

Mixed Blessings: Being Joyful When in Sorrow

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. 1Peter 1:3-7
 - 1. Christians rejoiced in the midst of trial and persecution
- B. Joy follows love in the list of fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22
 - 1. 1Thes. 5:16; Phil. 4:4
 - 2. Paul commands Christians to rejoice always, and is compelled to repeat the command
 - 3. It is a command, implying:
 - a. That we have the capacity to keep it
 - b. That keeping it is a choice not dependent on circumstances
- C. But why are we to rejoice? Why does God command us to rejoice?
 - 1. Not here to minimize your suffering, or tell you to tough it out
 - 2. Want to understand how to have joy in less than happy conditions

I. THE NEED TO REJOICE

- A. We rejoice out of gratitude for what God has already done
 - 1. The Ethiopian eunuch's attitude - Acts 8:39
 - 2. Col. 1:13; John 3:16
 - 3. We have our needs supplied - Eph. 1:3-7, 3:20-21
 - 4. Physical needs, too - Matt. 6:25-33; Psalm 37:25
- B. We rejoice out of gratitude for what God is doing
 - 1. Fellowship - 1John 1:3-7; Heb. 10:24-25
 - 2. Mediator, mentor, protector - 1Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:15-16
 - 3. We are on God's side
 - a. Heb. 10:19-22; 1Peter 3:12; 1John 4:4; Rom. 12:12
- C. We rejoice out of gratitude for what God will do
 - 1. Rev. 7:9-17; 1Peter 5:7; Rom. 8:31-39
- D. Our joy is based in the wonderful things that God has done, is doing, and will do for us
 - 1. Have those things changed, diminished, or disappeared? Then our joy in them should likewise remain steadfast.
- E. This joy comes natural. After all, are we of all people the most blessed?
 - 1. Matt. 13:44-46

II. THE NEED FOR THE COMMAND TO REJOICE

- A. If rejoicing should come naturally to Christians, why does God command it?
- B. Christians become discouraged
 - 1. They may not feel as if they're doing that well in their spiritual walk
 - 2. They may be under serious trial: facing death in self or family, extended illness, financial burden, multiple setbacks
 - 3. Discouraged by others, including brethren
 - 4. They may just be weak and self pitying

- C. For whatever reason, Christians are not always the happy people they ought to be
- D. Hence the need for the command-- we must decide to be happy!
- E. We cannot control life's circumstances-- but we can control how we react to life's circumstances
 - 1. What will our attitude be when things do not look so good?
 - 2. Acts 5:41, 16:25, 2Cor. 6:10; 1Peter 1:8-9
 - 3. What are the common threads?
 - a. Each knew the hardship would end; the condition was not permanent -- sickness, pain, death, oppression are not forever
 - b. Each knew that there was more than one way of looking at the event -- it is not what you are looking at; it is what you see
 - c. Each chose to search, see, and select the good in the events
 - d. Each did something to manifest that choice
 - 4. Proof: know someone who can find the bad in a good situation?
- F. Remember Romans 8:31-39
 - 1. No external force can separate us from the love of God
 - 2. There is nothing we can experience that is so negative that we cannot maintain the joy of being one of the saved
 - 3. There is no trial or temptation so great that it entirely obscures our view of Heaven, nor can it ever obscure God's view of us
 - 4. We simply choose to be positive - Phil. 4:8
 - 5. Where our mind is, there will our attitude be also
- G. An attitude of joy is not automatic-- it must be desired, trained, and worked for
 - 1. Things will not always work out as we would like, but even in the worst of times, these things do not change:
 - a. God is at our side and will never leave us alone in the trial
 - b. The trial will come to an end
 - c. We get to choose whether we will be joyful or discouraged until it does end
 - 2. Things will not always work out as we would like, but who can know all of the good that will come from allowing God to work it out His way
 - a. Ecc. 8:6-7