

# Slap Happy Or What?

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!  
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,  
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God,  
which transcends all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

*Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)*

*"... there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

*Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)*

*"...and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.  
When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them,  
and his sheep follow him because they know his voice..."*

*John 10:3-4 (NIV)*

**W**e all know people who seem to be perpetually happy. Some are downright silly or what we call, "slap happy". They are a puzzle to many of us and we are uncertain what fuels their giddy personalities. All we know is that we are not like them.

Our text today tells us to rejoice in the Lord at all times. Is this possible? Are we to be happy when life causes us a lot of pain? Can we rejoice when a loved one dies? Are we to be happy when we lose our job? Are we to adapt a giddy attitude in all situations? What is this all about?

In case we think Paul is missing something he repeats his command and tells us a second time to rejoice!! Then Paul makes a remarkable statement that goes a long way in helping us to rejoice. He states a wonderfully precious truth when he writes, "The Lord is near." Countless times I have whispered this four word statement of fact in the ear of a dying saint. I have also urged the saint who is close to heaven with the words, "Go in peace and walk with God."

The remarkable truth that our great, loving, sovereign God is closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24) brings peace and joy to the believer's heart. When visiting a person moments before they go into surgery I always refer them to the words of the Good Shepherd in John 10. There Jesus states that He is always just a step ahead of His sheep. As the orderly is behind the gurney pushing it toward the surgery I tell the patient to focus on the Good Shepherd a step ahead of the gurney leading them into the operating theatre. Such a thought brings peace that goes beyond understanding.

Isaac Watts wonderfully captures the glories of our ever present Saviour in the following words. As we read the following hymn we

rejoice with a heartfelt joy that nothing can take from us. No, we are not slap happy, rather we rejoice for all the reasons listed below and more!

Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love, and power,  
That ever mortals knew,  
That angels ever bore:  
All are too mean to speak His worth,  
To poor to set my Saviour forth.

But O what gentle terms,  
What condescending ways,  
Doth our Redeemer use  
To teach his heavenly grace!  
Mine eyes with joy and wonder see  
What forms of love He bears for me.

Arrayed in mortal flesh,  
He like an angel stands,  
And holds the promises  
And pardons in His hands;  
Commissioned from His Father's throne  
To make His grace to mortals known.

Great Prophet of my God,  
My tongue would bless Thy Name,  
By Thee the joyful news  
Of our salvation came,  
The joyful news of sin forgiven  
Of hell subdued, and peace with Heaven

Be Thou my Counsellor,  
My Pattern, and my Guide,  
And through this desert land  
Still keep me near thy side:  
O let my feet e'er run astray  
Nor rove nor seek the crooked way.

I love my Shepherd's voice,  
His watchful eyes shall keep  
My wand'ring soul among  
The thousands of His sheep:  
He feeds His flock, He calls their names,  
His bosom bears the tender lambs.

To this dear Surety's hand  
Will I commit my cause;  
He answers and fulfils  
His Father's broken laws:  
Behold my soul at freedom set!  
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.

Jesus, my great High Priest,  
Offered His blood, and died;  
My guilty conscience seeks  
No sacrifice beside:  
His powerful blood did once atone,  
And now it pleads before the throne.

My Advocate appears  
For my defense on high;  
The Father bows his ears,  
And lays his thunder by:  
Not all that hell or sin can say  
Shall turn his heart, his love away.

My Saviour and my Lord,  
My Conqueror and my King,  
Thy scepter and Thy sword,  
Thy reigning grace I sing:  
Thine is the power; behold I sit  
In willing bonds before Thy feet.

Now let my soul arise,  
And tread the tempter down;  
My Captain leads me forth  
To conquest and a crown:  
A feeble saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.

Should all the hosts of death,  
And powers of hell unknown,  
Put their most dreadful forms  
Of rage and mischief on,  
I shall be safe, for Christ displays  
Superior power, and guardian grace.

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