

Introduction: The year 2020 has been one that has produced some odd and bizarre things outside of our normal thinking. But God has not been silent nor has He been confused about it. No matter the depths of struggles or trials that have come in this year, God's word still stands and He is still sovereign and in control. Psalms 118:1 "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting." In fact, as this year comes to a close we must remember two things, we are to rejoice, and in the words of the hymn Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing "We are prone to wander, to leave the God we love."

Point 1 - (Vs. 33) This year hasn't been the first year of troubles and chaos. Please note these three points in the verse, (1) Jesus has spoken the truth to them and that's not changing, (2) in Christ you have peace, (3) in the world you have trouble.

Point 2 - I want to look at some important passages of Scripture that detail to us this important truth. This world is unstable. In fact, we are told not to love the world, nor the things in the world. We likely know this familiar passage and warning against having our hearts set on earthly or worldly things, 1 John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." We learn a few points from this passage, (1) the world is passing away. There is no hope here for peace, joy and fulfillment. The world doesn't provide that. All of its lust will fade as well. It's temporary and passing, (2) there's nothing spiritual or joy enduring about the world, (3) this is all that's in the world, lust, pride and lies, (4) the conjunction (but) which tells the hope of the believer. Hope isn't in this world, it is in the living, sovereign God who has redeemed us.

Point 3 - In the midst of trouble either in our lives or in our nation, can we legitimately ask God why? The word tribulation in vs. 33 can also be translated "*affliction, anguish or persecution.*" According to Vines Dictionary it means "*a pressing or pressure.*"

We can find this answer in the book of Job. Certainly we know Job endured trouble as no other. In terms of loss, he was stricken greatly. But does this mean God is hog tied? No, and we know that Job made this statement that defines life in the world, Job 14:1 "*Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil.*" What I find that quiets my questions is found in Job 38:1-11. As we see in this text, we really have no concrete answer. God is sovereign. He is in control of all things. Including what we consider trouble. Cf. Job 38: 26-27, seemingly after having no answer to God's work and ways God responds in 40:4-5

I am not saying we cannot ask why? However, I believe that God isn't our cosmic bellhop. He doesn't do or act based upon what our opinion or desire is. We trust God as our Father to do all things that work out according to His will. As we see Job's further response to who God is and what He does, we can also assume this as we live in this world, cf. Job 42:1-6.

Point 4 - The Context Of Trouble (John 16:16-22), (1) the world will rejoice at the trouble and persecution of believers, (2) you have grief now but that will be turned to joy. The joy is not in this world. The joy you have isn't based on your circumstances.

Let's ask the pressing question, what is true biblical joy? And how can I have it in times of trials? Let's unpack the meaning of the word joy. The word joy comes from the Greek word *chara* as an antonym of grief and sorrow. The word denotes "*happiness and gladness.*" It can refer to feelings and results from circumstances. But for the believer, it is continual because of our relationship with Christ, 1 Peter 1:8 "*And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.*" There are three uses of the word *chara* in the NT and let's take some time (briefly) to explore them.

- The use of the word describes the joyful response of the Magi when they saw the star that led to Christ, Matthew 2:10 "*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*" This is an emphatic construction of the word *chara* along with related verb *chairo*, thus expressing the overwhelming nature of their joy. From the beginning of the NT, Jesus, has been the source of true joy for those who find Him. His incarnation and death were fulfilled with the joy of redemption and reconciliation, Hebrews 12:2 "*Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"
- The word is also used as one of the elements in the fruit produced by the Spirit of God in our lives, Galatians 5:22 "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...*" with this joy believers pray, "*always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all*" (Philippians 1:4), receiving of the word, "*You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Thess. 1:6), and the welcoming of fellow believers, "*Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard*" (Philippians 2:29).
- The word emphasizes that the joy of the Lord transcends all earthly circumstances. And that Christian joy is actually proved through hardships. 2 Corinthians 7:4 "*Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction*", 2 Corinthians 8:2 "*that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality*" Hebrews 10:34 "*for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*"

Closing with Paul's letter from prison, cf. Philippians 1:21-25