

"THE KEY TO A JOYFUL, PRODUCTIVE LIFE"

Romans 12:12

INTRODUCTION

1. I suppose that we all have known Christians who go through life looking like they were "weaned on a pickle"! And most of the time they've been useless for any good work when things are going rough for them!
2. But we have also known Christians who are just the opposite, haven't we? Joyful, steadfast people who are always busy in doing good works toward their fellow man, **even though** they may be experiencing the same kinds of hardships.
3. Why the difference between the two? I believe that the joyful, steadfast Christian has **found** and **embraced** a secret expressed in the Scriptures. And one place this "**secret**" is found is in **Rom.12:12**- "*rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,*"

As we consider this verse, there are several observations we can make. First...

I. THE JOYFUL LIFE IS BASED ON HOPE

A. MANY HAVE THE WRONG CONCEPT CONCERNING "JOY"

1. Some seem to think that joy is a matter of personal temperament (one's heredity)
2. Others like to think that joy is a matter of circumstances (one's environment)
3. But we certainly don't understand how either of those can be true, when being joyful is enjoined upon us all!
 - a. It is a command, a duty, enjoined on us by the Lord through His apostles - **1 Thes.5:16**- "*Rejoice always*"; **Phil.4:4**- "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!*"
 - b. And it is commanded **ESPECIALLY** when things seem to be the roughest - **1 Pet.4:13**- "*but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.*"

B. TRUE JOY IS ABLE TO RISE ABOVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE

1. Seen in the example of the Hebrews - **Heb.10:34a**- "*For you showed sympathy to the prisoners*".
2. Also in the example of Christians in Asia Minor - **1 Pet.1:6**- "*In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,*"

C. THIS IS BECAUSE THE KEY TO JOY IS "HOPE"

1. Notice our text: "**REJOICING IN HOPE**"
2. It should be easy to see how hope is the source of joy in our lives...
 - a. A student, in hope of enjoying summer vacation, is happy as he thinks about it
 - b. Likewise, it was the strong hope of the Hebrews that gave them joy despite the seizure of their property - **Heb.10:34b**- "*(you) accepted joyfully the seizure of your property...*"
 - c. Again, the source of the Christians' joy in Asia Minor was their hope of salvation - **1 Pet.1:5-6**- "*who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,*"

D. TO BE JOYFUL IN LIFE, WE MUST HAVE HOPE!

1. If Christians are not joyful, it is because they are not full of hope!
 - a. And that is only because their minds are so preoccupied with things of this life
 - b. Ie, they are just religious enough to be miserable!
2. If they spent more time contemplating the hope we have as Christians, joy would automatically follow!
 - a. Of course, hope is based upon faith - **Heb.11:1**

- b. And faith comes from the Word of God - **Rom.10:17**
- c. But if people do not read the Word, their faith is weak, their hope is shallow, and their joy is minimal

But if we let God's Word produce the faith necessary for a strong hope, then we too can have that joy which will help us no matter what the circumstances. This leads us back to our text, where we wish to make another observation.....

II. A LIFE OF JOYFUL HOPE WILL BE PATIENT IN TRIBULATIONS

A. FIRST, LET'S DEFINE OUR TERMS...

1. "patient"
 - a. Means more than simply enduring, forbearing
 - b. It also takes in the thought of **activity despite the hardship!**
 - 1) It is continuing to do good, regardless of the trials.
 - 2) Not just sitting there, refraining from doing something bad.
2. "tribulations"
 - a. These could be trials suffered for the cause of Christ.
 - b. Or those common to all (sickness, death, etc).
3. Paul is therefore talking about pressing on in doing good despite hardships.

B. THE KEY TO SUCH PATIENCE IS "JOYFUL HOPE".

1. This can be illustrated in several different ways, both historically and presently:
 - a. Consider today's proficient ATHLETE:
 - 1) Why does he or she endure such hardships involved in today's training regimen?
 - 2) It is the **JOYFUL HOPE** of attaining victory! Or a college education! Or a pro contract.
Call it "JOYFUL HOPE" if you will, or just realize they're the particular BENEFITS we long for! They come in so many different packages!
 - b. The PILGRIMS who settled this country, or others.
 - 1) Why did they endure the hardships of sailing across the ocean?
 - 2) The **JOYFUL HOPE** of finding freedom from religious oppression, AS WELL AS breaking out of the stifled atmosphere of caste societies. **AGAIN, looking for BENEFITS!**
 - c. Think about the pressures and burdens besetting our COLLEGE STUDENTS.
 - 1) Why do they endure such hardships of study and examinations and expenses and pressures and loneliness?
 - 2) Again, it is the **JOYFUL HOPE** of a successful career, which may be noted as **BENEFITS for many tomorrows!**
 - d. Even more importantly, look at those EARLY CHRISTIANS who set such noble examples for us, in SHOWING US HOW we ought to live in serving the LORD JESUS CHRIST!
 - 1) Why did they endure persecutions, pressing on in their faithfulness to Christ?
 - 2) They were able to endure **BY CONSIDERING THE JOYFUL HOPE OF THEIR INHERITANCE IN HEAVEN!** - **Heb.10:34-** "*For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, **knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.***" **NOW, WE'RE REALLY TALKING ABOUT INDISPUTABLE BENEFITS!**
2. Does this not explain why some Christians do not remain steadfast when things get rough?
 - a. THEY DO NOT HAVE THE "JOYFUL HOPE" NECESSARY **to sustain them onward!**
 - b. And why not? Their minds are so preoccupied with worldly things!

One last observation I would like to make, based on our text...

III. OUR LIVES WILL BE AS HOPEFUL, JOYFUL, AND PATIENT, AS THEY ARE PRAYERFUL

A. "CONTINUING STEADFASTLY IN PRAYER" IS ESSENTIAL!

1. The relationship between prayer and the joyful life is also indicated and **emphasized with significance** elsewhere in the Scriptures.
 - a. Notice **1 Thes.5:16-18**- *"Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*
 - b. If we *pray without ceasing*, **we can rejoice always!**
2. For in proper prayer, we are constantly reminded of our HOPE (**the source of joy and patience**).
 - a. ***In prayer***, we should be made constantly aware of the **REASON for our hope** (forgiveness of our sins through Jesus' blood).
 - b. **AND, in prayer**, we should be made constantly aware of the **OBJECT of our hope** (to one day be with God eternally).

B. SO "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING!" BUT IS THIS POSSIBLE?

1. **NOT IF WE MEAN** always engaging in verbalizing formal words of supplication and petition.
2. But prayer does not always have to be with formal words - cf. **1 Chron.5:20**- *"And they were helped against them, and the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hand; **for they cried out to God in the battle, and He was entreated for them, because they trusted in Him.**"*
3. Prayer can **ALSO BE** a **mental attitude of devotion**, as well as **an unspoken reference to God in all that we do!**

CONCLUSION

1. Are our lives as joyful and productive as we really *want them to be*, and as they **could** and **should** be?
2. **IF NOT**, then let God's Word sink into our hearts, as we: *"Continue steadfastly in prayer"*
3. Do this, and we will more likely *"rejoice in hope"* and be *"patient in tribulations"!*

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