

## 1. Love Does Not Rejoice on the Basis of Unrighteousness

## a. What does it mean to “rejoice” or “delight”?

- i. To be glad or pleased, to feel and respond *to a good* with pleasure
- ii. There is a strong correlation between what we believe to be “good” and what brings us delight.
  1. This can vary in its intensity, in its degree of perceived or valued goodness, but it is a valuation of goodness nonetheless
    - a. So, something can be “funny” and thus delighted in
    - b. Or, something can be “moving” and thus delighted in
    - c. Or, something can be “exquisite” and thus delighted in
  2. The relationship of goodness to joy is often backwards today
    - a. We define good by what gives us pleasure
    - b. Yet it gave us pleasure *because we already deemed it good*
    - c. And, our *valuation of good* has been broken by sin, so we cannot trust that what gives us pleasure is actually good or good for us
- iii. There is also a strong correlation in what we place our hope in and our delight
  1. Hope is the expectation of future goodness, in this sense,
  2. Thus, we delight in future good, or expected good,
    - a. EXAMPLE: watching a sports team progress towards the future goal of victory
    - b. The joy happens in the progress, but only as foretaste of the victory
- iv. Thus, to rejoice on the basis of unrighteousness is to conclude unrighteousness to be good, virtuous, or glorious in the present or in the future
  1. So, while we are to rejoice *in every time* (1 Thess 5:16), we are not to rejoice *in every thing*
  2. What we pursue indicates the object of our joy
    - a. To pursue unrighteousness is to delight in it, and God relates this not merely to righteousness, but to LOVE
  3. Biblical love does not pursue sin, thus to pursue sinful things is not merely disobedient but is not love
    - a. Many want to make “love” the definer of righteousness (if it’s loving, it’s right), but here righteousness is the definer of love (if it’s righteous, it’s love)

## b. What is “unrighteousness?”

- i. Unrighteousness is the quality of resistance, either active or passive, against God’s sovereign rule
  1. It is a deification of oneself, the desire to rule oneself and the actions of resisting His rule over us
  2. Just as “seeks one’s own” is rooted in self-glory, so are the actions which flow out of self-glory called “unrighteousness”
    - a. Righteousness is the active seeking of God’s glory, submission to His authority, and working to that end
    - b. Unrighteousness is NOT seeking God’s glory, not submitting to His authority, and working against that end
- ii. Violation of God’s Word, intent, and design
  1. Often translated “violence” in the OT, indicating that the rejection of God’s authoritative word is an act of violence against Him and against that which belongs to Him (all of Creation, including other humans)
  2. Unrighteousness is anything which works against the flourishing of God’s creation *as determined and indicated by God’s revealed Word*
    - a. Thus, what it means to flourish is not a wax nose which we can bend according to our own wisdom or perception
    - b. The ends and means of flourishing is determined by God for His glory
      - i. “that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3)

- ii. God's goal in our redemption is to Himself.
      - 1. Forgiveness of sins is not the purpose of our salvation, but the means to God
      - 2. Adoption is not the purpose of our redemption, but the means to God Himself
      - 3. The end is God, all the rest of the goodness is means.
  - 3. All thoughts, intentions, affections, and actions which are not for God's renown and delight are out-of-sync with why we were made
    - a. We were made for God, to know Him and love Him and worship Him in joyful submission
    - b. This is what it means to have eternal life (John 17:3), to be filled up with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19; 4:13), to be righteous (Isa 60:18-21)
- c. What is the relationship between "rejoice" and "unrighteousness"?
  - i. Causal: If unrighteousness, *those things not for God's glory*, causes joy, then it is not love, whether in ourselves or done to or by others
    - 1. This means that God's definition of love is, by nature, God-ward first and foremost
      - a. Thus, even with our enemies, we do not delight in unrighteousness done by them *or done to them*, if it does not glorify God
      - b. This God-first cause of delight eliminates rejoicing in one's enemies' downfall
        - i. It may rejoice in God's judgement, if it is glorying in God, but not in the mere downfall of another, i.e. vengeance
    - 2. In fact, the central action of the human heart, worship, can really be defined as "that which one loves the most"
      - a. You worship what you love the most because worship is a valuation term
      - b. "Worth + ship" = "quality of worth",
        - i. How do you know what you love the most?
        - ii. What do you delight in the most? What do you pursue for joy?
      - c. You see the relationship between love, joy, hope, and goodness are so intrinsically tied together
        - i. We love what we delight in, enjoy what we value to be good, we love what we have hope in, etc.
  - ii. Love recognizes that what makes people flourish is to live for what they were designed: God
    - 1. Know and Worship God joyfully in love and dependence and the fullness of joy in this Creator/Created relationship
      - a. The fullness of human life is foundationally theological
      - b. Every other flourishing relationship (with others, oneself, and Nature) flow out of this central flourishing relationship
      - c. Therefore, all the aims of Love find their arrow's point in the restoration of Man to God
    - 2. Mutual interdependence with one another to that great theological end: the glory of God and the flourishing of Man
      - a. God has declared that he is most glorified when humanity is most satisfied in him
      - b. Our delight in Him glorifies Him, and our mutual interdependence to delight in Him glorifies Him
      - c. Our love for one another, and our aims and efforts to see Creation flourish in proper order glorifies Him, for it images Him as the image-bearers for which we were made
- iii. "Spiritual" love and experience which does not flow out of God's Word is not *Christian* love.
  - 1. All Christian joy arises from the gospel proclaimed by the Spirit to our spirits as He moves through the gospel of the cross to alter our affections, our values, and our wills to joy in the goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Love Rejoices with the Truth

- a. Truth is paralleled oppositional to “unrighteousness”
  - i. Romans 1:18 – who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...
  - ii. John 7:18 – “The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no ‘falsehood’ (literally, ‘unrighteousness’)”
    1. What is interesting here is that Jesus is defining righteousness for us: it is “seeking the glory of God [who sent Him]”
    2. Therefore, unrighteousness is all that is opposed to seeking God’s glory
- b. The relationship between Truth and Unrighteousness in the context is an important key to understanding the meaning of this expression of love.
  - i. John 17:17-19 – “Sanctify them in truth. Your Word is truth...I sanctify myself for their sake, that they might be sanctified in truth”
  - ii. Eph 4:20-25 – put on the new self, made in righteousness and holiness, and speak the truth to one another without deception, for you belong to one another
  - iii. Eph 4:11-16 – speaking the truth in love, let us grow up into unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, the fullness of what we are supposed to be – let us no longer walk in the futility of our minds, like those without the Spirit...
- c. To delight in the truth is to delight in God, His Word and His ways, as the greatest good
  - i. The Word of God is the *revelation* of what really is and what is really supposed to be, i.e. Truth
    1. REALITY, i.e. ETERNAL
    2. It is to rejoice in godliness, for God is the ultimate standard of Truth
      - a. Faithfulness, rather than mere authenticity
        - i. Authentic unrighteousness is not something which love delights in (Kanye’s recent apology, “I’m sorry for the realness”)
        - ii. Faithfulness to what is objectively right, good, and true
        - iii. Faithfulness to that which is delivered to you, rather than discovered by you or produced from you
        - iv. That is, faithfulness to God’s revealed truth
    - ii. Thus, to love another is not merely to delight in the things which make them happy, but to work for the things which make them holy
      1. This means that love often says “no” – and means it
        - a. EXAMPLE: Gandhi urged the British to “love their enemies” and submit to Hitler at the beginning of WWII.
        - b. Augustine wrote that sometimes the best way to love your enemy is to go to war with him.
        - c. Love brings truth because it delights in the holiness and righteousness of its object, not just its happiness in its own sin
      2. This means that love always seeks holiness and righteousness
        - a. Love may endure unrighteousness, because it is patient and not resentful, but it does not *enjoy* unrighteousness *nor call it good* or pleasing
        - b. Again, this is based in knowing and being near to God as His people
          - i. “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 1 Peter 1:16)
        - c. Love certainly, then, does not seek unrighteousness or celebrate unrighteousness
      3. This means that love is not about my feelings of happiness, either, but holiness
        - a. This means that even when I don’t feel like it, I can love others well
        - b. Love is not sentimental, it the powerful cross-carrying commitment to honor God by entrusting our happiness (or lack of it) to His revelation of holiness
        - c. To do so is to be freed from having to make others happy (exhausting!) or having to achieve my own happiness (disintegrating!)



3. Love delights to know Christ, rejoices in Him, pursues Him, seeks Him, acknowledges all that He has said about Himself and walks in the light of His word and work.
- iii. Jesus is the One who does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but delights in the Truth
    1. He has answered for our unloving hearts which rejoiced in unrighteousness
    2. He delights in the Truth of His Father's good and glorious will, and brings us to God by His sheer grace and the power of His incorruptible life.
    3. He has placed His Spirit within you to love well, to love like Him, to delight in holiness (like Father, like sons), and to pursue the glory of the one and only Good: God.
    4. By believing the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, by reckoning it true in all that He has proclaimed, we are freed to live as we were made to live: life from God, to God, and for God in the fullness of joy.

“God did not give us His gospel just so we could embrace it and be converted. Actually, He offers it to us every day as a gift that keeps on giving to us everything we need for life and godliness.

The wise believer learns this truth early and becomes proficient in extracting available benefits from the gospel each day. We extract these benefits by being absorbed in the gospel, speaking it to ourselves when necessary, and by daring to reckon it true in all we do.” — Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer*