

“Joy”

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1. Context. – Various words correspond in the original to the word “joy” of the English Bible, its derivatives and synonyms. The terms *χαρα* and *χαίρειν* (etymologically allied to *χαρις*, “charm,” “grace”) denote pleasurable feeling experienced in the mental sphere. On the other hand, *ηδονη*, *ηδεσθαι* (the verb not found in the NT) largely denote joy in the sphere of the senses. Alongside of this distinction runs the other difference that *χαρα* stands for the wholesome, unreflecting joy which occupies itself with the object of its source, whereas *ηδονη* designates the joy which subjectively dwells on its own sensation. In the NT the latter term is used only *sensu malo* (Luke 8:14, Titus 3:3, James 4:1, 2 Pet. 2:13). The terms *ευφραυνειν* and *ευφροσυνη* describe a genial, pleasurable state of feeling such as is engendered by good fare or some other festive condition (usually rendered by “to be merry,” “to make merry” [Luke 12:19, 15:23, 24, 29, 32, 16:19, Acts 2:26, 7:41, 14:17, Rom. 15:10, 2 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 4:27, Rev. 11:10, 12:12]). The terms *ευθυμος*, *ευθυμως*, *ευθυμειν* are used of hopeful good cheer with reference to the outcome of some situation or undertaking (Acts 24:10, 27:22, 25, 36, James 5:13). *αγαλλιασις*, *αγαλλιαν* stand for the deep joy of exultation, hence are joined by way of climax to *χαίρειν* (Matt. 5:12, Luke 1:14, 44, 47, 10:21, John 5:35, 8:56, Acts 2:26, 46, 16:34, Heb. 1:9, 1 Pet. 1:6, 8, 4:13, Jude 24, Rev. 19:7). In still another conception, that of *καυχασθαι*, the element of joy is an inevitable ingredient, but the word as such denotes a specific state of mind, viz. “glorying,” the exalted feeling in which the consciousness of the spiritual worth of the religious subject in its association with and subserviency to the glory of God expresses itself (for this conception cf. A. Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, 2:365-371 [1882]; A. Titius, *Die neutest. Lehre von der Seligkeit*, 2:91-96 [1900]).

2. Joy as a general characteristic of the Christian life. – Joy appears in the NT writings as an outstanding characteristic of the Christian life in the Apostolic Age. In the Pauline Epistles especially it figures prominently. It is one of the three great ingredients of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17); it receives the second place in the enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22; cf. 1 Thess. 1:6); the descriptions of the Christian life frequently refer to it (Acts 2:46, 8:39, 13:52, 16:34, Rom. 12:12, 2 Cor. 1:24, 6:10, 8:2, Phil. 1:25, 1 Pet. 1:8). That this joy is not a mere by-product of the Christian state without inherent religious significance appears from the further fact that the constant cultivation of it is enjoined upon believers (2 Cor. 13:11, Phil. 3:1, 4:4 [“rejoice always”], 1 Thess. 5:16, James 1:2, 1 Pet. 4:13). The Apostle even makes it an object of prayer (Rom. 15:13), and represents its attainment as the goal of his apostolic activity for the churches (2 Cor. 1:24, Phil. 1:25). The prevalence of a joyful state of mind in the early Church may also be inferred from the numerous references to thanksgiving as a regular Christian occupation (Rom. 1:21, 2 Cor. 8:2, Eph. 5:4, 20, Phil. 4:6, Col. 1:12, 2:7, 3:17, 4:2, 1 Thess. 3:9, 5:18). In view of all this, it may be surmised that the conventional formula of salutation by means of *χαίρειν* has perhaps, when used among believers, acquired a deeper meaning (cf. Matt. 28:9, Luke 1:28, Acts 15:23, 2 Cor. 13:11, James 1:1, 2 John 10-11).

When we come to inquire into the causes of the facts just reviewed, the first place must be given to (a) the vivid consciousness of salvation which is present in the Apostolic Age. Through the restored fellowship with God and the forgiveness of sin a joy streams into the heart which is colored by the contrast of the opposite experience belonging to the state of estrangement from God. The Christian

joy is specifically a joy in God (Rom. 5:11, Phil. 3:8, 4:10). Joy appears associated with faith, as well as with hope (Acts 8:39, 16:34, Rom. 15:13, 2 Cor. 1:24, Phil. 1:25, 1 Pet. 1:8). It likewise accompanies the ethical renewal of the mind as a new-born delight in all that is good (1 Cor. 13:6).

A second cause may be found in (b) the highly pneumatic character of the religious experience in the Apostolic Age. The Spirit as the gift of the Ascended and Glorified Christ to His followers, manifested His presence and power in these early days after a most uplifting fashion, and among other things produced in believers an exalted state of feeling in which the note of joyousness predominated. The conjunction of joy and the Spirit, however, does not merely mean that the Spirit produces this joy: it is due to the inherent character of the Spirit, so that to be in the Spirit and to be filled with joy become synonymous (Acts 2:46, 13:52, Rom. 14:17). The Spirit possesses this inherent character as a Spirit of joy because He is essentially the element of the life to come. This leads to the observation that in the third place (c) the joyfulness of the early Christian consciousness must be explained in the light of the fact that the Christian state is felt to be semi-eschatological, i.e. in many important respects an anticipation of the consummated life of the Kingdom of God. Through the entrance of the Messiah into glory, through His pneumatic presence and activity in the Church, and through the prospect of His speedy return, believers have been brought into real contact with the world to come. The specific character of the world to come is that of blessedness and joy, and to the same degree as this world projects itself through experience or hope into the present life the latter also comes to partake of this joyful complexion. Especially in St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews can we trace this connection, though it is not absent from any of the NT writings (Rom. 12:12, 14:17, 15:13, Heb. 10:34, 12:11, 1 Pet. 1:6, 8, 4:13, Jude 24, Rev. 19:7). Jesus Himself had already represented the spiritual coming of the Kingdom, the time of His presence with the disciples as a period of joy, resembling a wedding-feast (Mark 2:19), and had pointed forward to the dispensation of the Spirit as a period of joy (John 14:28, 15:11, 16:20, 22, 24, 17:13). On this principle is to be explained the paradoxical character which the Christian joy assumes through entering into contrast with the tribulation and affliction of this present life. It even makes out of the latter a cause for rejoicing, inasmuch as the believer, from the power of faith which sustains him, receives the assurance of his "approvedness" (δοκιμη) with God, and thus the strongest conceivable hope in the eschatological salvation. Rom. 5:3ff. is the classical passage for this, but the same train of thought meets us in a number of other Pauline passages, and occasionally elsewhere, sometimes in pointedly paradoxical formulation (Acts 5:41, Col. 1:11, 1 Thess. 1:6, Heb. 10:34, James 1:2, 1 Pet. 4:13). Most frequently this specific kind of joy is expressed in connection with the idea of *καυχασθαι*, "to glory" (cf. above; Rom. 5:2-3, 2 Cor. 11:30, 12:9, James 1:9).

3. The joy of St. Paul. — To be distinguished from this general joy as a common ingredient of all Christian experience is the specific joy which belongs to the servant of God engaged in the work of his calling. Of this joy of ministering, the delight and satisfaction that accompany the successful discharge of the apostolic task, the NT makes frequent mention. The Pauline Epistles are full of it. The Apostle runs his course with joy (Acts 20:24 [some textual authorities here omit "with joy"]); rejoices exceedingly over the obedience of believers (Rom. 16:19); though sorrowful, yet is always rejoicing in his work (2 Cor. 6:10); overflows with joy on account of his converts (2 Cor. 7:4); makes his supplication with joy on their behalf (Phil. 1:4); their progress in love and harmony makes full his joy (Phil. 2:2); he rejoices in the prospect of being offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith (Phil. 2:17); rejoices in his sufferings for their sake (Col. 1:24); feels that no thanksgiving can

adequately express his joy before God on their account (1 Thess. 3:9). Specific developments in his ministry furnish occasion for special joy (1 Cor. 16:17, 2 Cor. 2:3, 7:13, 16, Phil. 1:28, 2:28; cf. Acts 11:23, Heb. 13:17, 2 John 4, 3 John 3-4). This joy in ministering coalesces with the prospective eschatological joy, inasmuch as in the day of the Lord the results of one's ministry will be made manifest and become for the servant of Christ a special "joy" or "crown of glorying" (2 Cor. 1:14, Phil. 4:1, 1 Thess. 2:19).