

The Terre Haute

SPEAKER

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

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GREATLY REJOICE

John Edwards

Rejoice? I've been laid off. I'm down to my last dollar. The landlord just served us an eviction notice. We've had a death in the family. The children are sick. And, on top of all that, I'm being ridiculed for my faith! You're telling me to greatly rejoice? What are you thinking? How can I rejoice?

Come with me to the First Epistle of Peter. Writing to saints scattered throughout the first century, he said, “*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*” (1:6). These folks were put to grief by various trials. Yet, they were able to rejoice — not just rejoice — greatly rejoice! How could they do that? If they could greatly rejoice while suffering grief in various trials, then is it possible for us to do the same when we are distressed? Consider some points from Peter:

THIS WORLD IS NOT OUR HOME. Peter refers to his audience as “*strangers*” (1:1) and appeals to them “*as strangers and pilgrims*” (2:11). He speaks of “*the time of your sojourning*” (1:17). Thus, we are temporary residents here (Heb. 11:13-16; 13:14).

WE ARE A CHOSEN

GENERATION. Peter identified these strangers and pilgrims as “*Elect*” (1:2), “*a chosen generation*” (2:9). We are chosen in Christ, where we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3-4). This makes us special!

WE HAVE BEEN BEGOTTEN UNTO A LIVELY HOPE. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1:3). We do not sorrow as others which have no hope (1 Th. 4:13).

WE HAVE AN INHERITANCE IN HEAVEN. We are in line to inherit God’s future blessings! This inheritance is described as “*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*” (1:4). Thus we sing, *Where The Roses Never Fade*. Trials and troubles can’t take that inheritance away!

WE ARE KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD. Peter penned, “*Who are kept by the power of God through faith...*” (1:5). The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). As those in Hebrews 11, who suffered their share of difficulties, “*died in faith*” (v.

13), so can we!

WE HAVE SALVATION TO LOOK FORWARD TO. Think about “*salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1:5), “*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls*” (1:9)! This is eternal salvation in heaven for the faithful. What a blessing!

GRIEF IS TEMPORARY. Peter said, “*though now for a season*”. Suffering lasts for a little while, for a short time. The Psalmist said, “*Remember how short my time is*” (Ps. 89:47). Life is “*a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (Jas. 4:14). Paul said, “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (2 Cor. 4:17).

LOOK TO THE FUTURE. Peter shifts the focus of attention from present distress to future happiness. “*...found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*” (1:7).

Thus Peter said, “*ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1:8). As Christians, ours is not a joy based on external circumstances. That’s why a ‘prison epistle’ was an ‘epistle of joy’ with the plea, “*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4).

Instead of dwelling on your distress, focused on this world and its problems, thinking about who you're not and what you don't have, recognize who you are and what you do have — spiritually. Remember these words of Habakkuk: *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places...."* (Hab. 3:17-19). The Lord God will be our strength too, if we let Him.

WHY WORRY?

John Edwards

The Lord, in Matthew 6:28, asked, *"And why take ye thought for raiment?..."* That is, why worry?

LIFE IS MORE THAN THE PHYSICAL. Most of the things

folks worry about are physical in nature. The Lord said, *"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"* (v. 25).

THE BIRDS ARE STILL SINGING AND THE FLOWERS ARE STILL BLOOMING. Those who think the sky is falling, worried about all the uncertainty in today's world, would do well to do as Jesus said: *"Behold the fowls of the air..."* (v. 26). *"Consider the lilies of the field..."* (v. 28).

GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU. The Lord's reference to birds (v. 26) and flowers (vv. 28-30) teaches us about God's providential care. Consider these questions: *"Are ye not much better than they?"* (v. 26). *"...if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* (v. 30). We sing, "Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you!" Peter penned, *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you"* (1 Pet. 5:7).

WORRY DOES NO GOOD. Jesus said, *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (v. 27). What did you ever change by worrying? If anything, you altered your health, and not for the better.

GOD KNOWS OUR NEEDS. Jesus reminds us, *"...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"* (v. 32). He knows!

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (v. 33). By not putting first things first in life, we are cheating ourselves!

LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME. *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (v. 34). Each day has enough trouble of its own. So, don't borrow sorrow from tomorrow.

Why worry, when you can pray. *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Phil. 4:6).

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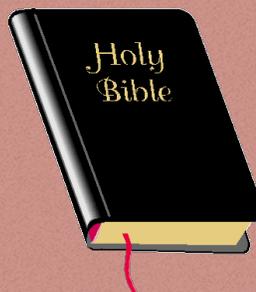
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Assembling Times:

Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
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We Speak Where the Bible Speaks.

We Are Silent Where the Bible Is Silent.

We Do Bible Things in Bible Ways.

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