

20221211 Joy – The JOY that Never Fades

Last Sunday we looked at the subject of LOVE. We discovered the unique nature of love from God's perspective. We took the time to learn the words that are used in the Bible for love. God-like love is unselfish love. The ancient Hebrew word, ahavah, was translated by Jewish scholars in the mid third century BC as AGAPE. This is a unique word meaning an "unselfish love." It is a love which expects nothing in return. God loves us with that kind of love and we are to love Him and one another in the same way.

This third week of Advent, we're going to see what God's Word has to say about JOY. What is it? How do we get it? How do we keep it? How do we share it? I began this sermon by searching Google for the phrase "what is joy." Let's start with the definition given by the Merriam-Webster dictionary. We can see that it defines joy as "the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires."¹

Joy is an essential marker of the Christian life. It is the second characteristic listed in the Fruit of the Spirit as defined by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22. *"²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."* (Galatians 5:22-26, NKJV).

I believe these elements of the Fruit of the Spirit are listed in this order intentionally. It all starts with love. Love (agape) is a prerequisite for experiencing joy and peace. Next Sunday will take a look at what the Bible has to say about peace.

Joy in Hebrew

The word joy appears over 100 times in the Old Testament and is derived from perhaps a dozen different words. The most common Hebrew word for joy is *simchah*, which simply means joy, gladness, or mirth. It is used about ninety percent of the time for joy. It first occurs in the Bible when Jacob has fled in the night from Laban his father-in-law. When Laban catches up with him he says, *"²⁷ Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?"* (Genesis 31:27, NKJV).²

There is another Hebrew word, *sason*, meaning exultation or rejoicing. It first appears in the Bible after Esther convinced King Ahasuerus to save the Jewish people. It's a word denoting national rejoicing.

*¹⁵ So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan **rejoiced and was glad.** ¹⁶ The Jews had light and **gladness (simchah), joy (sason)** and honor. ¹⁷ And in*

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/joy>

² New King James Version quoted throughout this sermon unless specified otherwise.

every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had **joy** and gladness, a feast and a holiday. (Esther 8:15-17a, NKJV).



All these Hebrew words generally mean “to be happy or joyful.” That joy did come from different sources: from lovers rejoicing in each other (Song of Solomon 1:4, Proverbs 5:18), those rejoicing in their children (Psalm 113:9), those rejoicing in wine (Psalm 104:15), those in an abundant harvest (Isaiah 9:3), and others in a good answer (Proverbs 15:23). These are all TEMPORARY sources of joy. But the Word also points us to something more solid - something more permanent.

In the Old Testament God's people ALWAYS found their ultimate source of joy and satisfaction in Yahweh Himself.

*The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him. (Psalm 28:7, NKJV).*

This tells us so much. It tells us that the source of our strength (think offensive weapon) and our shield (think defensive weapon) is the Lord Himself. The verse tells us where all this strength and defense originates. It is because “my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” Then it lays the product (think emotion) that comes from that trust. “Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.”

This tells us that the only solid source of joy is in understanding that our hope, strength, protection, and ultimately our joyful attitude and state can ONLY come from trusting in Him. That is what puts a song in our mouth. That reminds me of a song I used to hear,

I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry.² He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps.

³ He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD. (Psalm 40:1-3, NKJV).



I will ask you, are you in a horrible pit? Do you feel you're standing in rubber barn boots in wet gumbo clay that is three feet thick? The Shepherd King David is telling you what to do this morning to get out of that clay! Wait patiently for the Lord! He will lean in and listen to you. He will hear your cry! He will pull you out of that gumbo clay and He'll put your feet on a solid

Rock (JESUS). He'll direct your steps..... and then.....He will put a beautiful new song in your mouth and you'll be praising God and this attitude will be seen by others who will be prompted to put their trust in the Lord.

I told you last week that agape love is the most powerful tool of evangelism. It is by this that all men will know that we are His disciples, but JOY is what follows that love, and EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE MORE JOYFUL. There are many other verses that point to reasons that we rejoice in the Lord: our salvation (Psalm 40:16, 64:10. 63:11, 51:12).

In Jewish culture, significant life events like childbirths, weddings, bar-mitzvahs, etc are called simchah. Both those words mentioned above (*simchah* and *sason*) are said in all Jewish weddings. This comes from the Prophet Jeremiah who said:

¹¹ *the voice of joy (sason שִׂשׂוֹן) and the voice of gladness (simchah שִׂמְחָה), the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: "Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever"—and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,' says the LORD. (Jeremiah 33:11, NKJV).*

How fitting it is when we as Christ-Followers understand that we are the bride, and He is the groom. Our ultimate joy can be found ONLY in Jesus. Just two weeks ago we sang together about hope, realizing that it is only standing on Him that we have hope, love, and joy. "On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand." We can say along with the Prophet Jeremiah, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (Jeremiah 15:16, NKJV).

Joy In the New Testament

There are eight Greek words for joy in the New Testament, but the most prevalent one is χαρά, which is rendered *chara* in English. It appears around 60 times in the New Testament, first appearing in the account of the birth of Jesus. "*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*" (Matthew 2:10, NKJV). I can't think of a more wonderful place for JOY to begin. We will find that real joy begins and remains in us based on our trust in Jesus. Strong's' Concordance defines *chara* as "*calm delight and inner gladness.*" *Chara is the result of becoming aware of God's goodness and grace. It is our response to God's grace in our lives.*

Biblical joy does not flow from our possessions or circumstances. They are as unstable as the waves in the ocean. Joy is the result of a CHOICE. It bubbles up out of a grateful heart. I have never seen an ungrateful person who had a heart of joy. And I've never seen a joyless Christian except for the ones who have forgotten to count their blessings.

Paul is a great example of being joyful in trying times. He endured every hardship imaginable. He was beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned, left for dead and a whole host of horrible things, yet he said: "being full of sorrow and yet rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10) and "in all our affliction, I

am overflowing with joy” (2 Corinthians 7:4). This is not theoretical Christianity. THIS IS OUR REALITY WHEN WE UNDERSTAND OUR IDENTITY AND SECURITY IN CHRIST.

Many try to say that joy and happiness are the same thing. I’m not sure that they are. I can be going through a tragic circumstance that is anything but happy, but I can have a steadfast joy in the middle of it, knowing that God loves me, and that He is ultimately in control of whatever might happen to me.

A dictionary definition of *happiness* is “a state of well-being; a pleasurable or satisfying experience.” A definition of the word *rejoice*, related to the word *joy*, is “to feel great delight; to be glad.” Depending on the translation, the Bible uses the words *happy* and *happiness* about 30 times, while *joy* and *rejoice* appear over 300 times.³

Scripture tells us that the announcement of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds was “*good tidings of great joy which will be to all people*” (Luke 2:10). And when the shepherds saw the star, “*they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy*” (Matthew 2:10). If the children of Israel rejoiced from their physical freedom in leaving Egypt, how much more should we have joy in the grace and freedom we have in Christ? It was good news for the shepherds and it is good news of exceeding joy for each of us as well!

Biblical truths concerning joy

1. Repentance brings joy - “*I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.*” (Luke 15:7, NKJV). The angels even rejoice when a sinner repents and comes to Jesus (Luke 15:10).

2. Joy is a gift from God – When allowed to do so; it exudes as fruit from the heart of the Spirit-filled believer. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*”²³ *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*” (Galatians 5:22-23, NKJV).

3. Joy results from knowing Jesus - “*whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*” (1 Peter 1:8-, NKJV).

4. Joy gives us strength when we want to give up - “*Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*” (Nehemiah 8:10, NKJV).

5. Joy is a choice – Paul tells us this again and again in scripture, and he tells us that it is connected to focusing on the good and enjoying the mind of Christ. “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!*”⁵ *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*⁶ *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*⁷ *and the peace of God, which surpasses all*

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/joy-happiness.html>

understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-7, NKJV).

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NKJV).

Both of these verses make it abundantly clear that joy is a choice.

6. We can choose joy even while in trials understanding they have a purpose - *“² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4, NKJV).*

7. The Word of God brings us joy - *¹¹ “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:11, NKJV).*

8. Hope gives us joy (remember our sermon on joy). Hope is a product of what you stand on as your foundation. *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. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:13-14a, NKJV).*

*²⁸ The hope of the righteous will be gladness,
But the expectation of the wicked will perish. (Proverbs 10:28, NKJV).*

THE WORLD’S HAPPINESS WILL FADE BUT THE JOY OF THE LORD WILL BE FOREVER!

Let’s pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.