



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR OCTOBER 28, 2011

'IT'S ABOUT THE LORD, STUPID'

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! (Philippians 4:4, NIV)

WHEN MY SON WAS YOUNG AND JUST LEARNING THE GAME, he often lost track of the key objective. His favorite holes were not those cut into each green, but rather the much larger ones filled with sand. He found his greatest golfing joys in the bunkers!

Of course, we've all made mistakes like this, losing track of our chief focus in favor of lesser distractions—even those we might call "good."

Yesterday, we considered this very problem. We noticed that it can be easy to trade attention to Christ for attention to Christian living. We find ourselves getting caught up in "how it is done" over and above "what it is for." And when we do that, it isn't long before we lose motivation and joy in our pursuit of Jesus. In a culture where it is common to talk of "races" and "journeys," it is critical that we remember that what is most important is the One we are running for (followed closely by those we are running with).

Today's passage, a most familiar one, adds to our understanding of this need for proper focus, as long as we read it right! You see, much of the thinking that has come my way through the years on this passage has come couched in a sort of grin-and-bear-it context: "I know you're going through all kinds of trouble, my friend, but you need to put that smile back on your face and do some God-praising! Consider it joy! Rejoice!"

Yes, the verb matters here. There is rejoicing to be done. But so much more important is the object of that verb. It is the Lord. "Rejoice *in the Lord*." When the emphasis falls on the rejoicing, success rides on our ability—even though we're fully aware of the limitations of that! But when the attention falls on God, "merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love," our spirit recognizes the difference. Rejoicing is not a function of grit; it is the result of grace, God's grace. When we set our eyes there—on the wonder of God first, then the wonders He provides—we can't help but find peace in the midst of difficulty, because it is the natural course of focusing on the Lord of all creation.

Fresh insights

What does it mean to you to see a verse like Philippians 4:4 with a fresh emphasis? How does the perspective offered by today's devotion set you up for new practices in the days ahead?

God thoughts

Read Psalm 8:1-9. What is the focus of David's writing in this psalm? What evidences of God's majesty always capture your own attention?

The One who can

Read Psalm 9:1-12. Notice the "volume" and the object of David's rejoicing in this psalm. What would it take for you to become one whose mouth is so filled with praise for God?
