

Exhortations to Godliness

“LIVE JOYFULLY”

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Theme: Joy is the deep-seated delight in God’s sovereign love and competence to bring Himself glory in all your circumstances.

Introduction In all the Scriptures the command Paul provides us here is among the most difficult for the average believer to consistently obey. One of the reasons this is so true is because of the adversity that we face either due to living in a sin-fallen world, or because of the hostility that the world possesses to Christ and those who follow Him. However, through His own experiences as well as the revelation by the Holy Spirit, Paul knew that suffering for the Lord was not incompatible with rejoicing in the Lord - ***Philippians 2:17; Acts 16:25***. Yet, we understand that joy is the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s influences in our lives and is therefore not at all foreign to those who believe. Paul informs us that it ought to be the constant experience or the prevailing, underlying sentiment even when sorrow exists because of our experiences or circumstances.

I. THE EXPECTATION OF JOY - “rejoice ...”

A. It Is Commanded of the Believer

1. There is an abrupt introduction to a variety of obligations that belong to a Christian in light of their position in Jesus Christ and their expectation of His return.
2. It is good to be reminded that the overall theme of the book of Thessalonians is the urgency of the believer to persevere in their faith considering the realities of the imminent rapture of the church which will be followed by the Day of the Lord.
3. In this final section of the epistle, Paul is describing the “Fervor of Faith” - first dealing with the “relationships among the saints” (vv. 12-15) and now with “responses to the Spirit” (vv. 16-22).
4. He provides these obligations in responding to the Spirit in sharp, quick commands or imperatives beginning with “*rejoice always.*”
5. For many believers, this seems like a “Pie in the Sky” type command from God - finding it most difficult to obey this command.
6. Nevertheless, it is something that is an expectation by God and enabled by God’s Spirit - cp. ***1 Thessalonians 5:24***.

7. Again, this is not some peripheral matter, but an imperative that obedience, victorious Christians will concern themselves with obeying - **“rejoice”** [χαίρετε] - Pres. Act. Imperative referring to the maintaining a state of well-being and gladness.
8. This is a command that is remarkable considering the suffering that the Thessalonians were already experiencing and what they had yet to face - cp. **1 Thessalonians 1:6**.

B. It Is Consistent with Belief

1. It is necessary that we not think that suffering, tribulation, or general circumstances ought to dictate our level of joy.
2. The ability to **“rejoice”** is not something that is tied directly to our circumstances but is an essential result of our faith - cp. **Romans 15:13**.
3. Joy is an essential part of being part of the Kingdom of God - cp. **Romans 14:17**.
4. In fact, our joy is connected directly to our relationship with Christ Jesus - cp. - **1 Peter 1:8-9**.
5. In fact, joy is the insuppressible indication of the presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life - cp. **Galatians 5:22**.
6. The joy of the Lord is our strength in our daily walk - cp. **Nehemiah 8:10**.

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF JOY - **“...always”**

A. The Constancy of Our Joy

1. Because our joy is generated by God through our faith and relationship with Him, it is not dependent upon our circumstances - cp. **James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6; 2 Corinthians 7:4**; and, **Colossians 1:24**.
2. Hence, God’s command is that we are to choose to **“rejoice always”** [πάντοτε] - meaning at all times - cp. **Hebrews 7:25**.
3. Paul repeats this command in **Philippians 4:4** - *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”*
4. But how is this possible? It is through that on which we focus or concentrate

B. The Concentration of Our Joy

1. The **Person** - **Christ Jesus**

- a) We just noted in **Philippians 4:4** - we rejoice "in the Lord"
 - b) It is something that has as its source the Lord Jesus Himself - cp. **John 17:13**.
 - c) As we look at Christ, joy is a permanent possession - cp. **John 16:22**.
2. The **Providence - The Father**
- a) As we walk with Christ, we consider that He is up to the challenges that we face in our lives - knowing that He will never leave us or forsake us but will continually walk with us through all our circumstances.
 - b) There is the "deep-seated confidence in God's sovereign love and mighty power on behalf of His own, and in His providential working of all things according to His perfect plan."¹ - cp. **Romans 8:28-30**.
 - c) The unfathomable blessings of our union with Christ root us in His purposes and cause our joy in knowing that regardless of what we are facing, His glory is guaranteed through our faithful submission to Him - **Philippians 1:12**.
 - d) As a result, every believer has ample reason to rejoice regardless of unfavorable circumstances regardless of how dire or even life-threatening - cp. **Philippians 2:17**.
3. The **Provider - the Holy Spirit**
- a) Finally, our joy is the direct result of the ministry of God's Spirit - referred to as part of the "fruit of the Spirit" - **Galatians 5:22**.
 - b) As we grieve the Holy Spirit, the "fruit of the Spirit" naturally diminishes and hence our joy will reduce as well.
 - c) As we continue to grieve the Holy Spirit, we eventually quench the Spirit altogether and joy becomes a mere shadow of what ought to dominate the Christian's perspective - cp. **Romans 14:17**.

III. THE EXTINGUISHING OF JOY

- A. Fixation on Circumstances - 1 Peter 4:12-13.**
- B. Familiarity with Sin - 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.**
- C. Fearfulness in Anxiety - Philippians 4:4-6; Romans 15:13.**
- D. Forgetfulness of Blessings - Psalms 103:1-5; Psalm 63:7.**

¹ MacArthur, p. 184

- E. **Forfeiture of Scripture** - ***Psalm 19:8; Colossians 3:16.***
- F. **Failure in Community** - cp ***1 Thessalonians 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:4.***

Joy is the deep-seated delight in God's sovereign love and competence to bring Himself glory in all your circumstances.