gospel with them. One of these women was named Lydia, she was, "A seller of purple fabrics, ... A worshiper of God" (Acts 16:14).

As Paul was speaking with her, "the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). She believed that Jesus was the Messiah. She trusted in Him. Her whole household believed and was baptized. And thus began the church in Philippi.

Some time later -- a week or two or three or four -- Paul was going to the same "place of prayer" (Acts 16:16). Along the way, Paul encountered a slave-girl, who was demon possessed (Acts 16:18). Paul cast the demon out of her, which greatly angered her masters. See, somehow, through this demon, this slave-girl was able to tell the future. And these men were making a good profit from her abilities. But, without this demon, "their hope of profit [from her] was gone" (Acts 16:19). And whenever you touch someone's pocket-book, sparks can fly.

Indeed, that's what took place. These men rose up and threw Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:22-24).

Perhaps you remember the story of these men "praying and singing hymns of praise to God" in the prison (Acts 16:25). This happened in Philippi! Perhaps you remember how there was an earthquake, and the prison guard was "about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped" (Acts 16:27). But, Paul cried out with a loud voice to him, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" (Acts 16:28). When the jailer realized that it was so, "He fell down before Paul and Silas, and ... said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" (Acts 16:29-30). Paul responded with the simple words of the gospel: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

And that's what happened. The jailer believed, along with everyone in his household. That very night, all in his household were baptized. Such were the seeds of the church in Philippi. It began with a seller of purple fabrics and her family (Acts 16:14). It began with a jailer and his family (Acts 16:34).

We don't know much more about the church, as Paul and Silas and Timothy were kicked out of the town. And the story of Acts continues its focus upon their travels to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth (Acts 17-18). But, this little letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi helps to fill in a few details.

Here it is, some ten years later, and the church is doing well. Leaders have been established in the church (1:1). They now have the financial means to help Paul. Look at chapter 4, verse 10. This gives us insight into the reason why this letter was sent in the first place.

> Philippians 4:10
> But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

For years, the church in Philippi had a heart for the apostle Paul. But, they had no ability, nor opportunity to give to his ministry. But, for some reason, now they were able to give.

Now, don't think that they were abounding in riches. In 2 Corinthians 8, we get a view of how the churches in Macedonia supported the church in Jerusalem that was suffering due to famine. There, Paul writes, ...

> 2 Corinthians 8:1-4
> Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

Those in Philippi were a generous people. Look at chapter 4, verse 15, ...

> Philippians 4:15-19
> You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

In the early days of the church, they helped Paul financially. For some reason, they couldn't for a long time (4:10). But now, at last, they were able to give to Paul again. And Philippians was a thank you note to them.

My message this morning is an overview of the entire book. I want to establish the overall theme that we will use as we work through the book of Philippians. 1 Peter was: "Suffer Now, Glory Later" Philippians is: "Rejoice in the Gospel."

This is the call of the book of Philippians. It's a call to rejoice in the gospel.

This is no secret. Many, many commentators and preachers have pulled out the theme of joy in the book of Philippians. Indeed, it is a book of "joy." It is a book of "rejoicing." The noun, "Joy," or the verb, "Rejoice," (which translate from the same Greek word) occurs some 16 times in this little letter. That is a lot of times for only four chapters. To give you some perspective, the only other book in the New Testament that has more references to "joy" and "rejoicing" than this is the gospel of Luke, which has 10 times the number of words in it!

All this to say that there is a high concentration of joy in this book. Oh, church family, may we learn from this. May our study of Philippians drive us to be a joyful, rejoicing people.

In preparing to preach through Philippians, I had a conversation with a pastor friend of mine. He told me how Philippians could easily be considered a manual on "How to make a pastor happy." And there is no way to make a pastor happier than to see the gospel bear fruit in your life. The month of October is generally celebrated as "pastor appreciation month." You may or may not know that, and that's OK. But, if you want to show me your appreciation, let the gospel bring forth fruit in your life. That will bring me greater joy than anything else you might do for me. You can give me gifts. You can give me money. You can throw an appreciation party for me. I'm just telling you that nothing will bring more joy to my soul than to see the gospel have its effect in your life.

That's what I live for. That's what I long for. That's what I pray for. That's what I work for. My labor is to see the gospel flourish in our church and beyond.

I think that that's why our service last week was so nourishing to my soul. It's everything that I labor for. As Paul told the Galatians, "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:20). And last week was a demonstration of how Christ is being formed in you.

I think that this is why the troubles at church a few years ago hit me so hard. My life's calling is to do whatever I can to cultivate a body of people who walk "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27). And when there is disunity and

disharmony among the brethren, the gospel isn't flourishing. My life's purpose and goal is being met with futility. As Paul told the Galatians, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain" (Gal. 4:11). And when conflict among the members of the church arise, it is, perhaps, the most discouraging thing that any pastor might experience.

Anyway, this is the call of Philippians: "Rejoice in the Gospel."

Now, as I worked and wrestled to form this phrase, "Rejoice in the Gospel," I tried to expand this word, "gospel," to describe a bit more accurately what Paul was talking about. Because, the book of Philippians isn't merely calling for us to rejoice in what God has done for us in sending us Christ to die for our sins, in granting us faith to believe, in securing our place in heaven someday.

Rather, it's a call for us to rejoice in the progress of the gospel (1:12). It's a call for us to rejoice whenever Christ is proclaimed (1:18). It's a call for us to rejoice whenever people believe in Christ. Philippians is a call for us to join in the work of spreading the gospel (4:10). It's a call for us to grow in our maturity in the gospel (1:27).

And so, I thought about using themes like, "Rejoice in the progress of the gospel." Or, "Rejoice in the fruit of the gospel." Or, "Rejoice in the spread of the gospel." But, none of these quite fit. In some way or another, they are too limiting.

Because, the call of the book of Philippians is to rejoice. Rejoice wherever and however the gospel takes root and grows. Whether that's in us, whether that's in others, whether it's in missionary activity, whether it's in the way that the gospel bears fruit within the congregation, wherever and however the gospel advances, we are called to rejoice, we are called to have joy in our souls.

And in the book of Philippians, sometimes it works out by way of command (3:1; 4:4). But, more often, Paul puts forth his own example of joy when the gospel does its work in our lives. And the message of Philippians is to catch Paul's heart. And, "Rejoice in the Gospel."

I trust that you notice the two key words in this little phrase. "Rejoice". And, "Gospel". I have chosen these words very carefully. Both of these words are central themes to the book of Philippians. They form my outline this morning. My first point is simply, ...
1. Rejoice

My second point is simply, ...
2. Gospel

My aim this morning is that I want to show you how prominent and how central these two themes are to the book of Philippians. I also want to survey the letter. I want to read through the entire letter. Next week, we'll actually begin the letter by looking at the first two verses in detail. But, today, our text is the entire book of Philippians. Today, our goal is to see this theme, "Rejoice in the Gospel."

Now, about my points. We aren't going to take them in order. In other words, I'm not going to talk first about "rejoicing," and then about "gospel." Rather, I'm going to use these two points as hooks, going back and forth from one to the other. The reason for that is this: whenever Paul speaks about rejoicing (or having joy), it's usually because of the gospel. In other words, Paul's joy is related to the gospel. So, it is difficult to speak about the one without mentioning the other. Both of them are prominent in the book.

OK, well, let's begin reading in chapter 1, verse 1, ...

> Philippians 1:1-2
> Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses set-up the rest of the letter. We see the author, Paul. We see his companion, Timothy. In verse 1, we see the recipients of the letter, the church in Philippi. We will hear more about these two verses next week.

We continue in verse 3, ...

> Philippians 1:3-5
> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

In verse 4, we see the first mention of the word, "joy." It describes Paul's prayer for those in Philippi. He prays for them "with joy."

I'm sure that you know what this is about. You have a son or a daughter who is doing well. When you pray for them, you pray with joy. You thank the Lord for

the wonderful ways in which your child has been blessed. You thank the Lord for the good decisions your child has made. You joyfully pray for God's further blessing in their life. But, when a child is wayward, it's totally different. When you pray for them, you pray with tears. You plead for God's grace in your child's life. You pray that somehow, in some way, they would see their sin and repent. You read the story of the Prodigal Son and beg that such would be the experience of your child -- that he (or she) would come back home!

When Paul prays here, all is well with the church in Philippi. He is rejoicing. He is rejoicing in all that is going well. He is rejoicing that they have participated with him in the gospel. Verse 5, ...

> Philippians 1:5
> in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

Here's what gives Paul great joy. The Philippians had joined with Paul in the gospel. The NIV and the ESV translate this verse, "in view of your 'partnership' in the gospel." The KJV and the NKJV translate this verse, "for your 'fellowship' in the gospel." The idea here is that Paul and those in Philippi became partners in proclaiming the gospel. They were on the same team.

They weren't spectators in the gospel, but that they were active participants in the gospel. In chapter 4, we will see how they financially supported Paul both in the early days of his ministry with the church and in the days just before writing this letter. And in this Paul prayed with joy. The gospel was having an effect in their life. In chapter 2:12, we read of how the church was following the Lord. The gospel was bearing fruit in their lives.

Paul had this joy even though circumstances in his own life were difficult. Remember, Paul was a prisoner in Rome. In chapter 4:14, Paul called it "my affliction"; it was a hard time. And yet, Paul's perspective was joyful.

Look at chapter 1, verse 12, ...

> Philippians 1:12-14
> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian

> guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

In other words, the circumstances of Paul's imprisonment have been used by God for the progress of the gospel. First of all, those in the prison (fellow prisoners as well as guards) have all had opportunity to hear the gospel. Had Paul never been imprisoned there, these people would never have heard of Jesus.

Second, those outside the prison, the fellow believers in Jesus Christ, have been strengthened by Paul's willingness to suffer for Christ. They have become bolder than ever before to speak forth the name of Christ.

There's huge application here for us. God may well put you in circumstances in your life that you may never have chosen, yourself, but that bring great progress for the gospel. Your child may be afflicted with cancer, and you are placed around nurses and doctors who need to hear the gospel and see it modeled. And further you come in contact with other parents who are going through the same thing without the Savior, and so you tell them of Jesus.

Perhaps you are unemployed for months, and you pick up all the little jobs that you can muster. And along the way, you run into others in the same boat. You have an opportunity to speak with them of the faithfulness of God, and tell them of the gospel of Jesus Christ that gives you hope beyond financial provision, and you become an encouragement to other believers as to how the Lord always sustains His people.

Things get to be so bad that you lose your house, and you move into an apartment building. Living so close to other neighbors gives you good opportunity to share your story and your hope.

Hundreds of other similar circumstances may take place in your life that bring progress to the gospel -- things that you probably never even imagined before. Bizarre even. You share a video with an unbelieving friend, who likes it and shares it with others, and gives out other copies. And people are saved through him, even though he doesn't even believe!

This is somewhat similar to what was taking place with Paul. Look at verse 15, ...

> Philippians 1:15-18
> Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

That, my friends, is joy in the gospel. Whenever Christ is proclaimed, we can rejoice! Even if people are proclaiming Christ with bad motives, even if people are proclaiming Christ for their own personal gain, even if people have errors in their theology, even if we disagree with their methods, if Christ is proclaimed, then we can rejoice. If Jesus Christ and faith in His sacrifice is put forth as the only way to God, we can rejoice.

Now, we don't rejoice with everything that is being done. This doesn't mean that we delight in everything being done. This doesn't mean that we support the bad. But, we do rejoice that the gospel is being proclaimed.

> Philippians 1:18
> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

This is the call of the book of Philippians -- to rejoice in the gospel. We rejoice whenever there is progress in the gospel, even if it means hardship and difficulty and trial in our own lives. This is what Paul experienced.

> Philippians 1:21-26
> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

For Paul, living is Jesus. But dying is better. The suffering is over. You are with Jesus. And yet, the gospel compels us to live and labor.

Remaining in the flesh was necessary for those in Philippi. And so, Paul remains alive, because he knows that the Philippians will grow in the gospel through him. Verse 25, ...

> Philippians 1:25
> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,

There is something about the gospel that makes us radically others-focused. We live for the joy of others. It's not that we are people-pleasers. It's not that we try everything we can to make others happy. But, we know that the gospel will bring joy in others. And so, we make personal sacrifice for the sake of others, knowing that it is ultimately for their joy.

This is what the gospel does in our lives.

> Philippians 1:27
> Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

There is a way to live that is worthy of the gospel. There is a way to live that is not worthy of the gospel. Paul longs for the Philippians to live a life worthy of the gospel.

So, what does this look like?

> Philippians 1:27
> ... standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

It looks like unity. It looks like all standing together in one spirit. It looks like all having the same mind. It looks like all having the same purpose. It looks like all doing their part to spread the faith of the gospel. It looks like looking out for the needs of others. It looks like everyone living like Jesus.

Nothing could make Paul more joyful. Look at chapter 2, ...

> Philippians 2:1-8
> Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Did you catch that?

> Philippians 2:2
> make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Make my joy complete by serving others. Make my joy complete by regarding others as more important than yourself. Make my joy complete by looking out for the interests of others. Make my joy complete by living like Jesus, who didn't look out for His own interests, but for ours, who became a servant and died for our sins. Paul's joy was complete when people gave up their own interests, and sought for unity in the body.

I believe that this is what impacted me so much from last week. I was so impacted as you prayed together for each other, and as you shared your testimonies of your love for others in the church, and as you shared the way that the gospel has transformed you.

We tasted Philippians 2:2. We are of the same mind. We have the same love. We are united in spirit. We are intent on one purpose. And that makes my joy complete (2:2). There is nothing more that I can ever hope from you all.

It's when the gospel brings forth its fruit in our lives. It's when we walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27), that my joy is made complete (2:2). That's rejoicing in the gospel. That's the call of the book of Philippians. "Rejoice in the gospel."

The book of Philippians calls us all to sacrifice. Look at chapter 2, verses 17 and 18, ...

> Philippians 2:17-18
> But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

In other words, even if I am in prison, even if my suffering is great, even if my life is a sacrifice for yours, I will rejoice! I will share my joy with you. I trust that you, too will rejoice. I trust that you, too will share your joy with me.

This is what the gospel creates in our lives. It creates a mutual sharing with one another. It creates a mutual love for one another. It creates a mutual joy with one another.

We see this mutual love created by the gospel in chapter 2, verse 28. Epaphroditus had been with Paul. But, now, Paul sends him back to Philippi with this letter. Notice the joy that those in Philippi will have when they are reunited.

> Philippians 2:28-30
> Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Epaphroditus had poured out his life for the gospel (i.e. the work of Christ). He even came close to death in serving others. It's what the gospel calls us to do. It calls us to total sacrifice for others. It brings great joy when the reunion takes place.

Some of the greatest moments of joy in my life that I know is when I get together with other pastors at some sort of conference or some sort of meeting, or even over

lunch. I know that they are in the trenches, giving their lives for the sake of others. I know that they have made some sacrifices in their lives, giving their time to see others grow in Christ. I rejoice in every way that they have served to see the gospel go forth.

This is Philippians. It is "Rejoicing in the Gospel." It is "Rejoicing in what the gospel produces in our lives." It is "Rejoicing in the sacrifices of others for the gospel." That's why Paul said in chapter 4, ...

> Philippians 4:10
> But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Twice he clarifies that it's not the money that causes him to rejoice. It's the fact that the Philippians have sacrifices to serve others. It's the fact that the Philippians are bringing forth the fruit of the gospel.

> Philippians 4:11
> Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

> Philippians 4:17
> Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

Paul's rejoicing comes from beholding how the gospel has worked in their lives.

Paul's example of joy is our command. Several times in the book of Philippians, we are commanded to be joyful.

> Philippians 3:1
> Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

> Philppians 4:4
> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

At this point, you might be thinking, "Steve, didn't you say that Philippians was about rejoicing in the gospel? But here, Paul calls us to rejoice 'in the Lord.' Twice, even three times." How do you explain that? Well, it's really quite simple.

We are to rejoice in the Lord and what He has done. He has come and given Himself for our sins, by dying upon the cross. We can rejoice in the Lord, only because we rejoice in the gospel.

I need to close by bringing us to chapter 3. Throughout my message, I have talked about the gospel. The gospel, the gospel, the gospel. But, I haven't really explained what the gospel is. That's what chapter 3 is all about. Let's quickly look at the first 11 verses,

> Philippians 3:1-11
> Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

It's not your works (verses 4-6). All of your works are like manure (verse 7-8). It's the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (verse 9). Trusting in this will drive us to pursue Jesus (verses 10-11).

Do you know this in your life? Is this what characterizes your life? Pursuit of Jesus? I pray that you do.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 15, 2013 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.