

***He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. (Pro 25:28)***

There have been a number of sermons recently addressing various elements of our need to have a strong focus on Christ, and today I want to address what I think is a foundational element of that from a practical point of view. Ruling or controlling our spirit is crucial to having a focus on Christ. I consider this to be a matter of practical focus and work, and it's something I have considered closely in my own personal life, and I've discussed with people over the years from many different angles. Some of you will hear things today that I've said to you personally, and as such I don't want anyone to take this sermon as directed 'at' you.

When I think of the phrase 'control your spirit' I think we generally apply it to situations and people who are excitable and maybe spend a lot of time in a state we label as 'angry'. Today I want to address how ruling our spirits is way more than just anger management. If we are going to properly exert 'rule over our own spirit', this idea must be properly framed and applied. Put simply, the ruling of our spirits shouldn't just be directed toward the suppression or control of only one emotional element, i.e., anger, but all states that drive us away from focusing on Christ. If we are going to have a proper focus on Christ, it is imperative that we do this work.

My general message today is that any state of spirit outside of rejoicing is a state that needs adjustment. That's not a judgment or indictment of anyone, it's just what it is. It's a thing for all of us to consider as we walk this path. Ruling our spirit isn't just about controlling our anger, but controlling any emotion and state of mind that is not one of rejoicing. Any other state causes us to be as a 'city that is broken down and without walls' because no other state can truly be focused on Christ – which puts us in danger of being overcome by the enemy, just like a city without walls. We must be working toward a rejoicing state all the time. In the end, I hope that you will all agree with me that Christ is both the reason and the way toward achieving that.

Paul presents to us a simple, but very powerful affirmative duty as Christians in his letter to the Thessalonians:

*"Rejoice evermore." (1Th 5:16)*

He tells the Philippians the same thing, not once, but three times:

*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. (Php 3:1)*

And then

*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. (Php 4:4)*

Rejoicing is not a smile plastered on your face, or a light airy tone to your speech, or calling someone pet names when you talk to them in the hopes of promoting your mask of happiness. Be very clear about this. This is a spiritual thing, that requires spiritual work. A rejoicing spirit will manifest itself in your behavior, your speech and your actions, and yes that might mean you're smiling. Just playing happy doesn't cut it. We certainly can't walk around with an Eeyore attitude and face all the time, but this doesn't start with facial expressions and acting happy and working backwards. It starts with the right spirit which works to then manifest itself outwardly. Remember that while you may fool men, you never fool God. He knows what is in your heart

*"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."* (Jer 17:10)

The rejoicing we are exhorted to by Paul is one in which we rejoice in God's grace, not in the things of the world. The Psalmist tells us quite plainly

*"This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."*  
(Psa 118:24)

Rejoice and be glad in the day the LORD has made! How can we not rejoice when we have a Savior who has descended from on high to deliver us from the bondage of sin through the sacrifice of His own body and shedding of His blood? How can we be anything but joyful if we but stop to consider our adoption and the gifts our Father has granted us? How could we not rejoice if we honestly consider the misery and pain we are spared when we bring our petitions to the throne?

Rejoicing seems such a simple thing. Being happy is so much easier than being sad or angry or something else, right?

Well, not to put too fine a point on this, but no. The natural state of mankind is not to rejoice in the Lord, because "*the carnal mind is enmity against God*" (Ro 8:7) That's why it's a specifically admonished and exhorted way to behave, and why the matter is brought to bear so many times throughout scripture. The hymns that God has inspired for use in His worship in the Psalms declare the need for rejoicing repeatedly. That should help to drive home its importance.

It's probably important to establish what it is to rejoice based on what the word actually means. This word 'rejoice' is Strong's 5463, and it's a verb. It's not an emotion. That's important, and I'll try to make this clear why throughout this sermon. Our emotional and mental states impact our ability to rejoice, but some mask of 'fleshly happy' isn't the target here. Putting lots of smiley face emojis in your text isn't rejoicing. ☺

This word is used a few different ways, but mostly translated rejoice, and we can maybe see why this is not to be understood as just a simple ‘happy’ with examples of where else it is used.

*“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* (2Jn 1:10-11)

The phrase ‘God speed’ is the same Greek word. It is a greeting or salutation, and can be used when meeting someone or when they are leaving your home, as here. In a few spots this word is translated ‘greeting’ or some form of that. It is intended to display to the person you are meeting at your door an outward and obvious joy at seeing them such that they are made to understand the joy their presence brings to you. Here, it is discussed in the negative, that those who bring false doctrines are absolutely not to be made to feel joy or acceptance from you. You should **not** greet them with joy and welcoming, open arms, or you risk being partaker of their evils.

Another example is

*“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, **joying** and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.”* (Col 2:5)

It isn’t clear to me why the translators chose to use the term ‘joying’ here, and in modern English that’s not a way we use the word ‘joy’, generally, but I like it because it stands out. Which sounds more emphatic ‘I’m happy to see you’ or ‘I’m joying to see you’? When I think of someone ‘joying’ I think of little children who run to see you and wrap you in their little arms after you’ve been away from them. There’s nothing they are focused on but how joyful they are to see you and have you back in their immediate presence. All their energy, actions and focus are on you as the immediate source of their happiness and joy.

Finally consider this use of the same word

*“It was meet that we should make merry, and be **glad**: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”* (Luk 15:32)

Here again the idea is not an emotional state where ‘be’ is the verb, we’re going to ‘be something’. The original verb is the word translated ‘glad’. We are going to act, speak, and emote in a way that while it makes our positive emotion known, the action is the key piece. We are taking action to rejoice, as opposed to doing something else, like taking action to bemoan or murmur against our situation, for example.

I think this is critical because you can do a lot of things in the flesh to be happy. You can pop some pills or eat a food that changes your emotional state. I’ve never

experienced but heard of the ‘runner’s high’ where people achieve a state of euphoria and lowered ability to feel pain brought about by extreme exercise. Those things might make you happy in the flesh, but that’s not rejoicing.

Alternatively, I can be in extreme physical pain or in some really emotionally sad situation, but still rejoicing in Christ. And that’s the thing to remember first and foremost. This isn’t about being happy over the weather or the position you find yourself in today in your lot. Rejoicing is about rejoicing in Christ.

To rejoice in Christ requires, absolutely requires, a focus on Christ and a view toward Him – what He has done for His sheep, His promises, His steadfastness and unchangeableness, His mercies and His everlasting love.

In this world, where we are surrounded by sin and thanklessness, where temptation is the goal of every element of society, it can be difficult to keep our focus on rejoicing or Christ. Everything about the world is designed to divert that focus and to prey upon our naturally depraved state. Satan has worked on the weaknesses of men from the beginning and continues to do so to this day. We are at war over it.

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”* (1Pe 2:11)

Never forget that this is war we are engaged in, a constant war against the old man that is corrupt and centered in the flesh. We have to fight this fight not just against the world but against our own nature and sinfulness. This wrestling that we do within ourselves is an absolutely necessary activity. Paul describes the necessity this way

*“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* (1Co 9:27)

This isn’t just about an abstract sense of keeping away from fleshly lusts. If you look at the context it becomes a little plainer.

*“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is **temperate in all things**. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; **so fight I, not as one that beateth the air**: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* (1Co 9:24-27)

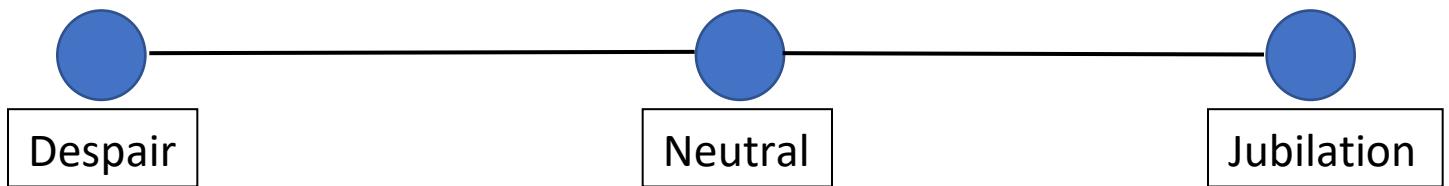
To be temperate means to exhibit self-control in all things mentally and physically. Our fight is not against shadows, or things that have no substance in reality, the fight is very, very real. But we are able, through Christ, to bring our bodies into subjection and

into the proper focus. This is what Paul tells us – we have a duty and are able to keep ourselves in the proper frame of mind if we strive for the mastery of it.

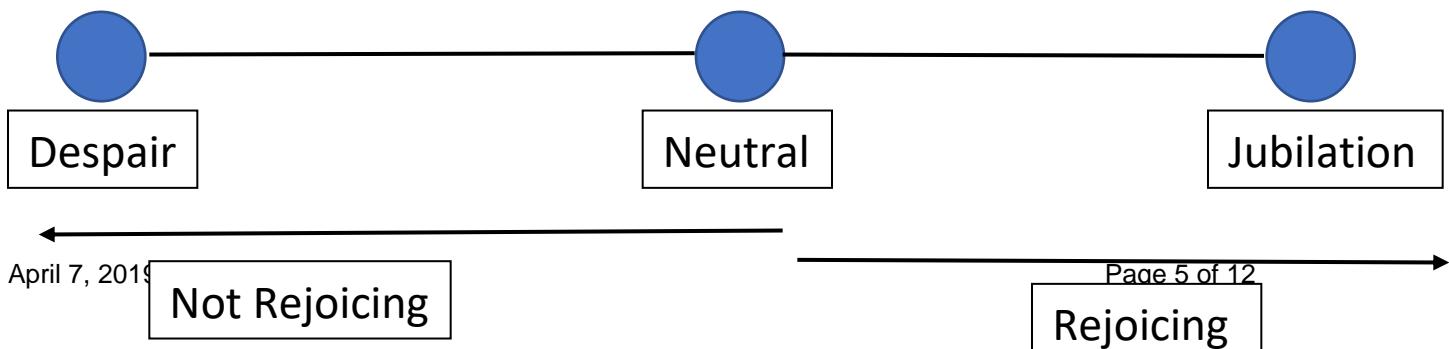
Recall that the exhortation is not just to strive to rejoice, but to do it ‘evermore’. This word evermore is interesting, because while it is indicative of constant rejoicing in eternity, that isn’t the primary meaning. It doesn’t mean forever, especially not in some abstract sense. The same word is translated ‘alway’ in Phillipians 4:4. It literally means all the time – at all times, always, ever. Paul tells us to rejoice at all times and he’s not being metaphorical or figurative.

Now, it’s one thing to say ‘rejoice all the time’ and another to actually try to help a person do it. I want to try and frame up a way to think about this that I hope helps us to see what we must actively work toward every day. This might seem weird or overly analytical, but bear with me.

I posit to you that the condition of our spirit can essentially be marked on a spectrum. On the one hand, we have a despair that cannot be recovered from, and I believe is manifested in its ultimate form in the flames of hell, where it is known and understood that there is absolutely no hope for relief from either the physical agony or the mental and emotional anguish of knowing nothing about their condition will ever change. On the other hand, you have exultant jubilation of mind and spirit, the likes of which will only be truly experienced in the presence of God in the heavenly home of the Elect.



Now I just told you this is a spectrum, but I firmly believe there are really only two states – rejoicing and not rejoicing. Everything to the left of ‘neutral’ is plainly not rejoicing. If you look closely at my highly technical diagram below, you’ll notice that it’s not just to the left of ‘Neutral’ that I label ‘Not Rejoicing’, and that’s because a neutral state isn’t a state of rejoicing itself, so it must by definition be ‘not rejoicing’. I know I probably sound like some kind of a logic nerd saying this, but I’ll try to make it clear why that’s important in a moment.



I'm also trying to keep this simple and not overly complicate the thinking because I've found this to work for me in my own struggles. Part of what the world does with this part of the human condition is to make it seem so complex and full of variables that you don't have a choice but to mess around in their solutions – therapy, drugs, etc. I could be wrong, but I don't think this is really all that complex. When we're in a bad spot, it feels hard, it looks like an impossible mountain to climb, but when you're thinking straight and trying to set yourself up to do the work, I think it's pretty straightforward.

I don't believe it ultimately matters what label you put on the state of things when you're in a 'not rejoicing' condition. Whether you label it angry, or depressed, or manic, or whatever, the simple fact is you're not rejoicing, so how do you get out of THAT 'not rejoicing' state? That's all that really matters. All the rest of it is essentially noise.

This also isn't about any single 'not rejoicing' state of spirit – it's about ALL of them. We have to recognize our need to be in that rejoicing state because of the focus on Christ that it drives us toward. It's also important to understand this is not unique to any one person or type of person. Everyone suffers from this struggle. Each of us suffers from it in different ways and to different degrees, but it is present for all of us to tackle and help each other with. If you truly think you don't suffer from this, ever, I'd like you to come talk to me, because I think you're either the most unique human ever to live and I want to figure out what is so special about you, OR, you're deceiving yourself, and that's not good for you. I personally deal with it every day, I know that; some days I win, and lots of days I fail miserably. How it manifests itself for me is radically different than it is for other people, I know that too, but it's there I believe for all of us to face.

Beware! Modern psychology and psychiatry like to use lots of words to describe this state of 'not rejoicing'. Some of them we're very familiar with, like depression, chronic anger, manic-depressiveness, chronic anxiety, etc. They have a host of other words that literally fill books with their names, descriptions, symptoms, and 'treatments'. Ultimately, what these things are called in a modern parlance is utterly irrelevant. Putting so much focus on the specific label can lead to a significant problem in overcoming it. The problem is that when you put a lot of fleshly words around what your problem is, you seek fleshly answers and solutions. That's bad.

Scripture uses terms like distress, broken hearted, down trodden, poor in spirit, groanings and other similar words. They're all essentially the same thing, though – a lack of rejoicing for one reason or another.

Using the labels and methods these false sciences promote to address the state of our

spirit is at best of microscopically small value, because it is derived from fleshly thinking! Many of their treatments like drugs and ‘therapy’ aren’t solutions at all, but veneers and avoidance of the real issue. They seek to silence that voice in our heads that tells us this state we find ourselves in isn’t where we need to be and that our sins deserve to be punished by our Creator. They hate that idea! The drugs work to make you ‘happy’ but it’s false and fake happiness. The therapy tells you to ‘be yourself’ and like the song ‘if it makes you happy, it can’t be that bad’. Nothing that makes you happy can be bad, so just do whatever and all will be well in your world. Even if that were true, and submitting to any sin that crosses your path will make you happy, that’s not rejoicing, that’s fleshly happiness. Of course we know that sin doesn’t lead to happiness at all – it’s all a lie of Satan.

That’s why ‘neutral’ isn’t the place you want to be. If we followed all the advice and therapies and treatments provided by psychology, psychiatry and modern medicine to address whatever labeled problem we have in our spirits, at the absolute best, **that would bring us to neutrality** in our spiritual frame. That isn’t rejoicing! Starting at and relying on the methods of the flesh will never get you to a point where you are actually rejoicing.

Now, that’s not to say that you don’t deal with issues of your frame when and how you need to. If you need a solid exercise program to keep you in a good frame of mind, then get on the treadmill. If your spirit is easier to rule when you regulate your diet in a certain way, then eat lots of kale or whatever. If a regimen of various things being done on a daily basis, as long as they aren’t sinful, helps you keep under yourself, then do those things. If you have physical issues that need medical attention, get them attended to. We have to take care of our frames so that we are fit for battle. Paul tells us

*“...bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1Ti 4:8)*

He doesn’t tell us that it profits us nothing. And that doesn’t just mean the getting on the treadmill, it means any of the things we need to individually do to deal with our physical frames and their weaknesses. Focusing on it as the solution doesn’t do much, but as part of a larger approach that starts with spiritual helps it is additive. It just can’t be what you rely on.

So do what you need to do, but don’t for one minute think that these fleshly things are going to ‘fix you’ or get you where you need to be. They won’t fix the problem and they won’t get your spirit where it needs to be, i.e. rejoicing.

Ultimately, ruling our spirit to wrangle ourselves into a proper state of rejoicing is a matter of the spirit, not one of the flesh.

*"Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth."* (Jas 3:4)

We sail in a maelstrom of sin, of temptation, of filth, of human frailty and human fickleness. We can choose to let that maelstrom overwhelm us and cause our ship to capsize, or we can put proper control on the helm and keep ourselves upright. Fighting the wind on a giant ship with a tiny helm takes a lot of energy, attention, and knowledge. But when you're at sea, you don't really have a choice if you want to live through the storm. You either figure it out or you die. We either figure it out or end up lost.

Finding ourselves, even on a daily basis, in a dark place, or a difficult spot where we don't see things in the bright light of God's mercy and His providence doesn't make us bad people. The Psalms are full of verses that describe broken-heartedness and a disconsolate spirit. If you look at Psalm 88, you'll find a Psalm that starts in a dark place and also ends there, never returning as so many others do to a place of hope and rejoicing in God's goodness and mercy. There's a reason for that. All Scripture is for our learning, and I think what we learn from that is there are times in a person's life where it is dark. Where your heart isn't in the place it needs to be to serve God fully. Where we feel as the Psalmist did that God has cast off our soul and He hides His face from us (Ps 88:14).

It is one of, if not the only Psalms that takes this approach and never comes back around to the glory of God in His mercy toward us. Those Psalms that remind us of His mercy, the kindness of His providence, the ordering of our steps and the sure foundation that God's providence provides us far, far, far outnumber this one. Understanding that is the beginning of understanding how to address our spirits and the behavior required to right our ships and rejoice in Christ.

Solomon tells us very plainly that there is

*"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance,"* (Ecc 3:4)

There are times for sorrowful thinking and behavior, but it is not appropriate at all times to be mournful, even over our sins; certainly not over our station in life or the position we find ourselves in on any given day. Don't confuse sobriety and a somber attitude with the attitude I'm talking about. It's not the same thing. Please don't confuse a sorrow over your sins for this either. By itself, sorrowing over your sins isn't what I'm talking about. You can easily spiral down into an unruly spirit and out of a rejoicing state if you dwell on your sins too much, but by itself, mourning for our sins is part of the proper frame a Christian should have.

I'd like you to examine with me a Psalm that I think if looked at properly gives us the path to achieving this state of rejoicing, and how to return to it when we find ourselves out of it.

*"To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."* (Psa 84:1-12)

There is a lot here, but I'm going to pick and choose a few key pieces to focus on that stand out to me as helpful.

### ***To the chief Musician upon Gittith, a Psalm for the sons of Korah***

When you see a Psalm written for or to the sons of Korah, it is generally considered to be a Psalm that was directed for use in the public worship of God.

*"And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order. And these are they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel..."* (1Ch 6:31-33)

This Korah is a son of Kohath. While all the Psalms were considered acceptable to sing in the service of God where the tabernacle of the congregation was stationed, and then later the temple, there were some written specifically for that purpose. Psalm 84 is one of those. If God has given you, in His inspired word a psalm suitable for worshiping Him, you might want to pay a little more attention to it.

### ***My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my***

***flesh crieth out for the living God.***

There are clearly times when we will find ourselves immersed in our fleshly state, and crying out for the presence of our God. Where the flesh rules, God is not. This is the cause of our state, and also the cause of our distress. This is one of the things that marks us as different from the world, in that we do not revel in this separation from our God, but it piles on our distress, as it were. We know our flesh ruling is a bad place to be, but sometimes, that's where we are.

***Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.***

Part of the lamentation is that we have no peace or place of rest, but we know and see the truth that there is a place of peace. Those that are there will certainly praise you, and they will do so constantly. The phrase 'be still praising thee' doesn't mean to be still as in quiet and doing nothing. It's an interesting turn of a phrase that means constantly. Think 'evermore'. This is compounded by the use of 'Selah' here, which is thought to indicate a perpetual and eternal thing. Whatever was said before will be the case eternally.

We know, even as we feel separated from God by our flesh, that the place to be is in God's house, and to be praising Him is one of our greatest helps. This is the mindset we have to train ourselves to. If we train to it, when we find ourselves in a dark place in our spirit, we can more easily figure out how to return from that place and to the place where our mind and heart are praising God and rejoicing in His goodness.

***Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.***

And here is the most intriguing part of this passage. There is no other mention of the valley of Baca anywhere else in scripture, which leads most expositors to believe it was either some minor but very environmentally harsh place on the road to the temple or it is purely metaphorical. This is the only place that this specific Hebrew word is used as a proper noun, and it is taken from a primary root word which means 'to weep'.

This is a valley of tears and sorrow and hardship. Those who are not dwelling in the house of the Lord find themselves here in this valley even though they don't know it. Those who are in the valley as pilgrims, searching out and truly **seeking** the house of the Lord, do a tremendous thing – they make the harsh, hard, uninhabitable, oppressively dry place into a well that refreshes them. They take the sorrow and wash it away. They take the environment they find themselves in and turn their heart and mind toward God, focusing on their destination, not the current location or circumstance in their journey. When they do that, the rain fills the pools there in the valley. God provides the necessary supplies to those who are engaged in the work, not just in the physical work of our hands, but in the work of our heart and spirits.

Anyplace and every place is a plush garden when we focus on Christ.

These who are passing through aren't lying on their beds bemoaning how broken-hearted they are and how they can't figure out what's wrong with them. They simply put that away to turn their worst conditions into their best. That might sound trite and simplistic, but it's not. You control how you react to the hardships of our pilgrimage, great and small. You have the ability to change how you react to what's around you at all times.

This isn't some power of positive thinking hogwash. This isn't a works righteousness argument. This is about ruling your spirit and when it gets out of control, bringing it back into its proper place.

***O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.***

To reiterate, this isn't some simplistic 'well, just be happy' kind of trite advice. There is a way to get back to where we need to be when our ship is listing and it seems like the storm is going to overtake and capsize us. It's the same method described here as what Paul gives us. Look, it's no coincidence that 'rejoice evermore' is followed by 'pray without ceasing'. The two are absolutely and unequivocally linked.

More than any habit, diet, drug, therapy, or whatever fleshly thing you try, prayer is the first answer. Start there. On your knees in your closet (Mat 6:6), with someone else if it helps, but get to the Lord. It's the only real solution to anything, especially these issues that are internal and can't really be addressed by someone else for you. I can fix your computer. I can't fix your heart. I can maybe help you get there, and I want to, but at the end of the day, the issues of your heart, your contentment, your patience with your situation and the world around us is between you and God. If you aren't willing to go there and deal with it with Him, nothing else you try is going to matter. If you don't seek answers from Him, you're not going to find any answers. Period.

Words from others are key to helping you gain perspective and maybe adjust your course, but if you lose sight of this simple fact you're never going to get back on track

*"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins..." (Jer 17:10)*

You can hide the melancholy or the anger or the whatever with various activities and masks, but if you're not going to do the work with the Lord to put your focus on Him and push away the world, nothing you do is going to be a long term work bearing fruit. You can't look to other members of the body to fix the situation for you. You can't just say 'well, I don't know what's wrong' and leave it at that. You have to search it out with God to overcome it. It is, after all, our affirmative duty to 'rejoice evermore'.

This is important because our goal isn't actually to fix anything. We can't fix our natural

state. Our goal is to obtain the END prize and occupy as best we can.

***I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.***

That's the target thought right there. Let me be a servant of servants in the eternal house of my God rather than trying to 'be happy' here on earth, steeped in wickedness.

Ruling our spirit with the intent of focusing on Christ, His mercies, His gifts, His judgment, His being all in all to and for us is the path to that prize. It is a foundation that enables us to do so many things that it can't be ignored. If we aren't careful with our own spirit, how can we be careful with others?

The seeking of God in these matters through prayer is crucial to being in a state of rejoicing. We all have to find our way to doing that, and we have to train ourselves to be more aware of when we're sliding down some path away from rejoicing. I know I spend too much time after the fact wondering what happened instead of focused on what's happening in the moment. I don't have a perfect answer for that, but one thing I know for certain can help with it is each of us looking out for one another and when we see it happening, saying something.

Not saying something judgmental or hard but trying to help a person see they're sliding. I point back to the metaphor of us as a body. There are times when something hurts that isn't the real source of the hurt. Like when you get a nerve pinched somewhere and your arm tingles or your leg hurts, but the source of the hurt is in your back or neck. If we are coming closer and closer together in love and charity and thankfulness in our hearts for what each member brings to the body (not just saying 'I'm really thankful for you'), we'll be able to help one another proactively, and we'll be able to hear the help for what it is.

I hope this hasn't just been a big 'well, duh, prayer'. I'm sorry I don't have super specific answers or more specific ways to deal with this issue of ruling our spirits on a daily basis, but I also feel that it is simple if we choose to make it simple. Prayer and communion are simple answers to a multitude of issues. When we complicate things too much and try to look to the flesh for other answers, we just bury the real issue we need to address and don't fix anything because there is no power in the flesh. I don't want us to do that.

I want to encourage all of you to go forward into this week and seek to rejoice in every minute of every day.