

Romans

Joy, Peace, Confident Faith

May 29, 2016

- I. Joy and Peace through confident faith by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - A. **Romans 15:13** . . . Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. Today, I want us to examine this benediction and consider the truths it expresses about God given joy and peace that are obtained through a confident faith that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 1. And what is a benediction? A benediction is a statement of blessing, or a prayer that asks God to bless a specific person or group.
 2. For example, in previous years many church services ended with one of these four benedictions from the Bible.
 - a. The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace (**Numbers 6:24-26**).
 - b. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (**1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:2; Philem. 1:2**).
 - c. [Now may] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, [Amen] (**2 Corinthians 13:14**).
 - d. Now [may] the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, [21] equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in [you] that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (**Hebrews 13:20-21**).
 3. With those benedictions in mind, I will reread **Romans 15:13**, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
 - C. Prayer
- II. A look at God given joy and peace that are obtained through a confident faith that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - A. Now **the God of hope** –
 1. Several months back when we were studying **Romans 5:2**, we looked at this word **HOPE**, and I pointed out then that in most cases, the

Biblical use of the word **hope** is different from the way it is commonly used today. In our day, the word **hope** speaks of a strong desire for something that is uncertain or even unlikely. For example, I hope on Father's Day that I get a new iPhone 7 with a data plan that gives me unlimited data for life, or I hope I get an A on my math test even though I didn't study for it.

2. In the Bible, the word **hope** most often speaks of a strong desire for something that we **confidently expect** to obtain or be given sometime in the future. In other words, when the word **hope** is used this way, it means that what we hope for we fully expect to receive, either real soon or some time in the future.
3. Therefore, when Paul speaks of God as the **God of hope**, he is saying that God is the One who assures or guarantees that what we confidently expect to receive, we will receive.
 - a. In other words, our hope – or our confident faith – is not based on wishful thinking or unrealistic expectations or someone's empty promises, but on our good, faithful, and eternal God.
 - b. Therefore, as the God of hope, He is the source and anchor for our confidence – and because He is trustworthy, and because we trust Him, our confidence is unshakeable.

B. Now may the God of hope fill you with

1. Without question, it is God who gives us the kind of joy and peace that last, just as it is God who gives us everything necessary for life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**), and it is God who works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure (**Philippians 2:13**), and it is God who is able to keep us from stumbling, and to make us stand in His presence – blameless [and] with great joy (**Jude 1:24**), and it is God who brings us safely to His heavenly kingdom (**2 Timothy 4:18**).
2. However, for a container to be filled with a specific substance – and in this case it is God-given joy and peace – it must be empty of other substances that get in the way of it being filled.
 - a. In other words, to be filled with God's joy and peace, we must empty ourselves of those things that prevent joy and peace from being poured in.
 - b. Therefore, God fills us as we empty out those ways of thinking, speaking, choosing, and acting that prevent us from being filled with all joy and peace.
3. The truth of this principle – that we must be emptied in order to be filled – is affirmed by other scriptures. For example –

- a. Paul explains the progression of the emptying and filling process in **Philippians 4:6-7**, “**Be anxious for nothing** (*that is, don’t let anything be a cause for anxiety, which means you must maintain control over your thoughts and emotions when you are being tempted to become anxious*), **but in everything** (*that is, in every anxiety producing relationship or situation*) **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God** (*Notice, God gives us the responsibility to – first of all – empty out any anxiety that is within and prevent any anxiety from coming in, and then to pray and implore God about what we think we need, while giving thanks for all the good we have at God’s hands*). [7] **And [then] the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
- b. Isaiah stated it more simply in **Isaiah 26:3**, “**The steadfast of mind, You** (*that is God*) **will keep in perfect peace, because he** (*the steadfast of mind*) **trusts in You.** (*In other words, a confident trust in God coupled with a disciplined and focused mind that keeps anxiety and fear out, are the conditions for being kept in perfect peace by God.*)
- c. And finally, Paul uses this language in **Colossians 3:15a**, “**Let** (*which means **allow** – which implies you can stop or hinder or refuse to allow*) **the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.**
4. The point here is simply this: It is God who fills us with the kind of joy and peace that lasts, but He fills us **AS** we remove whatever is in the way or whatever competes with or contaminates the joy and peace He gives.

C. Now may the God of hope fill you with **all joy**

1. The first thing to notice is that God can and will fill us with **ALL** joy (*and that word **ALL** applies to the word peace as well*), though we will focus only on joy right now. And what I hope to show you is that this joy exceeds every other kind of joy – and it exceeds all other joys to such an extent that it makes all other joys seem insignificant by comparison. The other thing I hope you can see about this joy is that it satisfies, continuously.
2. Now you may have noticed that I just spoke of “this joy” and “all other joys,” as if there is more than one kind of joy. And in fact there are two kinds of joy – **earthly** or **temporary** joy, and **heavenly** or **eternal** joy.

3. Earthly joy, by nature, is temporary. When it comes, we know it is there because we feel the positive effects it brings.
 - a. However, earthy joy doesn't last – it always fades away or gets crushed by some new not so joyful experience. Even if it lasts for a long time, in time it will be replaced by some disappointment, or it will be lost due to the loss of the source of that joy.
 - b. And my point here is that, by its nature, earthly joys are temporary, which means we have to re-experience them again and again to regain the joy they bring.
4. There is another side to earthly joy that we must consider, also. Some earthly joys are good and some are evil. Some are within the boundaries of godliness and some are outside those boundaries.
 - a. Of the joys that are within the boundaries of godliness, some of them are spiritually healthy, some are neutral in relation to our spiritual well-being, and some can be spiritually unhealthy for certain individuals (*Remember **Romans 14:1-15:13***).
 - b. As for the joys that are outside the boundaries of godliness, they are not only temporary, they bring some form of death.
 - (1) Now it is true that in most cases, the pleasure producing part of these evil joys lift our spirits and bring a smile to our face.
 - (2) But in time, the deadly side of these joys produce disappointment, sadness, pain, loss, and sometimes a form of addiction that drives you to return – again and again – to that evil joy. In other words, though evil joys bring joy at first, they also bring a form of dying that makes your life worse than it was before you partook of such joys.
 - c. The last thing I want to say about earthly joy is that it comes from outside ourselves, which makes us dependant on other people, things, and circumstances – which are as changeable as the weather – to do those things that bring us earthly joy.
5. In contrast to earthly, temporary joy there is **heavenly** or **eternal** joy. And this kind of joy, by its nature, is made to be permanent.
 - a. It doesn't fade away or get cut short by some other not so joyful person or situation. Not even trials and tribulations can overpower it or steal it away.
 - b. Once you have it, it stays with you because it does not come from something outside of yourself – as with earthly joys – it comes from within. And because it is within you, it is always with you.
6. However, and this is a huge however, you can drive this heavenly joy away, and in that way lose it – if only temporarily – (1) by

returning to distrust of God and ungodly thinking, (2) and by giving in to discontentment – be it with God, people, possessions, or circumstances, (3) and by pursuing ungodly pleasures or looking for joy in ungodly places.

- a. Of course, you can return to heavenly joy by repenting and getting back on the path of confidently trusting God and godly living.
 - b. But the fact is, even though heavenly joy is eternal, we can dislodge it, overpower it, and drive it away by our own foolish, sinful choices and behavior.
7. Based on what has been said about joy so far, it might be obvious that heavenly joy comes from confidently trusting in God – so as to be content with God and His dealings, **coupled with** godly living, **which in turn** brings us into that spiritual condition whereby the inward presence of God, our living to please God, and our ongoing fellowship with God produces this joy – internally and eternally.
8. Therefore, the two most vital requirements for finding and living within heavenly joy is the confidence that we are safe in God's hands in every relationship and situation **coupled with** a whole-hearted and whole-life pursuit of godliness **which then** leads to intimate fellowship with God **which then** produces an incomparable inward joy that cannot be taken away by anything external. And of course this means we must empty ourselves – or at least be making commendable progress in emptying ourselves of unbelief, discontentment, and ungodliness.

D. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and **peace**

1. Most of what is true about joy is true about peace. There is earthly peace – which is temporary in nature regardless of how long it lasts. In contrast, there is heavenly peace – which in all cases is eternal, though it too can be diminished, overcome, or removed by returning to some measure of distrust of God, anxiety, and ungodly fear.
2. Earthly peace is dependent on two sources –
 - a. **First**, it is dependent on you – as to how you view God, the degree to which you trust God, how you view yourself, how you think and feel about the way people treat you, how you interpret life's circumstances, what you believe is threatening, and how you deal with conflict.
 - b. **Second**, earthly peace is dependent on the willingness and cooperation of others to maintain a peaceful environment in which all can live.

- c. The part of earthly peace that is dependent on you is under your control. However, too many of us have a hard time trusting in the goodness of God, and we are prone to such peace stealing things as anxiety, fear, anger, and pride.
 - d. The part of earthly peace that is dependent on others makes lasting peace impossible, because people change, people's values and interests change, people's circumstances change, and people are fickle. Therefore, all earthly peace is temporary.
 - 3. Heavenly peace is also dependent on two sources –
 - a. **First**, it is dependent on you in relation to your view of God, and your confidence in the goodness and trustworthiness of God. Then it is dependent on your view of yourself, especially in relation to pride, self-love, self-rule, and entitlement. Then it is dependent on your willingness to subdue and resist anxiety, fear, and anger. And finally, it is dependent on your methods and principles of conflict resolution, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
 - b. **Second**, heavenly peace is dependent on God, for it is God who fills us with heavenly peace as we confidently trust in Him as our first and foremost source of security – that is, as we believe we are safe in His hands. And God fills us with heavenly peace as we pursue godliness in all areas of life, for it is this pursuit of godliness that puts us in good standing with Him – and this good standing is important, for heavenly peace begins between God and us, and then it extends to life in the world.
 - 4. Of course, heavenly peace is internal, which is why no amount of security-threatening people or earthly things can diminish or remove the God given serenity we have within.
- E. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace **in believing**
 - 1. It is this “**in believing**” phrase that tells us that we must get to the place of having a confident faith in God before God fills us with all joy and peace.
 - 2. And as should be obvious by now, when the scripture speaks of faith in God, it is speaking of a faith that goes far beyond the narrow faith for eternal salvation. Faith in God is all encompassing in that it touches and affects every area of the Christian life.
 - 3. And though a list of the various things faith in God touches, time will not permit it, and so I encourage you to ponder this truth for several months in order to gain a bigger picture of just how vital faith is to every area of life in relation to living a godly life.

- F. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will **abound in hope**
1. To abound in hope is to have a plentiful supply of confidence that what you expect to receive from God, you will receive.
 2. And though I shouldn't have to say this, we ought never expect to receive anything from God that serves our selfish, sinful desires.
- G. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope **by (or by means of) the power of the Holy Spirit.**
1. Only when we are being assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit can we drive out and die to those things that stand in the way of being filled with all joy and peace by God.
 - a. Therefore, without this enabling power, some can overcome some of their weaknesses and accomplish some emptying and make some changes, but **NO ONE** can do what is necessary to remove what needs to be removed in order to be filled.
 - b. In other words, it is **ONLY** by the empowering power of the Holy Spirit that we can become truly righteous and truly empty of self and truly free of foolish fears and truly free of distrust of God and whatever else holds us back from being filled by God with joy and peace.
 2. In **Acts 1:8**, Luke records Jesus as saying, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."
 3. And Paul said in **Galatians 5:22-23**, "But the fruit of the Spirit (*that is the outgrowth of the inward working of the Holy Spirit*) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, and self-control . . ."

III. Conclusion

- A. Now may the God of hope fill each one of us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.