



The Theology of Joy Pt 2: Counting it all Joy!

February 15, 2015

Text: James 1:2-4

1. This is such a great Text! We said last week that one reason is because it obviously implies that joy, in its most Christ-based sense, is a **decision**.
2. Joy is something we have been given. When we lose sight of it, we can reacquire it. It is something we can purchase, by faith, with our emotional and mental faculties; it is the lens through which we can view earthly, temporal circumstances. This is what is meant to "count" situations joy!
3. Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines joy, in part, as "A delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good."
4. Joy, in its most wonderful aspect, is not based upon **circumstances**, but based upon Christ, which means it is available for the believer...NOW!
5. True, biblical joy, and particularly New Testament joy, is based upon Christ's **finished** work!
6. One more reminder: **Happiness is based on fickle, fallible circumstances; joy is based upon the full, finished cross of Jesus. From prison, Paul via the Holy Spirit penned words that encapsulate this heart of Jesus-based rejoicing.....**
7. **Joy dear friends, was purchased for us by our Lord; it is part of our Christian heritage, poured into our hearts by the Spirit; it is granted at the moment of conversion and cultivated over a life of obedience, prayer, study of Scripture, faith, and good works!**
8. Yes, this should be the Church's sense of it; our current and living picture of it; and yet it remains a joy that points forwards to the fullest expression of it: **eternity!**
 - *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1Pe 1:8-9 ESV)*
 - *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev 7:17 ESV)*

Thoughts on the Text:

1. As we mentioned last week, "The old covenant was a covenant of prosperity. The new covenant is a covenant of adversity whereby we are being weaned from this present world and made meet for the world to come." –Spurgeon
2. Paul, from prison, demonstrated a kind of joy, a sort of rejoicing, VERY foreign to us:
 - *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Php 3:7-11 ESV)*
3. He said other things that are baffling to us as well:
 - a. *Php 1:21-25 ESV For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. (23) I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (24) But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. (25) Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,*

- b. *2Co 5:6-9 ESV* So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.
- c. **Where was this joy coming from?**
4. John thought this way:
- a. *1Jn 3:1-3 ESV* See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (2) Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (3) And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.
- b. **What is this perspective?**
5. Peter thought this way:
- a. *1Pe 5:10-11 ESV* And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (11) To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- b. **Note he didn't say, "You are not going to suffer."**
6. Acts shows us the early church thought this way:
- a. *Act 5:40-42 ESV* and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
- b. Recall the faith of many of the Apostles:
- Philip: Crucified
 - Matthew: Beheaded
 - Barnabas: Burned to death
 - Mark: Dragged to death
 - James (the Less): Clubbed to death
 - Paul: Beheaded, Rome
 - Peter: Crucified, Rome
 - Andrew: Crucified, Achaia
 - Thomas: Speared to death
 - Luke: Hanged, Athens
- c. **How were they able to do this?**
7. **History** tells us OVER and OVER again of a sort of joy we would do well to seek. Here is just one of so many examples, from the historian Eusebius, *Church History, Book V*:

But the whole wrath of the populace, and governor, and soldiers was aroused exceedingly against Sanctus, the deacon from Vienne, and Maturus, a late convert, yet a noble combatant, and against Attalus, a native of Pergamos where he had always been a pillar and foundation, and Blandina, through whom Christ showed that things which appear mean and obscure and despicable to man are with God of great glory, through love toward him manifested in power, and not boasting in appearance.

For while we all trembled, and her earthly mistress, who was herself also one of the witnesses, feared that on account of the weakness of her body, she would be unable to make bold confession,

Blandina was filled with such power as to be delivered and raised above those who were torturing her by turns from morning till evening in every manner, so that they acknowledged that they were conquered, and could do nothing more to her. And they were astonished at her endurance, as her entire body was mangled and broken; and they testified that one of these forms of torture was sufficient to destroy life, not to speak of so many and so great sufferings.

But the blessed woman, like a noble athlete, renewed her strength in her confession; and her comfort and recreation and relief from the pain of her sufferings was in exclaiming, 'I am a Christian, and there is nothing vile done by us.'

Our Text: Counting it all Joy!

1. And James, the Lord's brother, obviously encouraged his flock to have this sort of joy, and did so with some **authority!**
 - a. The word for "count" in verse two is *hēgeomai* in Greek. It means...
 - b. 1) To rule or lead, to command with official authority, to have authority over, and 2) To consider, think, account.
 - c. James is saying, "Think of every trial you go through as a joyous event; and don't just think it...know it. Rule over any other sort of thinking or emotions!"
2. Why was this so strongly encouraged? Because every trial tests faith! (v3)
 - a. James Adamson writes, "James impressively begins his message with *peirasmōs* (Greek for trial or temptation), the great common experience of the Redeemer and the redeemed. This present world is a battlefield where the powers of good and evil are embroiled in a war hastening hard to its predestined climax, the triumph of God."
 - b. James encourages his readers to walk in joy because Christ wins! And all any trial can possibly do, if one has the right perspective, is **anchor** us in the reality of His victory!
3. Tested faith produces **steadfastness** or patience.
 - a. Strong faith in Jesus makes us hold on to Him tighter, praise Him a little harder, long with more passion for Heaven, and live with more Kingdom abandon!
 - b. It also allows us to walk in the peace of contentment, accepting all that God has given us whether good or bad. Regardless, our aim is to please Him!
 - c. *1Ti 6:6-8 ESV* Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.
4. The picture in Verse 4 is one of a **complete** Christian.
 - a. Once bad times can be consistently counted as joy in Jesus...
 - b. And faith is battle-tested and rising day by day in Jesus...
 - c. And a walk is steadfast and unmovable and always abounding in Jesus...
 - d. **The Christian has EVERYTHING!**
 - e. The full effect of steadfastness is a Christian who understands that **Jesus is Enough!** He or she understands that everything we see around us is **temporary**. We begin to live for another place!
 - f. Dear saint, you live in a temporary house. You have temporary money. Your job is temporary. Your parenting is temporary. Indeed, your earthly life is temporary! What we do with all these things can effect someone's eternity...but they in and of themselves, are temporary!
 - g. If you want to know how the saints of old walked through so much, this is how. Jesus becomes their all! His Word and will becomes everything! Even trials are seen as chances to glorify Him! And even in death, they knew and had joy in the truth that eternity awaits!

- h. Dear friends, once you no longer fear death, fear cancer, fear hunger, fear abuse, fear poverty, fear violence, fear the world, fear man, fear missing out on some temporary dream, fear your team losing, or fear *fear* 😊, you can start living with joy!

New Testament Joy!

Next week, we'll look in more detail at Christ's thoughts on this and His Gospel... But friends, understand that New Testament joy is based not in situations, but the **Savior**; not in material possessions but the **Master**; not in perfect circumstances but a perfect **Christ**, and not in earthly problems but an eternal perspective!

Somewhere along the line, we should begin to long for eternity. This is what I meant last week when I said we are worldly. Yes, we struggle with worldly sins, but even more tragically, we long for the world; comfort in the world; peace in the world; success in the world. This disrupts our joy and sets us up not to count it all joy but simply to count it...to keep track of wrongs and number transgressions against us.

Christ frees us from this.

Next week: *New Testament Rejoicing!*

Amen.