

A Joyful Life Regardless of One's Circumstances

Romans 12:12

I was recently reading the biography of Joseph Parker, pastor of the City Temple, London, England in the late 1800's. His beloved wife of nearly four decades died in her late fifties. Dr. Parker said, *"In that dark hour I became almost an atheist. How could I be otherwise? My chief joy was taken from me. I had prayed to God to pity me by sparing her, yet He set His foot upon my prayers, and treated my petitions with contempt. If I had seen a dog in such agony as mine I would have pitied and helped the dumb beast; yet God spat upon me and cast me out as an offence."* I was frankly refreshed by Dr. Parker's honesty. He went on to explain that God helped him overcome his sorrow by sweetly whispering, *"All is well, one day the mystery will be explained."* Dr. Parker said, *"This hope enabled me to take up my ministry with an even warmer zeal."* This morning I want to help us all discover how we can move from sorrow to joy, no matter the trouble.

I. All Joy Is Ultimately Based on Hope --- "rejoicing in hope."

Many wrongly suppose joy is a matter of personal temperament or circumstances. But the Bible commands us to have joy *"Rejoice evermore"* (I Thess. 5:16), even when times are rough; *"But rejoice . . . in suffering"* (I Pet. 4:13) because of a hope within.

(A). Biblical hope is a confident anticipation . . .

A student, in hope of enjoying summer vacation, is happy as he thinks about it. Likewise, it was the strong hope of the Hebrews that gave them joy despite the seizure of their property (Read Hebrews 10:34). The source of the Christians' joy in Asia Minor was their hope (confidence) of salvation (Read 1 Peter 1:5-6).

(B). Biblical hope is the Christian's anchor . . .

Paul says that our hope in Christ *"is an anchor of the soul"* (I Thess. 1:3). Too often our minds are so preoccupied with the things of this life we lose hope.

II. This Joyful Hope Will Lead to Patience in Tribulation --- "patient in tribulation."

"Patient" means more than simply enduring, forbearing. It also takes in the thought of activity despite the hardship. It is continuing to do good, regardless of the trials. *"Tribulations"* could be trials suffered for the cause of Christ or those common to all. Paul is therefore talking about pressing on in doing good despite hardships. Does not the absence of "joyful hope" explain why some are not steadfast during affliction?

III. Prayer Is the Outflow of Both Patience and Joy --- "continuing instant in prayer."

This relationship between prayer and joy is implied elsewhere (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

In proper prayer, we are constantly reminded of the source of our joy and patience. *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"* (Romans 15:13).

This "praying without ceasing" or "continuing instant in prayer" is an attitude.

(A). Seeing God as Sovereign in all situations --- both good and bad.

(B). Trusting God is good in every situation --- and one day it will all be explained.

"My confident expectation in life is God is both Sovereign and good."