

Joy in the Life of the Believer

Introduction

Joy is the Greek word *chara*, the noun form, occurring 59 times in the New Testament. *Chairo*, the verb form, to rejoice, occurs 74 times, often as a phrase of salutation.

- I. Joy is an attitude that has a look beyond the current situation and is therefore related to hope.
 - A. 2 Corinthians 7:4 “Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.”

Tribulation, or a troubled circumstance, is not an obstacle to being joyful. One can see through the trial to the ultimate outcome, which even in the worst circumstances, can be an occasion for joy.
 - B. 2 Corinthians 8:2 “...that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.”

Joy can not only simply exist in trials, but one can express an abundance of joy. Even deep poverty did not keep the assemblies in Macedonia from being joyful, and liberal in their giving. Rather than looking to their own security, their joy produced a generosity of giving.
 - C. Romans 12:12 “...rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;”

In a series of encouragements to the Roman assembly, Paul includes rejoicing in hope. The phrase “in hope” is a locative of sphere, and indicates that the broader term is hope. In a sense, joy is produced by or comes out of hope.

Biblical hope is not wishing something good will happen. Rather, it is an attitude of expectation. The victorious Christian should expect all the grace promises and provisions presented in the New Testament will fulfill their purpose when applied. Such expectation produces joy, the attitude of well-being that looks through current negative situations, and realizes that God’s plan is working as promised.
- II. For the believer in the current age, joy is an element of the fruit of the Spirit.
 - A. Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

As such, it is produced as a result of the residential indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is a significant departure from the way joy is used in other ages.
 - B. Joy is an attitude of well being that can be expressed through rejoicing, even when in difficult circumstances.
 1. 2 Corinthians 6:10 “...as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Rejoicing is not incompatible with sorrow, or grief, which is an emotional reaction. They can occur at the same time, as joyfulness is not emotional in the sense that grief is. Rather, it is an attitude that is produced by the indwelling Spirit, which the spiritual believer can and should express even under the most dire, grief stricken,

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situations.

2. Colossians 1:24 “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church...”

Paul was able to rejoice during his sufferings on behalf of the Colossians. When he did so, he was filling up those tribulations that he lacked, and which Christ also experienced. Paul suffered these tribulations for the sake of the body of Christ.

This passage is not discussing Christ’s sufferings in death, but the “tribulations of Christ.” Tribulation is never used of Christ’s on the cross, but is used in Scripture of circumstantial testing and trial. As Paul suffered, Christ suffered with him. This corresponds to the Lord’s question of Paul on the road to Damascus, “Why do you persecute me?” In troubling the church, Paul was persecuting Christ.

III. Rejoicing is a requirement for the believer who is being controlled by the Spirit.

- A. Philippians 3:1 “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”

The object and basis of rejoicing is “in the Lord.” This is not the “in Christ” relationship, but tells in Whom the believer is to rejoice.

Here, and again in Philippians 4:4 below, we find the Philippian believers commanded to rejoice. This command implies that the Philippians were maturing believers who were walking by the Spirit, for only such can actually rejoice in the fruit of the Spirit sense.

- B. Philippians 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

Here the command to rejoice is repeated. The word “always” must mean “in all circumstances.”

- C. 1 Peter 4:13 “...but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

Peter also associates rejoicing with participating in the sufferings of Christ, similar to Paul’s statement in Colossians 1:24. The final clause should read, “that when His glory is revealed you may also rejoice while being glad.” For some reason the KJV, and NKJV translators reversed the wording, which has caused much confusion in interpretation. The word “being glad” means to have an intense, but non-emotional, controlled mental attitude of well-being. Christ, Himself, was glad in spirit, that is, in the attitude of His mind (Luke 10:21). It is also something that can be expressed in words as is shown in Acts 2:26.