

facing your trial with joy

"but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. against such there is no law." gal 5:22-23

every success in life is meaningless without joy. joy is God's dream for you. heaven is called a "wedding banquet." and Jesus' whole mission was to share that joy with you. He said it himself. "these things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." john 15:11 think about that. the joy of God in YOU. the experience of that joy eternal starts now. and it doesn't start with a change in your circumstances but a change in you.

joy is something we all long for but that often seems difficult to grab hold of. experiencing joy should be a part of every Christian's life. joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, produced by God's work in us, and it is part of God's will for us.

we know that even the most mature of God's people experience periods of joylessness. for instance, job wished he had never been born (Job 3:11). david prayed to be taken away to a place where he would not have to deal with reality (psa 55:6-8). elijah, even after defeating 450 prophets of baal with fire called down from heaven (1 kings 18:16-46), fled into the desert and asked God to take his life (1 kings 19:3-5). if these men struggled, how can we experience consistent joy in the christian life?

the first thing is to realize that joy is a gift from God. the root word for joy in the greek is chara, which is closely related with the greek charis for "grace." joy is both a gift of God as well as a response to the gifts of God. joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and relish His favor.

with this in mind, it's evident that one way to experience joy is to focus on God. rather than dwelling on our difficulties or those things robbing our contentment, we should dwell on God. this is not to say we should deny our discontentment or stuff negative emotions inside. following the example of many of the psalmists, we can pour out our hearts to God. we can tell Him bluntly all the things that ail us. but then we submit those things to Him, remember who He is, and are happy in Him. Psa 3, 13, 18, 43, and 103 are good examples.

joy is our weapon of warfare for all situations. it exalts God and dampens the devil's intentions. it is our recognition that God loves us enough to bother. and, if you are blessed to be suffering for our Lord's sake, great will be your reward in heaven. "so they departed... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." acts 5:41

my fellows, we are being trained up in the way we should go, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." eph 4:3 "my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. but let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." james 1:2-8 "now no

chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." heb 12:11

joy is a level above happiness. it's fulfillment on top of happiness, triumph on top of happiness, elation on top of happiness. happy is how you feel when you watch a funny movie. joy is how you feel when you're living life in the will of God.

frequently, the bible uses the word joy rather than happiness. happiness verses in the bible are scarce compared to the words "joy" and "rejoice." in society joy and happiness are frequently used interchangeably, but they are not the same. in contrast to the world's conception of happiness, joy is a state of being, a state of peace and content. it's an internal choice, a characteristic of self that becomes a part of your nature - not some flimsy emotional response to some external stimuli.

perhaps our beloved apostle paul spoke it best: "yet indeed i also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom i have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that i may gain Christ." phil 3:8

you see, Christ is our joy - our joy unspeakable. as with all other things in the world, there is nothing outside of Him; only a void waiting to be filled. "let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." eccl 12:13

so, "in the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other." eccl 7:14 joy that you are in His will, being perfected!