

Training in Silence

As the Lord enables us, we'll go further into some training methods. The first one comes out of training in solitude. It is called training in silence. I believe we can view some of the verses in Philippians 4 to get a taste of such training.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near (Philippians 4:4-5).

How is it possible to rejoice in the Lord – always; at all times; no matter the circumstances? It is possible to do that when we place ourselves in the atmosphere of being near the Lord. It is when we are in solitude, and when we learn silence, that we can also become gentle, like Jesus was gentle and humble in heart. Remember his words? *“Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* The reason we can come to him is because he is *“gentle and humble in heart, and we will find rest for our souls”* (Matt 11:28-29). The key to gentleness, the key to rejoicing always, is coming to Jesus. What is the discipline of silence? Richard Foster observes: “We are so accustomed to relying on words to manage and control others. If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let him take control until we trust him.”

What if we've done some good deed, and you don't know it. What's the temptation? We'll want to let you know what we've done so we'll feel even better about ourselves.

Jesus says, “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then, your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matt 6:3-4).

When will your Father reward you? In your times of solitude and silence!

What if we've done something wrong and then we find out that you know. What's the temptation? Will we not be tempted to explain ourselves; to perhaps excuse ourselves? Won't we be tempted to help you understand why we did what we did? If there's anything to say to others, it's, “I'm sorry.” Otherwise, instead of trying to explain ourselves, take the time to be by yourself alone with the Lord and – do what?

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Rejoice that your righteousness does not come from your actions, your deeds whether good or bad (Php 3:9). Rejoice that your righteousness comes from Jesus and his work on the cross. Rejoice in his perfect work. Rejoice in his perfect will.

Or how about this scene? Someone has just told you something juicy and delicious about someone whom you don't care very much for. It might be true. It might be half-true. It might just be the person who told you, their point of view on the matter. What if, instead of passing that information on you remain silent about it, and

instead bring it to God? This is an example of the "*earthly things*" (Php 3:19) the rest of the world is absorbed in, enemies of the cross of Christ. Ask God to bless the person who told you the gossip or slander; to bless the person you don't care very much about; and to instead of engaging in juicy gossip, to bring it all to the Lord. This, in part, is what Paul means when he writes what are probably his most well-known saying from Philippians.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near (Php 4:4-5).

In other words, don't rejoice in someone else's downfall. Rejoice in the Lord. Come close to him often. Delight yourself in him. Feel the joy of his presence. Feel the joy of his peace. Know that he truly is near.

Speaking of enemies of the cross of Christ, Paul says here in Philippians that their god is their stomach (Php 3:19), which simply means they rely on their appetite to keep them going. Do we have an appetite for Jesus? He's grabbed hold of us. Will we not now turn to him and grab hold of him (Php 3:12)?