

Theme: The fruit of the God centered Gospel is deep, abiding joy in the lives of believers.

I. Intro - The Importance of Paradox

A. Paradox - something appears contradictory but is not

B. Jesus often used paradox

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. Mark 8:35

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³ "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. Luke 6:22–23

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24

C. Some things appear false or destructive but upon deeper reflection are profoundly true

D. Glory to God alone; isn't that destructive to us?

E. How does a God-centered life produce joy for us?

II. Enjoying God

A. Joy is centered on God and His glory (v2)

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:2

1. Biblically joy is found in being centered on God rather than ourselves

2. The great discovery of Augustine (Confessions)

Great are you, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is your power and your infinite wisdom. Human beings, as but a little part of your creation, would praise you; human beings who bear with them their mortality, the witness of their sin, the witness that you resist the proud. Yet they would praise you; they, who are but a part of your creation. You wake us to delight in your praise; for you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they rest in you.

3. The Reformation teaching on Soli Deo Gloria

What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever (Westminster Catechism, Q1)

4. Joy is centered in God because

a. God is the beginning, center and end of all creation

b. Humans are the image of God, and were created to know, love, and glorify God

c. Nothing implodes human joy like narcissistic self-focus and self-interest

B. Joy is the fruit of the Gospel (vv1-2)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1–2

1. Vv1-2 is Paul's summary of the Gospel - justified because of God's grace alone, through Christ's work alone, received by faith alone

2. The fruit of this glorious Gospel is our rejoicing!

3. The fruit of the Gospel is joy because

- a. The Gospel is centered on God, His work, His glory
- b. The Gospel brings us back into relationship with our Creator Father
- c. The Gospel is powerful to remove our objective and subjective guilt
- d. The Gospel frees us to love and serve others with good works - which deepens our own joy

C. Joy endures through suffering (v3)

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; Romans 5:3

1. This joy continues even in suffering - it is not dependent on our circumstances
2. This is a major difference between what we often think of as happiness and true joy. Happiness is dependent on circumstances, but true joy endures even in suffering
3. Joy endures through suffering because
 - a. Our joy is found in God - and He does not change just because our circumstances do
 - b. We know that God works in all things for our good
And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28
 - c. We know that God uses suffering to improve our character and help us become more like Christ

D. Joy longs to be like Christ (vv3-4)

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5:3-4

1. Suffering produces deep character in us
2. This character is Christ-likeness, and the hope is when we will finally be fully like Him
3. Joy longs to be like Christ because
 - a. He is the Perfect image of humanity - all that we were made to be
 - b. As we cultivate godly character we grow increasingly free of the power of joy draining sin

E. Joy grows as we experience God's love personally (v5)

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:5

1. Joy is rooted in proper thought, but doesn't stop there
2. Error is never the path to true joy, but mere intellectual assent to truth does not sustain joy either
3. For joy to take root and grow we must personally, regularly experience God's love in our hearts as we walk in the Holy Spirit
4. Joy grows as we experience God personally because
 - a. God is a relational Person - not an idea
 - b. We were created with a deep need and desire to experience communion with the Trinity

III. Applying the Word - Enjoying God

A. Do I see the paradox? - focusing on God brings me joy!

1. This runs counter to our initial inclinations
2. But if we focus on our own joy, we lose it
3. Many today tell us to chase self-fulfillment
4. But “finding myself” is the sure way to lose myself
5. We live and die in a God-centered universe, and joy comes when we recognize this
6. This is why many Christians have embraced the false prosperity Gospel - it fits our misconceptions
7. Does my focus lie on glorifying God - or pleasing myself?
8. Do I understand the attempt to live for myself is destined to drain away my own joy?

B. Am I stirring up passion for the God of glory?

1. Do I regularly behold God in all His glory!
 - a. Example of the Grand Canyon - just look at it!
 - b. Don't seek to stir up my passion - behold God!
2. Do I regularly put myself in a place to experience God and His loving glory?
 - a. This is not a matter of mere intellectual assent - we are meant to experience the joy of beholding, knowing, and worshipping God!
 - b. This is why we are to daily meditate on Scripture, talk with God - to open doors to experience God

- c. This is why we gather with God's people for worship - to experience God together
- d. This is why we need fellowship - to point each other to the glorious love of God
- e. The need for regularly doing this - example of driving through downtown Annapolis

C. Closing prayer for a passion for God's glory - and our joy!

Enjoying God

Romans 5:1-5

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Prayer

Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: God's glory; joy

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

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