

Let's get Gaudy!! (rejoicing) 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25 (18)

Disclaimer: Material for this message was adapted in part from sermons found on the Sermon Central website.

In 1937 architect Frank Lloyd Wright built a house for industrialist Hibbard Johnson. One rainy evening Johnson was entertaining distinguished guests for dinner when the roof began to leak.

The water seeped through directly above Johnson himself, dripping steadily onto his bald head.irate, he called Wright in Phoenix, Arizona.

"Frank," he said, "you built this beautiful house for me and we enjoy it very much. But ... the roof leaks, and right now I am with some friends and distinguished guests and it is leaking right on top of my head."

There was a pause on the line, then Frank Lloyd Wright replied:

"Well, Hib, why don't you move your chair?"

Rejoice always,
Pray without ceasing,
Give thanks in all circumstances
For this is the will of God, **in Christ Jesus**, for you.
1 Thess. 5:16-18

Paul seems rather glib in tossing off this impossible lifestyle list

Always rejoicing? Always thankful? Always praying?

How could we possibly accomplish these?

I think the answer can be found in that little insert in the closing line:

*For this is the will of God, **in Christ Jesus**, for you.*

But let's back up a bit so that we can better understand that answer.

And I also think, that the answer to one of these commands will be the answer to the other two as well, because if we know how to always pray and always give thanks, we should already be always rejoicing. And since this is "Rejoice Sunday," let's solve this riddle from the "**always rejoicing**" point of view.

Our Bible teaches us that **one of the fruits of the Spirit is... JOY.** (Galatians 5:22). You might be surprised to learn how central, these ideas of **rejoicing and having joy** are supposed to be for the people of God.

The Jewish Encyclopedia states that no other language has as many words for joy and rejoicing as does Hebrew. In the Old Testament there are 27 different words that are used primarily... for some aspect of joy or joyful participation in worship.

The good Israelite regarded the act of thanking God as the supreme joy of his life.

The psalmist sings, "You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.." Psalm 16:11

The New Testament also stresses this joyful life as heavily as does the Old:

Rejoice always – 1 Thess. 5:16
Rejoice in hope – Romans 12:12

Rejoice in the Lord always,
again I will say, Rejoice!" - Phil. 4:4

Today's passage instructs us to "*Rejoice always*"

Romans says we should "*Rejoice in hope...*"

And Philippians commands "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, Rejoice!*"

I've always wondered about that last scripture, "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, Rejoice!*" Why did Paul feel that he had to repeat himself?

Then I realized, as a parent, I had to repeat myself quite often with my children.

And I repeat myself... and I repeat myself... Why did I feel had to do that?

Because the kids weren't listening! They weren't paying any attention!

There are many Christians who must not be paying attention either. They struggle with this idea of having "joy" in their lives.

But as the evangelist Billy Sunday once declared: "**If there is no joy in your religion, you've got a leak in your faith.**" In other words - if there's no joy in your life - you have a problem. You've got a leak someplace and you need to find a way to deal with it.

Now, some will point out that the reason they have no joy in their lives is because they don't have a reason to be joyful.

Life seems to have fallen apart.

They aren't satisfied with their job.

Their family has problems.

Their health isn't good

Their car has gone in for repairs for the 10th time this year.

They just can't see a "reason" for being joyful.

And, I can't blame people for feeling that way. It's hard to be joyful when life is going against you. It's hard to be joyful when you're struggling with troubles, or overwhelmed by pain, or unsure of your future.

But there's a problem with THAT approach to life. If we wait until everything turns out the way we want it to be in our lives... if we're not going to be joyful until all the leaks are patched ... THEN we're NEVER going to experience JOY; or, if we do find some joy, it will be a rare and short lived occurrence.

In this world you will have trouble
but take heart; I have overcome the world
-- *Jesus*. (John 16:33)

Jesus Himself warned us that "... ***In this world you will have trouble...***"
We can't get through this life without trouble – without some pain – without some suffering. But again He gives us the answer to today's riddle in the same sentence. Because Jesus went on to say "***take heart, for I have overcome the world.***"

The good news is this.
You don't have to wait until you're Happy with your life to have joy in your life.

The kind of **JOY** God wants you to have in your life will bring you **HAPPINESS**.
But the pursuit of happiness will not always bring you joy.

This is like that little rule from Geometry class:
"*All squares are rectangles... but not all rectangles are squares*"

You can find a similar rule in Scripture: God's Joy will always bring happiness... but the pursuit of happiness will not always bring joy. Why would that be?

For that answer, let's turn to our dictionary again.
The word ***happiness*** derives from the English word "*happenstance*" which means "something that **HAPPENS** because of a circum**STANCE**, a chance occurrence"

Thus – what we think of as happiness is an emotion that is caused by our circumstances. Worldly happiness is almost always reliant upon some situation or event to make us feel good.

- o If something good happens... we'll feel happy,
- o But if something bad happens... we feel sad.

By contrast, God's kind of Joy does not depend upon the present situation.
In fact, God's joy often exists **DESPITE** our circumstances.

A person once asked his friend... "*How are you doing?*" His friend, upset about something that had happened in his life, replied,
"*Oh... all right – under the circumstances.*"
To which the first man replied, "*What you are doing there? What are you doing UNDER your circumstances?.*"

God doesn't want us to be UNDER our circumstances,
He wants us to be **OVERCOMERS**

That is the gift that Jesus died to give us
He wants to give us the ability to have control of our lives
He wants to set us free from the chains and the shackles that life can impose on us.
Jesus said: "... **if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**" John 8:36

That's why Scripture so often tells us to rejoice...even when it doesn't make any sense

Whenever you face trials of any kind,
consider it nothing but joy,,

James 1:2

James, the brother of Jesus tells us, *whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.* James 1:2-4

Peter told the Christians of his day: "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.***" 1 Peter 4:12-13

What are these scriptures telling us??? They're saying – If the roof is leaking and you can't get someone to fix it right away... **MOVE YOUR CHAIR.** Change your perspective. Take some control of your life – by rejoicing in spite of the situation..

Paul and Silas were doing mission work in the city of Philippi when they were arrested.
...The crowd attacked them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks... (Acts 16:22-24)

They had done nothing wrong. All they had done was preach the Good news of Jesus and heal a demon possessed girl. And for this, they were mistreated, attacked, beaten and imprisoned.

How would you have responded???

It's not right... It's not fair... **THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO TREAT ME LIKE THIS!**

We would have been shouting threats and curses from the inner prison.

But that is not what happened. their story continues. *"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them"* (Acts 16:25)
They had been stripped, beaten, thrown into the very darkest cell in the prison and fastened in stocks... and what do they do??? They pray and sing, while the other prisoners listen. They hold a mini-revival in their jail cell.

Paul & Silas could have allowed their situation to take control over them, but instead, they took control of their situation by REJOICING in God – praying and singing. The end result was that Paul and Silas witnessed to a literal "captive audience."

God's kind of Joy is NOT AN EMOTION that happens to you.
God's Joy is His tool for you to use to take control of your life.
As Nehemiah said ...

the Joy of the Lord
is your strength."
Nehemiah 8:10

**Well, how can I do that?
How can I lay hold of the "Joy of the Lord"?**

The fruit of the Spirit is love,
JOY, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness,
Galatians 5:22

First we need to lay hold of THE SOURCE of God's joy. Our Bible tells us that *"The fruit of the SPIRIT is... joy..."* In other words... God's Spirit is the source of God's Joy. So, the more I'm filled with the Spirit of God... the more of God's joy I'll have in my life. And our Bible tells us to: *"...**be filled with the Spirit.**"* (Eph. 5:18)

So, how do I get filled with the Spirit?

1st – *"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart."* (Ephesians 5:18-19). **In other words, surround yourself with thoughts and music that glorifies God... and God will give you His joy.** That's what Paul and Silas were doing in their prison cell.

2nd – *"Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Ephesians 5:20. And, spend a great deal of your time in prayer thanking God for what He's done... and God will give you His Joy.

I suspect that was what Paul and Silas were praying about while they were in jail. They were reminding themselves of all the good things God had already done in their lives - the miracles they'd seen and the lives that had been changed.

3rd – “**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**” Ephesians 5:21
Find a way to serve others... and God will give you His joy.

And then for Paul and Silas, the most amazing thing happened. Just as their joy had already freed them from emotional bondage to the day's events, now it happened physically, as their prison doors flew open and their chains fell from their wrists.

At that moment, Paul and Silas could have seized the opportunity to run away, but instead they stayed to save the life of their jailer; ultimately baptizing both that man and his family into Christ. That's the joyous fruit of the Spirit that helped them overcome their circumstances.

For the Christian, Joy is more than an emotion.
Joy is the tool God gives us to overcome our circumstances,
to empower us to rise above the pain and the sorrows of this life.

Our Bible instructs us to look “*to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, **who for the sake of the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Heb. 12:2)

Jesus overcame the pain and disgrace of the cross. He rose above the horror of His own crucifixion because He didn't focus on His present situation. INSTEAD He focused on what He was accomplishing (our salvation) and it gave Him the JOY and courage needed to see it through

Fanny Crosby one of the greatest hymn writers of the nineteenth century wrote over 8000 hymns. Songs like “Tell me the Story of Jesus,” “Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine”, and “To God be the Glory, great things He has done.” But Fanny Crosby had been blind since she was a baby. When she was 8 years old she wrote this poem:

“O what a happy soul am I! Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world contented I will be;
How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't!
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot and I won't.”

Fanny Crosby's point, as is also the point of this whole message, is that happy circumstances come and go, but Joy is a gift from God, given to help us be more than conquerors whatever our circumstance.