

“ Practical Christianity” I Thess 5: 16-22

¹⁶ Rejoice always,

INTRODUCTION

Why are so many Christians Depressed?

Depression, even among Christians, seems to be rampant today; it's as if some kind of emotional black plague has crept into the Church.

I think this is because many “*seeker friendly*” churches preach a message of happiness and prosperity and, if Christians don't feel happy and/or prosperous, they can feel un-Christian. I cannot help but wonder if the “*feel good*” gospel message might be exacerbating the feelings of depression among Christians.

The New Testament is an education in how to be Christ-like. But unfortunately this “*Narrow path*” includes trials and tribulation.

Now I want to begin with a statement that may surprise you and perhaps appear a little hard, if not impossible, to believe, but I think it's true and then I'll endeavor to show you why it's true. Here's the statement. There is no event or circumstance that can

occur in the life of any Christian that should diminish that Christian's joy.

Now let me talk about that from a negative standpoint. If joy is diminished in the Christian's experience, that is sin because it amounts to disobedience to this command. That might sound a little bit ridiculous, given the woes of life, but it is precisely what this command expects of us. And it's not an isolated command, by any means, as we shall see before we're finished, but just comparing it with a couple of places in the Scriptures.

For example, **Philippians 3:1**, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice," just in case you didn't get it the first time.

REVIEW

LESSON

I. THE RULE

REJOICE ALWAYS: Pantote chairete (2PPAM): ([2Corinthians 6:10](#); [Philippians 4:4](#); [Matthew 5:12](#); [Luke 10:20](#); [Romans 12:12](#))

Notice that in the original Greek, the adverb is placed first, to emphasize when we are to rejoice - at all times, always.

In this last section of chapter five we find instructions on how to behave toward God. Hiebert refers to verses 16-18 as "principles for the inner life" for each of these passages deals with the believers life in relationship to God. Like a general speaking to his troops, Paul utters three crisp injunctions, which Moffatt calls "diamond drops"!

Spurgeon - Here follows a string of Christian precepts-a golden chain.

Denney writes that...

THE three precepts of these three verses may be called the standing orders of the Christian Church. However various the circumstances in which Christians may find themselves, the duties here prescribed are always binding upon them. We are to rejoice alway, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks. We may, live in peaceful or in troubled times; we may be

encompassed with friends or beset by foes; we may see the path we have chosen for ourselves open easily before us, or find our inclination thwarted at every step; but we must always have the music of the gospel in our hearts in its own proper key.

Rejoice (5463)(**chairo**) means be glad, be joyful, be delighted. The present tense calls for the saint to continually be in a state of happiness and well being, something that is only possible as we surrender to the willing of the Holy Spirit, trusting in His supernatural enablement and not relying on our natural "strength" to pull this off (we can't!).

Rejoicing can be in and concerning one's circumstances, but ultimately should be in God and His promises, because the people around us (and us included) can be (will be) unruly and fainthearted and weak and antagonistic. Such people would make an ordinary (natural, in Adam) person angry and sullen and discouraged. But we as believers (supernaturally, in Christ) have our roots planted somewhere else and are drawing up the sap of joy from a source that cannot be depleted (cf [Ps 1:2](#), [3-notes](#)), the river of God and his Word which the Spirit takes and uses to transform our thinking and our response to adverse circumstances and uncomfortable people. What is the key to rejoicing or delighting? You have to go no further than the next verse (remember **context** is king in interpretation!)

Paul gives a similar command to the Philippians...

[Philippians 4:4](#) (see notes) **Rejoice** (present imperative = as your lifestyle) in the Lord always; again I will say, **rejoice** present imperative = as your lifestyle)!

The **present imperative** is a command (**imperative mood**) calling for for all the saints at Thessalonica (**rejoice** is second person plural) to continually (**present tense**) make a personal choice (**active voice**) to rejoice. Yes, it is a choice we must make (see [Phil 2:12-note](#)), but one that is only possible to make as we learn to lean on the empowerment of the indwelling Spirit, Who gives us the desire and the power (see [Phil 2:12NLT-note](#)) In sum, this command is an appeal to the will of the saints at Thessalonica. And it served as a reminder to them (and to all believers) that they had a part in maintaining this experience of joy - the choice to rejoice. Paul charged them not to allow adverse circumstances to rob them of their joy. Once again we see that mysterious balance of **human responsibility** and **divine sovereignty**, (Jerry Bridges calls this "dependent synergism")

How could the Thessalonians obey this command? Paul tells us in [1Thes 1:6](#), explaining that the source of the joy was not their efforts to keep a joyful outlook but was the joy produced by the Spirit Who indwelt them. It was supernatural joy which Paul explained was...

the fruit of the Spirit (which) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (see note [Galatians 5:22](#))

Hiebert writes that

A Spirit-prompted attitude of rejoicing unlocks the whole of a believer's nature; it influences his outward conduct and stimulates his affections and desires...

Always (3842)(**pántote** from **pás** = all + **tóte** = then) is an adverb of time meaning at all times. Why **always**? Because as noted above the believer's joy originates not naturally from "happy" happenings but supernaturally, independent of circumstances and

dependent on Christ our Example, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" ([He 12:2](#) - note)

Spurgeon declared...

I am bound to mention among the curiosities of the churches, that I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been **afraid to rejoice**....Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy.

Turn this book over and see if there be any precept that the Lord has given you in which He has said, '**Groan** in the Lord always, and again I say **groan**.' You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that; but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you.

II THE REASON

A. Sovereignty

"No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except

according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God's work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for their salvation.

But that is, after all, precisely what Scripture teaches.”

John MacArthur

LUKE 10: 20

“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

Proverbs 16:9 “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

Genesis 50:20 “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

Romans 8:28 “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Isaiah 40:23 “who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.”

Second Chronicles 20:6 “O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”

Job 42:2

"I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

[Matt. 19:26](#), *"And looking upon them Jesus said to them, **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."***

[Gen. 18:14](#), *"Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"*

[Prov. 16:33](#), *"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."*

[Lam. 3:37-38](#), *"Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? ³⁸Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?"*

- i [Exodus 4:11](#), *"And the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him*

dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

- ii [Deut. 32:39](#), "See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; And there is no one who can deliver from My hand."
- iii [1 Sam. 2:6-7](#), "*The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.*"

B. Salvation

PSM 21: 1

O Lord, in Your strength the king will ^abe glad,
And in Your ¹salvation how greatly he will rejoice!

ISA 61:10 I will ^arejoice greatly in the Lord,
My soul will exult in ^bmy God;
For He has ^cclothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,

And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

C. Situation

I love **Luke's** description of **Peter**, et al, after imprisonment for proclaiming Jesus and defending themselves before the Jewish Sanhedrin...

[Acts 5:41](#) So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing** that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Both **Matthew** and **Luke** record the command to rejoice in persecution...

[Matthew 5:11](#) (see notes) "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 "**Rejoice**, (present imperative = as your lifestyle) and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[Luke 6:22](#) "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 "**Be glad** (aorist imperative = Do this now!) in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

Paul says in **Colossians 1:24**, "I rejoice in my sufferings.

James 1:2, "Consider it all joy," again not a marginal joy, not a minimal joy, but a consummate joy, "my brethren, when you encounter various trials because these trials test your faith and they therefore produce endurance."

Peter says it this way, **1 Peter 1:6**, "In this you greatly rejoice," even though now for a little while if necessary you've been distressed by various trials

Paul's explanation for the unnatural paradox of joy in suffering is found in his letters to the Romans and Corinthians

For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared with **the glory that is to be revealed to us**. (see **note Romans 8:18**)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. **17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,** **18** while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. ([2Corinthians 4:16-18](#))

Paul had learned the secret as he explained to the saints at Philippi...

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **12** I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. **13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (See **notes Php 4:11; 12; 13**)

In his letter to the Colossians **Paul** wrote...

Now I **rejoice** (present tense = continually; active voice = personal choice to rejoice) in my **sufferings** for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. (see note [Colossians 1:24](#)) (**Comment:** Sufferings for His Name sake, but not in any sense with an atoning value [payment for sin], for Christ death paid the penalty in full once and for all time.)

D. Security

ROMAN 5:2

through whom also we have ^aobtained our introduction by faith into this grace ^bin which we stand; and ¹we exult in hope of the glory of God.

John 10:27-28

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand," ([John 10:27-28](#)).

1 Peter 1:4-5: (See reasons number 36 and 37): "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by

the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Romans 5:9: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Romans 8:38-39: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

John 6:37-40

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.
38 “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day,” ([John 6:37-40](#)).

E. Second Coming

John 14:1-3