

Romans 12:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Analysis

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. This simple command captures the essence of Christian empathy: **rejoice with them that do rejoice** (χαίρειν μετὰ χαίροντων, chairein meta chairontōn) and **weep with them that weep** (κλαίειν μετὰ κλαίοντων, klaiein meta klaiontōn). The parallel structure emphasizes entering fully into others' emotional experiences—celebrating their joys without envy, mourning their sorrows without detachment. Paradoxically, rejoicing with others' success can be harder than weeping with their pain; envy sabotages shared joy, while sympathy comes more naturally. Paul calls believers to vicarious participation in the full spectrum of human emotion within the body of Christ.

This command flows from the body metaphor (verses 4-5): if we are members of one another, your joy is my joy, your sorrow is my sorrow. Emotional solidarity is practical love (verse 9). The phrase echoes Job 30:25, 'Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?' and anticipates 1 Corinthians 12:26, 'whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' Authentic Christian community requires emotional vulnerability and imaginative compassion—the ability to inhabit another's experience.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture valued self-sufficiency and emotional control, especially for men. Stoic philosophy taught apatheia (freedom from passion), viewing emotional

display as weakness. In contrast, Jewish tradition affirmed grief and celebration as communal activities—weddings involved the whole village; funerals included professional mourners. Paul synthesizes these: Christians neither suppress emotion nor perform it superficially, but genuinely share one another's joys and sorrows as family. In the diverse Roman church, this meant wealthy believers celebrating poor believers' small victories and poor believers mourning wealthy believers' losses without resentment.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. When fellow believers experience success or blessing, do you genuinely rejoice or secretly struggle with envy?
2. How well do you enter into others' grief—are you present, attentive, and mournful, or do you offer trite comfort and move on?
3. What prevents you from deeper emotional engagement with your church family—busyness, self-protection, or relational distance?

Interlinear Text

χαιρόντων	μετὰ	χαιρόντων	καὶ	κλαιόντων	μετὰ
Rejoice	with	Rejoice	and	them that weep	with
G5463	G3326	G5463	G2532	G2799	G3326

κλαιόντων

them that weep

G2799

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 12:26 (Parallel theme): And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Hebrews 13:3 (Parallel theme): Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Job 30:25 (Parallel theme): Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?

Luke 1:58 (Parallel theme): And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

Jeremiah 9:1 (Parallel theme): Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!
