

## **VICTORIOUS LIVING : THE CHOICE TO REJOICE!**

(from Rick Warren "God Power to Change Your Life")

"To be happy" is people's number one ambition in life. Being happy is serious business, we work at it. We have this idea that we must be happy all the time. It is easy to be happy when everything is going our way. Unfortunately, not everything always works out according the way we planned it. So how can we remain optimistic when everything is falling apart? This is where joy is needed.

Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Happiness depends on happenings. "I am happy today because things just happened to turn out right". Joy is different. It goes deeper. Joy is an attitude, a choice. It is an inside job and is not dependent on circumstances. It is our choice to rejoice. We can choose, regardless of the circumstances, to be joyful.

When we learn to choose joy, we greatly enhance our live. As Christians, we can be the most positive people in the world and rejoice in every situation. Why? Romans 5 gives three reasons.

### **1. In God, we have hope**

Roman 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand". Paul then explains the result of experiencing the grace of God is that "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God". For a Christian, no situation is completely hopeless. Christians have hope.

It has been said that a person can live 40 days without food, 3 days without water, 8 minutes without air, but not 1 minute without hope. We have to have hope.

Many people have hope, but they have not based it on anything solid. Many based their hope on the wrong things: the stock market, their good looks, a big salary, a nice job, a good family, etc. But those things are temporary and can be taken away. When they disappear, so does hope. Joy is impossible without hope.

By contrast, Christians have a reason to be positive. We can rejoice because we rejoice in hope. In Romans 12:12 Paul reminds us "Be joyful in hope". Paul is talking about our hope in Christ. The hope we have in Christ is the first reason we can rejoice, even in difficult situations.

### **2. God has a purpose for our lives.**

We can rejoice because God has a purpose in every situation.

Romans 5:3 "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance."

Many people have the misconception that when they get rid of their problems, they will be happy. But we are never going to get rid of all our problems as long as we are alive. In life we find, that just when we get rid of a big problem, we notice smaller problems we were unaware of while we were focusing on the big problem. Joy is learning to enjoy life in spite of problems. Joy is not the absence of suffering, but the presence of God. That is why Paul says we rejoice in suffering: God is always with us.

Don't take this wrongly; Paul is not saying we should fake our joy. God does not expect us or want us to be a phony or a hypocrite. Paul is not asking us to deny that things are bad in our life if they really are. Neither is he talking about masochism. Some Christians have a martyr complex, they think that the more they suffer,

the more spiritual they are. Suffering can produce good things in our life, but Paul is not talking about masochism.

Paul says “We rejoice *in our suffering*”. He is not saying “rejoice *because of our suffering*”. He doesn’t mean also we enjoy suffering. He says we rejoice in it because we know the suffering has a purpose behind it. God has a purpose by allowing that problem. And with this perspective, we can determine how we react to the events around us either is a good thing or a bad thing. Paul says that as Christians we can rejoice even in tough times because we have hope and because we know that God is working in our lives. Our trials and difficulties have value. It is easier to handle suffering when we know there is a purpose in it, that it is not in vain.

Romans 5:3-4 Paul says suffering produces perseverance and perseverance produces character and character produces hope.

Whether a problem is brought on by our self, by other people or by the devil, God allowed it. But do understand that difficulty and pain did not automatically produce perseverance, character and hope. Instead, when deal with these, some people became bitter, angry and uptight. The good result only comes out when we choose our right attitude toward the problem, and the right attitude is Joy. We *rejoice in* the problem, not *for* but *in* the problem, God uses it for good in our lives.

### **3. God is with us**

Romans 5:11 “we rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has now made us God’s friends”

We can be joyful in any circumstances because God is always with those who believe in Him, no matter where we are or what we are facing. As believers, we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. We have become God’s friends/ partners, and this friendship will last forever.

Remember His promise in Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you”.

No matter what you go through in life, you will never go through it alone. That is the reason to rejoice!

#### **Discussion:**

1. What is the difference between joy and happiness, can you share your experience when joy is preferable than happiness
2. Why is a more hopeful attitude both valid and effective in dealing with difficulties?