

MAKE THE CHOICE TO

REJOICE!

PHIL 4:4

“Pressing Forward”

Philippians 3:7-14

Sunday, February 17, 2019

1. Sunday Summary: This morning we continued our sermon series on the book of Philippians that we are calling *Make the Choice to Rejoice*, and today we examined the joy of being the object of God’s laser-beam focus, and how that makes us into people who are singularly focused on knowing Jesus and conforming our lives to his. We looked at two movements that stem from verse 12, “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me”:

- 1) The causal “take hold” – Christ takes hold of us. It’s important that we know and we understand that our faith is caused by Christ taking hold of us, and that’s why we can take hold of him at all. We need to know that because in our day and age we have many options before us for self-improvement from religion, to further education, to psychotherapy. But in each of these options everything depends on you. Christianity is the other way around. Any help we get, any joy we have, any change that happens for the better in our lives, is all dependent on being taken hold of by Christ. Then we looked at three questions that arise because of this:
 - a. Does that mean we have to have a dramatic conversion experience – the short answer is no, but we do have to know, and experience the fact that a power has come upon us.
 - b. How will we know that a power has taken hold of us? We’ll know it when we start to try to take hold of Christ. In other words, when we become more serious about our faith.
 - c. What about other people, how can we know if they are saved? The answer is ultimately that we can’t. We can only know our own story. But God does reveal that to us, and we can abide in the goodness of that.
- 2) Our “take hold” – We take hold of Christ. In other words we begin to have a singular focus on Christ and try to conform our lives to him. Like a laser beam gathers up light and presses it toward one point, we’re to gather up our whole lives, and press them toward Christ, and being like him. We do that by looking at each and every aspect of our lives, and asking how this aspect is affected by the gospel, and our relationship with Jesus. Christ makes this all possible for us.

2. Connecting Questions: (Interactive, life sharing, thought & feeling type stuff)

- Talk about your experience of God’s laser-beam focus and affection. Have you ever known or felt that? What does that knowledge or feeling do for you in your life? Does it give you joy?
- Discuss how you know that you have assurance of salvation. Does it help you to know that any movement you make toward God is evidence that he’s already at work in you? If so, how?
- Pastor Mike suggested that the Christian faith is never passive. What do you think about that? How active or passive are you in your faith right now? What does it cause you to do?
- How much time do you spend thinking about different aspects of your life, and how the gospel ought to impact those areas? Where do you think you need the most help? Talk about it.
- What insights from today’s message were most helpful for you?

3. Truth Questions: (What does the Bible say?)

- Think together about some other passages that deal with the topic of election. Can you think of any? What might they add to the conversation?
- Read Romans 8:28-38. What do you think this passage is about? Some Christians suggest that we can't have any assurance of our salvation. What does this passage suggest? What comfort does it give you? How can knowing and understanding this passage lead to living with more joy?

4. Formation Questions: (Taking it further, How does the Truth change the way I live?)

- What concrete steps can you make to sink the gospel truth that we dealt with today deeper into your life throughout this week? What will you do about the message you heard today?
- Think about one aspect of your life that needs some deeper conforming to Christ. Talk about what that is, and what you'll do this week to make some positive steps in that area?
- How will you "Make the Choice to Rejoice," this week? What will you do? Make a list of things you will think, say, do that will help you to choose the joy that Jesus gives this week.

5. Resources for Further Study:

1. Mason, Mike. *Champagne for the Soul: Rediscovering God's Gift of Joy*. (Regent College Publishing, Vancouver, BC. 2003).
2. Keller, Timothy J. *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*. (Riverhead Books, New York, NY. 2008).

