

## THE GOOD AND THE BAD

*To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:11, NIV)*

SOMETIME LAST YEAR, a young man who plays on the high school team I coach was playing a junior tournament away from home. On occasions like this, I will often call up a player’s scorecard online to see how he did that day. This time, though, I was confused, certain there was an error, for every score was the same as the par for that hole.

It wasn’t that this player couldn’t put up a total that strong. In fact, he often does. But it is so rare to see a card with 18 pars that I texted his mom just to be sure. Indeed, he had parred every hole!

Golf scores, we know, are usually more like hikes in the mountains, with ups and downs and maybe a few humdrum flat spots. At least that’s the way they are for me, so it’s a rare day when I’m rejoicing all the way around.

And yet I know I should be.

How do I know this? Well, two little episodes from the book of Acts push me in this direction.

The first comes when we are told of the fellowship of the believers in those heady days after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We read of their many activities, including this: “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:47). Now, that makes sense to me. Living in unity, enjoying good food and the blessing of the people—who wouldn’t rejoice?

But not so long after this, we read of the day the apostles were flogged for speaking openly about Jesus. In the aftermath of that occurrence, we see, “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). Here is an much different set of circumstances, and yet the rejoicing remained.

As much as we would like to build cocoons of comfort in all seasons, it’s a foolish effort. For one, we cannot schedule the good days and the bad. For another, there is so much to be gained when we are challenged with difficulties and learn even then to praise the Lord for his steady goodness. And thus, rejoicing is for every occasion.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International.

**Opening questions** What does your typical golf scorecard look like? Are you a normally steady player or more “all over the board”? • How do you know you do not rejoice as much as you should?

**READING** Leviticus 23:33-43, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Philippians 4:4

### A festival of praise (Leviticus 23)

What part does rejoicing have in the feast of tabernacles? How might we be well-served by setting aside such an intentional time for rejoicing?

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### Against the tide of trouble (Habakkuk 3)

What are the barren trees and empty stalls of your life? What does it take for a person to rejoice in times like these? How challenging is it for you to be that person?

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### ‘Rejoice in the Lord always’ (Philippians 4)

How do we prevent ourselves from writing off an expression like this as a platitude and instead seizing upon its directive for our life?

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