

TO BE MERRY/CHEERFUL

This study contains mostly examples, rather than commands and principles. It is best used not by itself, but in connection with the other studies found in this series about "frivolity."

The New Testament Greek words examined in this study can be translated by several English words. After each occurrence, the concept will be expressed using the word "merry," or the equivalent [in brackets]. For those interested, the N.T. Greek words are listed at the end of the study.

SUMMARY:

- PART 1 - MERRIMENT, HAPPINESS, REJOICING, AS A *GENERAL CONCEPT*: There are times when we should be filled with rejoicing & merriment; but when it becomes a lifestyle - the focus of our life - it becomes evil.
 - PART 2 - MERRIMENT, HAPPINESS THAT IS *ASSOCIATED WITH ENCOURAGEMENT*: This type of merriment / happiness can exist even under adverse circumstances.
 - PART 3 - The New Testament Greek words [OPTIONAL]
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PART 1 - To Be Merry, to Be Filled with Rejoicing and Celebration

(a cheerfulness associated with enjoyable circumstances)

A. It can easily become sinful - especially if it characterizes one's lifestyle, preoccupation, or focus of life. The end result is eternal loss. Some examples:

1. A self-preoccupation with festivity and happiness is incompatible with love for one's "neighbor"
 - Such a lifestyle is spoken-against by Jesus (2 examples)
 - Luke 12:19-20a - About the rich man who had an abundant surplus, who built bigger storehouses for his abundance (rather than being generous toward God). He said to himself: "You have enough goods stored up to last many years. So take life easy! Eat! Drink! Enjoy life [be merry]!" God said to him, "You senseless fool! This very night your life will be taken from you! Then who will get all those things you have stored up for yourself?"
 - Luke 16:19 - About the rich man, contrasted with the poor beggar who sat by his doorstep. He lived in luxury [had a merry life]... until he died and woke up in a place of torment... (Read the rest of the passage.)
 - Many verses in Scripture associate *self-sacrifice* (rather than self-preoccupation) with love for neighbor. (Compare to Philippians 2:1-5 and 1 John 3:16-18.) "Love for neighbor" is incompatible with self-preoccupation.

2. Such an attitude can be associated with opposition to truth from (or about) God: The truth may be suppressed or ignored, or it may be exchanged for a lie. These things are incompatible with love for God, the source of truth. (2 examples)
 - An example from history, in which it was associated with idolatry
 - Acts 7:41 - The Israelites made a calf-idol, brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration [were filled with merriment] in honor of what they had made with their hands. (A reference to an event mentioned in the O.T.)
 - A future example, in which it will be associated with people who hate the truth and who will kill the truth-speakers
 - Rev 11:10 The people of the earth will gloat over the death of the two prophets and will celebrate [make merry] by sending each other gifts. (They will do this because these two prophets had tormented them with their message about judgment.)

3. The two greatest obligations we have as humans are: Love for God and what he says (= truth), and love for our neighbor (which includes love for our enemies). The above examples show that this lifestyle is easily associated with the violation of BOTH obligations.

B. There are appropriate times for being merry / rejoicing (though NOT as the focus of one's life). Some examples of these times include:

1. During times of special blessings (examples)
 - The restoration of broken relationships
 - Luke 15:23-24, 29, 32 - (After the prodigal son had returned) - Father: "Bring the fattened calf and kill it, so we can have a feast and celebrate [be merry]! For this my son was dead but now he is alive again. He was lost but now he is found." So they began to celebrate [be merry]. / Older son: "All these years I've been slaving-away for you. I've never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat, so that my friends and I could celebrate [make merry]." / Father: "We had to celebrate [be merry] and rejoice, because this your brother was dead but now he is alive again. He was lost but now he is found."
 - The birth of a child, when all hope for bearing children has been lost
 - Gal 4:27 - Quote from the O.T. (Isaiah 54:1): "Rejoice [make merry], O childless, barren woman; shout (for joy), you who have not (previously) experienced the pains of childbirth! Because the children of the desolate woman are now more numerous than the one who has a husband."
 - In Galatians, this passage is used in part of an allegory that illustrates the joy of salvation under the "new covenant" of grace.

2. When considering the blessings and future hope that are a part of salvation
 - The resurrection & (because of it) able to be in God's presence
 - Acts 2:26, 28 - My heart is glad; my tongue rejoices [expresses merriment]. My body will live in hope. / You have shown me the way of life; you will fill me with joy [merriment] in your presence. (In this specific context, the application is to Jesus, the first to experience the joy of raising from the dead. Ultimately all those who belong to Jesus will be able to express this joy.)
 - The fact that salvation is now available to *all* (not only to the Jews)
 - Romans 15:10 - Quoting Deut. 32:43: "Rejoice [be merry], O you nations, with his people (Israel)."

3. When considering the coming day of justice & judgment - the time when injustice will be forever eliminated. (These specific examples will occur in the future.)
 - Rev 12:12 - "Rejoice [be merry], you heavens and everyone who lives there! But how horrible for you, earth and the sea - because the devil has come down to you! He is filled with rage, because he knows that his time is coming to an end."
 - Rev 18:20 - "Rejoice [make merry] over her (= the destroyed city of Babylon), O heaven, you saints, apostles and prophets! God has judged the city for the way she treated you!"
4. When experiencing the temporal blessings of God. (Even people who do not love God can experience some of the blessings and kindness that come from him!)
 - Acts 14:17 - God has not left himself without testimony (among those who do not know him). He has shown kindness to you: He gives you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy [merriment]."
5. These examples show that there *are* proper times for being cheerful/happy. We do not need to be "extreme" and avoid it, just because it can be bad/sinful when taken to excess.

C. Our attitude/conduct can affect the joy/gladness others have (or don't have) - AN ILLUSTRATION:

- 2 Cor 2:2 - For if I cause you to be grieved, who is left to make me glad [merry]? Only you, whom I have grieved! [If they refused to deal with the sin that was present among them, he would be forced to do it - and that would leave them grieved, rather than filled with joy. In this case, - if he had to bring grief to them - it would influence their ability to bring joy to him.]

PART 2 - To be cheerful, encouraged

(a cheerfulness associated with encouragement)

1. When the joy of encouragement is present, the appropriate response is to be filled with praise to God, who makes it possible.
 - James 5:13 Are any of you having troubles? Pray! Is anyone happy [cheerful/encouraged]? Sing songs of praise!
 - Note: This verse also shows us that this attitude is only ONE of the possible circumstances that may exist in life. As Eccles. 3:4 says, there is...
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance (etc.).
2. The joy of encouragement can exist during times of hardship and difficult circumstances. Two examples:
 - Acts 27:22, 25, 36 Paul to the people on the ship: "I urge you to keep up your courage [be encouraged/cheerful], because none of you will die. Only the ship will be destroyed." / "Keep up your courage [encouragement/cheer], men, for I trust God: it will happen just as he told me!" / They were all encouraged and ate some food.

- Acts 24:10 Paul, defending himself before the governor: "I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years. So I will gladly [with cheer/courage] defend myself before you."
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PART 3 - The N.T. Greek words used in this study:

From PART 1:

euphraino

- To gladden, make joyful; Passive: to be glad, to be merry, to rejoice
- Luke 12:19; 15:23-24, 29, 32; 16:19; Acts 2:26; 7:41; Romans 15:10; 2 Cor. 2:2; Galatians 4:27; Rev. 11:10; 12:12; 18:20

euphrosune

- Good cheer, joy, gladness
- Acts 2:28; 14:17

From PART 2

euthumeo

- To be joyful, be of good cheer, of good courage
- Acts 27:22, 25, 36; James 5:13

euthumos

- Of good cheer, of good courage
- Acts 24:10

Source: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament [public domain]