

Joy & Rejoicing

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If someone were to ask you - Where in the Bible is Joy spoken of most often? What might your answer be? Do the words Joy, Joyed, Joyful, Joyfully, Joyfulness, Joying and Joyous appear more times in the Old or New Testament?

It might surprise you but there are 25 different words in the Old Testament which translate to the various words above about Joy, and combined they appear 127 times there. In the New Testament there are 11 words that translate to words about Joy and they appear a total of 71 times there. Disclaimer - This is by my count based on KJV and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.

Same question only this time about rejoicing?

In the Old Testament words translated as variations of rejoicing appear 209 times. In the New Testament 77 times.

Same disclaimer as above!

I think most of us might have thought the opposite to be true about Joy and Rejoicing. The Old Testament is often seen by many people as being a less joyful or happy time in history. And people are often eager to explain why should you ask them the questions I just asked. They might say well back then they didn't have this or that. Or that they couldn't do this or that. Perhaps this is because it is easy to equate joy with happiness and good times. But joy and happiness are not the same thing.

I recently found the following quote on this subject -

'Happiness is fickle, and requires happy circumstances. Joy, on the other hand, sticks around. It doesn't get chased off by trouble.'

But is this always true? We begin this morning by looking at a passage from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah is believed to be the author of Lamentations and he describes how Joy disappeared when turmoil enters the scene in Lamentations 5:15 -

"The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning."

The Hebrew word for joy used here is - *mâsôs* pronounced maw-soce'. Meaning exultation, joy, rejoicing

Notice how the writer describes this loss - '*Joy of our hearts has ceased*'

Lamentations was written in Hebrew but the Greek word for joy means "to be well" in the heart's deepest place.

Joy is a feeling of deep delight, and rejoicing is a celebration of that joy. Or what we might call an outward expression of our joy.

Simply put - Joy is a noun and Rejoicing is a verb.

The actions of Israel in Jeremiah's day caused a separation of their nation from God resulting in the Joy in their heart leaving them and the rejoicing expressed in their dancing to cease.

But Joy can be found and remain even in the most difficult of situations as the next passage displays.

Certainly one of the most powerful passage in the New Testament on the subject of Joy is found in Hebrews 12:1-2 -

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the **joy** set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

The Greek word used here for joy is *chara* pronounced *khar-ah*!. It is the most commonly used word for Joy in the New Testament and appears more some 59 times there.

So when we read in the New Testament about the joy we should have it is most often speaking of this type.

And probably one of the most recognized passage in the New Testament concerning the subject of rejoicing is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. In chapter 4 verse 4 Paul states this - "**Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!**"

In other words we are called to express this great joy we have in Christ.

This morning we will focus our attention on what is said about Joy and rejoicing in Paul's letter to the Philippians where we will see Paul uses the word Joy 6 times and words about rejoicing 12 times.

Let us consider some of the things we have in Christ to be joyful about and things we can go about rejoicing in.

From the Authorized King James Version

Philippians

1:4-6 *"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with **joy**, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 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:"

The word **joy** used here in this passage is the same word (chara) that was used by the Hebrew writer when said of Jesus Christ - "*For the **joy** (chara) set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

Are we praying with this type of joy?

Philippians

1:15-18 "*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do **rejoice**, yea, and will **rejoice**.*"

Are we defending the gospel and preaching it out of goodwill and love?

1:23-26 "*That your **rejoicing** may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*"

Does it cause other Christians to rejoice in Christ when we are among them?

2:2 "*Fulfil ye my **joy**, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*"

Isn't it a joy when we are among others who are like minded in Christ?

2:16-18 "*Holding forth the word of life; that I may **rejoice** in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I **joy**, and **rejoice** with you all. For the same cause also do ye **joy**, and **rejoice** with me.*"

Here Paul chooses a variant of the word chara. The word used twice here is chairō pronounced khah'ee-ro. It is a primary verb; meaning to be full of "cheer", that is, calmly happy or well off; impersonal especially as a salutation (on meeting or parting).

Are we 'full of cheer' as we hold forth the word of life to one another and others?

2:28 "*I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may **rejoice**, and that I may be the less sorrowful.*"

We need to read or see this passage in its context to understand the question I am about to ask. Here is the context -

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

Do we have the concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ that is on display here? And do we rejoice when others are healed and return to see us?

3:1 *“Finally, my brethren, **rejoice** in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.”*

Do we rejoice when hearing the gospel message again and again?

3:3 *“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and **rejoice** in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”*

Do we rejoice in Christ and have more confidence in Him than in other things?

4:1 *“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my **joy** and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”*

Is this the way we feel towards our brothers and sisters in Christ?

4:4 *“**Rejoice** in the Lord always: and again I say, **Rejoice**.”*

Does our joy in the Lord reflect in our faces and lives?

4:10 *“But I **rejoiced** in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”*

Do we seize the opportunities given to us to make others rejoice in the Lord?