

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 272

Joy

Rejoice in the Lord always.

Philippians 4:4

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

Free Grace Broadcaster

JOY

272

Contents

Created to Rejoice	1
<i>Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)</i>	
Glad Tidings of Great Joy	6
<i>Thomas Reade (1776-1841)</i>	
Christ Our Joy in All Things	10
<i>Robert Asty (1642-1681)</i>	
The Scriptures and Joy	17
<i>Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)</i>	
Christ's Sufferings and Joy	23
<i>Samuel Davies (1723-1761)</i>	
Persuasions to Spiritual Joy	30
<i>Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)</i>	
Rejoicing in Every Condition.....	35
<i>Robert Asty (1642-1681)</i>	
Maintaining Our Joy and Balancing Sorrow	41
<i>Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)</i>	
The Christian's Duty of Joy	44
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	

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CREATED TO REJOICE

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

MAN was created to rejoice: to be joyful is his life and health. Sorrow is contrary to his nature; and if man had not sinned, he would not have been sorrowful for one moment. A young child shows its joy by laughter and skipping around. All that man does, he does to be happy. Sorrow grips, presses, oppresses, and brings pain to the heart, whereas joy enlarges the heart and causes one to be refreshed by leaping for joy. This is true in the natural and in the spiritual realm.

Joy is the pleasure, delight, and rejoicing of the heart. It is the expression of a spirit set at liberty (or enlarged), generated by a present blessing or due to the anticipation of a future blessing. The Holy Scriptures, the best and infallible chronicler¹ of nature, expresses joy by the verb *rejoice*: “my heart rejoiceth in the LORD” (1Sa 2:1); by the verb *enlarge*: “when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32); by the verb *delight*: “Delight thyself also in the LORD” (Psa 37:4); and by the verb *cheer*: “let thy heart cheer thee” (Ecc 11:9).

Since man is not all-sufficient within himself, he must seek all his delight and joy elsewhere, that is, outside of himself. An unconverted person does perceive that he is empty within, but he does not know where his true and complete joy is to be found. Nevertheless, he must have joy, or else his heart will succumb.² Thus, he seeks joy in creature delights,³ as everyone seeks that toward which he is most inclined and that which is most opportune.⁴ One person thinks that money will yield joy, whereas another person expects it from costly apparel, homes, furnishings, and gardens. Another thinks that food and drink will yield this; again, others seek it in high positions and governmental offices, and some expect it from love and wisdom. Thus, every person labors for his own gain and with his own objective in view. However, this does not yield satisfaction. The heart even grieves when it laughs, and all such laughter ends in eternal sorrow and weeping.

The Lord, however, causes His favorites to see that all this is nothing

¹ **chronicler** – one who writes accounts of historical events.

² **succumb** – sink under sorrow or trials.

³ **creature delights** – earthly pleasures rather than spiritual joys.

⁴ **opportune** – suitable to one’s purposes or circumstances.

but vanity, sin, and sorrow, and that all joy and happiness consist in having communion⁵ with Him. We shall now discuss this spiritual joy.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL JOY: This spiritual joy consists in a delightful motion of the soul, generated by the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers, whereby He convinces them of the felicity⁶ of their state, causes them to enjoy the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and assures them of their future felicity.

The seat of this joy is the soul or the heart. “Thou hast put gladness in my heart” (Psa 4:7); “your heart shall rejoice” (Joh 16:22). This happiness is not one of appearance only but is in truth; it does not consist in external display, but rather in possession. It is not something *external* that delights the external senses, but it penetrates to the *internal*, that is, to the innermost [depths] of the soul—the intellect, the will, and the affections.

However, the heart of all men does not partake of this joy, but only the heart of believers. “Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit” (Isa 65:14). “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous” (Psa 33:1). “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee” (Psa 70:4).

No one can manufacture this joy himself. It is an inexpressible work of grace by God the Holy Spirit. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy” (Rom 15:13). “For the kingdom of God is...joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). “Make me to hear joy and gladness” (Psa 51:8). For this reason, David calls the Lord, “God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:4). If someone desires this joy, let him be sensibly convinced that he cannot manufacture this himself and that he is also unworthy to receive it; let him thus come through Christ to the Father and pray in His name, “Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil” (Psa 90:15). “Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Psa 86:4).

This joy pertains to being reconciled with God—to their being the recipients of His grace, goodness, love, and benevolence, He being their God and Father, their portion, delight, rest, keeper, and felicity, and Jesus Christ being their Savior. This is manifested by the expression of rejoicing in the Lord. “Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King” (Psa 149:2). “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy” (Psa 31:7). “Be glad in the LORD” (Psa 32:11). “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the

⁵ See FGB 248, *Communion with God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁶ felicity – happiness.

LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isa 25:9). “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luk 1:47). This joy is generated whenever they perceive and believe that God has bestowed a blessing upon them in His favor. Also, the preciousness of the gospel, the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and temporal⁷ deliverances and blessings bring forth this joy. They do so because they perceive that in all these things the Lord is manifesting His favor toward them. “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Psa 119:111). “Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted” (Psa 89:15-16).

In addition to the benefits that believers may enjoy here, they also have the promise of joy in heaven that is inexpressibly more excellent. Oh, how great that treasure is... Therefore, rejoice in hope (Rom 12:12)!

From that which has been said, it is evident what the nature of true spiritual joy is. This will be more evident when we consider the opposite of spiritual joy, as well as that which resembles and qualifies it.

THE OPPOSITE OF SPIRITUAL JOY: SORROW. The second aspect to be considered is the opposite of or that which is contrary to joy, which is *sorrow*—not only the sorrow of the ungodly, for whom weeping and gnashing of teeth are prepared, but also the sorrow of believers. God’s children do not always have joy here; it has been foretold that they will cry, weep mournfully, and be sorrowful (Joh 16:20). They must experience that they mingle their drink with their tears often (Psa 102:9). This can be due to being very far from God, weakness of faith, fear of not being a partaker of Jesus, the power of corruption (which not only assaults them, but may also hold them captive for a long period of time), the assaults of Satan, or various temporal afflictions and tribulations. Therefore, their tears are their [food] day and night, and they pour out their soul within them (Psa 42:3-4); their life is thus spent with grief, and their years with sighing (Psa 31:10). However, the Lord does not allow them to sink away in sorrow. He is with them when they must go through fire and water, so that neither the rivers overflow them nor the fire burns them (Isa 42:2-3). He will yet refresh them in their sorrow and afterwards cause their darkness to lift. He will by renewal comfort those who mourn and lovingly wipe the tears from their eyes. He allures them, speaks to their heart, and kisses them with the kisses

⁷ **temporal** – pertaining to the present life as distinguished from a future existence.

of His mouth (Song 1:2). This is the promise: “And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (Joh 16:22).

Now compare sorrow and joy and observe the great difference between the two. From this can be deduced⁸ the exceeding excellency and desirability of this joy, as well as the inexpressible goodness of God that a people who are only worthy of eternal sorrow are by Him filled and will eternally be filled with such exceeding joy. Furthermore, since God’s children encounter many sorrows in this life, no one ought to be too [downcast] as if they were not a child of God, for what they encounter is no different from what all God’s children encounter. It can also be that one is sorrowful, humble, and ashamed over sin, mourns over the absence of sweet communion with God and nevertheless rejoices in the assurance of his state, as well as in the promise that his sorrow will be turned into joy (Job 41:22). He conducts himself wisely who accustoms himself to being joyful by faith, even though he weeps due to oppression.

COUNTERFEIT SPIRITUAL JOY: The third matter to be considered is that which resembles this joy: *counterfeit joy*...The joy of temporal⁹ believers...resembles spiritual joy in an external sense, even though they differ entirely in nature. Temporal believers are also joyful at times. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon¹⁰ with joy receiveth it” (Mat 13:20; cf. Luk 8:13). Their objective is spiritual, for it pertains to the gospel, having Christ as a Savior, entering heaven, being numbered among the godly, being loved and praised by the godly, etc....Now compare this to the joy of true believers. You will observe that in both cases the object of their joy is the same; nevertheless, the difference is as great between the natural and the spiritual as between imagination and truth...

First, all true joy proceeds from faith because of the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, even though it varies greatly in degree. Therefore, all joy that does not proceed from receiving Christ and union with Him—by which one becomes a partaker of all His benefits—is counterfeit joy. “In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). The eunuch went on his way rejoicing after he had become a believer (Act 8:37, 39); the jailor rejoiced in the fact that he had believed (Act 16:34).

⁸ **deduced** – concluded by the process of reasoning.

⁹ **temporal** – temporary.

¹⁰ **anon** – immediately.

Secondly, all true joy is experienced in the presence of God and in communion with God as their reconciled God. “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luk 1:47). “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phi 4:4). “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous” (Psa 32:11). “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (Psa 104:34). All counterfeit joy pertains to matters pleasant to the person and which do not end in God. Although true believers also rejoice in their happiness and in the matters that they have or anticipate, they do not remain with the matters only; that is impossible for them. Rather, in the enjoyment of these matters, they find themselves in the presence of God.

Thirdly, all true joy makes the soul holier, drawing the soul away from all that is not God and does not please God—from sin. It enlarges the heart and makes them willing to do God’s will out of love with humility. “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32).

It cannot but be that when one is joyful, there will also be love. One cannot but rejoice in a received benefit—rejoice in having communion with God. Furthermore, it cannot be different but that the heart will be inclined to manifest gratitude by surrendering oneself to the service of the Lord. When David joyfully exclaimed, “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust,” he then exclaimed immediately, “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength” (Psa 18:1-2). When he recognized that the Lord had heard his prayer, he said, “I love the LORD” (Psa 116:1)...

If someone considers himself to be joyful and is nevertheless not tender in his walk but instead lives in the world and yields to his lusts, doing everything with the wrong objective and in seeking self, his joy is not a joy in God, but a counterfeit joy. However, whenever joy proceeds from faith, functions in communion with God, and begets tenderness, willingness, actual opposition to sin, and the practice of godliness—then there is true joy. Let the heart of such a person rejoice, and endeavor to continually live in this joy.

From *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 455-461; used by permission.

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711): Dutch theologian and major representative of the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

Thomas Reade (1776-1841)

CHRISTIAN joy is not a tumultuous¹ passion or feverish affection, but a calm and composed frame, a holy serenity² of soul, a glad-some³ rest in the faithfulness and grace of Jesus. It sheds a luster over the countenance, beams forth at the eye, and often causes it to be suffused⁴ in tears. It creates an indescribable delight in the heart.

Paul was in this heavenly frame when he said, “I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2Co 7:4). This holy joy does not depend on outward circumstances, for the apostle could say, “As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). No one possesses this inward joy but the real believer. “A stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy” (Pro 14:10). It is the fruit of the Spirit and flows from a living faith in the divinity and atonement of Jesus.

So inseparable from Christian joy are right views of the blessed Savior that John commences his first epistle, as he did his Gospel, by refuting those two heresies, which, like poisonous weeds, were then springing up. The one was propagated by the Gnostics or Docetae, who denied the real humanity of Jesus; the other by the Ebionites, who denied the essential divinity of the Redeemer. How conclusive are the declarations of John: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1Jo 1:1). What language can more fully describe the real humanity of the Son of God?

“For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (v. 2). What a striking attestation to the divinity of Christ! “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (v. 3). “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (v. 4).

Thus, the apostle clearly and unequivocally⁵ states that Christian

¹ **tumultuous** – characterized by disorder.

² **serenity** – peacefulness; absence of mental stress.

³ **gladsome** – joyful; pleasant.

⁴ **suffused** – flooded.

⁵ **unequivocally** – plainly; in a way that leaves no doubt.

communion can only be maintained in its blessedness, and Christian joy possessed in its fullness, by a cordial⁶ reception of Jesus Christ as “God...manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16).

It [would be] well if all who profess to believe in Jesus would examine the ground of their faith and the source of their joy by this highly important passage in the Word of God. Holy joy is a portion of heaven brought down into the soul, and it enables the believer to soar above the troubles that assail him. Like the Alpine traveler,⁷ he looks down upon the storm that agitates the valley beneath. Even when compelled to exclaim, “Without were fightings, within were fears” (2Co 7:5), he can “rejoice evermore” (1Th 5:16).

Habakkuk was truly happy when, raised above all the changing scenes of life, he thus sang to the harp of prophecy, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places” (Hab 3:17-19).

The apostles sang in the prison. The martyrs praised God in the fires. They rejoiced in hope of the glory of God and were made more than conquerors through Him Who loved them and gave Himself for them. This holy joy, this peaceful state of heart, is, nevertheless, susceptible to be⁸ disturbed and ruffled.⁹

Through the remaining corruption of his nature, the believer is often sorely harassed and distressed. The enemy plies him very closely with his temptations. Thus, he finds hourly need for watchfulness and prayer, as well as for deep humiliation and self-abhorrence. If ensnared through the subtlety of Satan or by sudden surprises of temptations, the enemy exults, and his heart is grieved. Yet, what must he do? Through grace, he betakes himself to the blood of sprinkling. He goes mourning to his heavenly Father, acknowledging his sin. He pleads the merit of his Savior; he implores the continued aid and protection of the Holy Spirit. He lies low in self-abasement¹⁰ at the foot of the cross and there receives this gracious word applied powerfully to his soul: “Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat 9:2). Light beams once

⁶ **cordial** – sincere; heartfelt.

⁷ **Alpine traveler** – person traveling through the Alps, a mountain system in Europe.

⁸ **susceptible to be** – capable of being.

⁹ **ruffled** – upset.

¹⁰ **self-abasement** – humbling oneself.

more in his heart; joy once more fills his soul. He hates himself and loves his Savior, watches more narrowly over the inward motions of his spirit, distrusts himself, and relies more confidently on the grace of his covenant God.

Thus, the enemy of souls is baffled; [the believer's] growth in humility is promoted; and God, through His restoring grace, is glorified.

Chastening,¹¹ says the apostle, is not joyous, but grievous (Heb 12:11). Hence, outward troubles may dampen the believer's joy while he looks off from the Savior to the boisterous¹² wind and waves that rage around him. Peter did so and began to sink. Faith, however, clings fast to the Savior and exults in the storm.

Paul was compelled at times to say, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" (Rom 9:2). But where arose this grief? It sprang from the deep concern which he felt for his perishing brethren according to the flesh. Thus, many favored souls who are happy in the love of God, and who rejoice in Jesus with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, can sympathize with David and say, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psa 119:136). Their personal joy may be in lively exercise, while their hearts are greatly grieved for a world that lies in wickedness. Is not this the characteristic feeling of the children of God?

Christian [love] is a compound of active benevolence and tender compassion, flowing from a supreme love to Jesus Christ. The true believer is, therefore, the genuine philanthropist.¹³ He not only feels for the miseries of others, but labors to remove them by prayer and suitable exertion. His heart can melt at another's woe and gladden at another's welfare. Hence he rejoices over one sinner that repents. He feels his own joy increased by each increase to the church of God. He rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth. As sin pains him, both when felt in himself and seen in others, so holiness delights him, when, like Barnabas, he beholds its growing influence in those around him. The joy of the Lord is his strength. When faith is in lively exercise and joy is springing up in his soul, he can brave every danger and boldly encounter every enemy that may oppose his way to glory.

Such is the happy experience of the believer in Jesus. It is his privilege to rejoice. A God of sovereign love wills the happiness of His people. As nothing but sin can separate the soul from God or cause Him

¹¹ **chastening** – disciplinary punishment.

¹² **boisterous** – rough, stormy.

¹³ **philanthropist** – person who practices love to others and promotes their welfare.

to hide His face from us, so nothing but sin ought really to dampen our joy. Woe be to him who can feel joyous in his sins!

The gospel is good news, glad tidings of great joy. Those worldly people greatly mistake its nature, tendency, and design, who suppose it to be a mere system of restraints, an enemy to innocent enjoyment. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. The gospel bids us to be happy. All that it condemns is an abuse of divine mercies and that alienation of heart that leads us to seek from the broken cisterns of the world the happiness that can only be derived from the eternal fountain of uncreated excellence.

The gospel, while it faithfully reveals to us our ruined state as sinners and our utter unworthiness of the least of God's mercies, graciously opens to our view the way to unspeakable felicity through the incarnation and death of the eternal Son of God. Those who reject the gospel and choose the forbidden pleasures of sin find the fruit of their choice to be bitterness and death, while those who cheerfully renounce the world and yield themselves unto God through Jesus Christ have a spring of holy joy opened in their souls, which shall flow onward until it issues in everlasting life. O my soul, is this your experience? Do you feel this inward joy in a crucified Jesus? Are you leaning on the bosom of your Savior, resting on covenant faithfulness and unchanging love?

“Enable me, blessed Lord, with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation and to come daily unto Thee, the fountain of consolation, Who has said: ‘Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved’ (Song 5:1). When I feel my inward depravity, oh, give me grace to see, with the eye of faith, the glorious remedy that Thou hast provided. May I lay hold on Jesus Christ and never let Him go until He blesses me. Shine into my heart with the bright beam of Thy heavenly grace. Shed abroad Thy love in my soul. Give me the witness of the Holy Spirit. Grant that I may taste Thy goodness here in the sweet refreshing streams of gospel joy, until, borne with gladsome wing to the fountainhead in glory, my soul shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise.”

From *Spiritual Exercises of the Heart*, Reformation Heritage Books, 365-369, www.heritagebooks.org. Used by permission.

Thomas Shaw B. Reade (1776-1841): English layman and author; born in Manchester, England, UK.



CHRIST OUR JOY IN ALL THINGS

Robert Asty (1642-1681)

*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
—Habakkuk 3:18*

JOY is the sweet motion of the soul in a full contentment of heart and complacency¹ of spirit upon some good set before it. Now here the prophet sees all things to be discouraging below; but he turns his eyes up to heaven and sees a certainty and stability there, and therefore he rejoices in the Lord and joys in the God of his salvation. “I will rejoice in the LORD,” that is, “I will rejoice in JEHOVAH, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:18). *Jehovah* is a title given unto God the Father, setting forth His self-existence and self-sufficiency, and His giving being unto all creatures; but the title *Jehovah* is attributed also unto the Son, and so I understand it here in this text: “I will rejoice in Jehovah,” that is, in Christ Jesus, Who may be called *Jehovah* not only as He has a sufficiency in Himself, but as He gives existence and being unto all the promises of the Covenant of Grace, in Whom they are yea and amen. And on this account, I take it that the title *Jehovah* is often given unto Jesus Christ, the Second Person.² “I will rejoice in the LORD. I will joy in the God of my salvation,” that is, “in my Lord, my Savior, my dear Jesus, and my Redeemer.” So, from the words you may observe this proposition:

DOCTRINE: There is enough in Christ Jesus alone for the soul’s full rejoicing and triumphing in all cases and conditions. Jesus Christ is glorious in His person, and there is not one like Him in heaven or on earth...Jesus Christ is a most choice, excellent [person], a very goodly and a very lovely person...a person all glorious, a person all over lovely and beautiful. “His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved” (Song 5:16).

But I shall...show you wherein Jesus Christ is such a sufficient ground of rejoicing and of comfort to the believing soul...in all conditions. And I shall here show you wherein it appears that the glory of Christ’s person is such a ground of rejoicing to us at all times.

¹ **complacency** – satisfaction.

² **Second Person** – Second eternal Person of the holy Trinity; see FGB 231, *The Triune God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

That will appear in His mediatorial constitution,³ as God-man in one person. Jesus is a *mediator*⁴ (1Ti 2:5), an *umpire* between God and man to make peace for us (Act 10:36; Eph 2:16-18; Col 1:20); and the glory of His person lies in His mediatorial constitution. As He is God-man, so He is a most glorious person (Joh 1:14). Now this title of *Mediator* is often given to Him in Scripture. In Hebrews 8:6, He is called “the mediator of a better covenant.” In Hebrews 9:15, He is “the mediator of the new testament.” And in Hebrews 12:24, it says, “To Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.” This was such a one as Job wished for in Job 9:33: “Neither is there any daysman [*umpire*] betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.” Now there are two things that are required for someone to be a mediator. He must be equally related to the people between whom he comes, and he must be impartial to each party. Now, both qualifications are found in Jesus Christ.

A mediator, I say, must be equally placed between and related to the people whom he comes to reconcile. A mediator must be a middle person who must not be related more to one person than to the other; there must be an equal proximity or nearness in him unto the parties that he comes to mediate for, or to make peace between. Now, Jesus Christ was such a person in Whom there was an equal proximity or nearness to both parties that He had to do with, for He was both God and man. As He was truly man, He stood in a nearness unto man; and as He was truly God, so He stood in a nearness unto the Father. He was by the divine nature as near unto the Father as by the human nature He was near unto man; and He was as near unto man by His human nature as He was unto the Father by His divine nature. So, He is equally placed between and related unto the persons whom He came to reconcile.

Also, a mediator must be impartial and faithful in and about the interest of the parties involved. Jesus Christ, being made God-man, was not only in a nearness to man and to the Father, but He was thereby unbiased,⁵ and set out upon equal terms impartially to manage the

³ **mediatorial constitution** – Christ’s nature as man and God in one person for His work as the “one mediator between God and men” (1Ti 2:5).

⁴ **mediator** – “one who goes between”; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1) See also Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ **unbiased** – showing no prejudice or favoritism.

concerns of the interest of both parties. He was both God and man and was not only so in a nearness to both parties, but He was equally concerned honorably to manage the interest of both parties whom He came between and was engaged in this nearness that He stood in unto both. He was engaged thereby equally to manage the concerns of both parties. Being God, He was engaged in point of honor to give satisfaction to His Father. Being man, He was engaged in point of faithfulness to work out the whole business and concern of our salvation and to make peace for sinners. He was equally concerned for the interest of both parties, having the divine and the human nature united together in one person. Both natures constrained Him to have an equal and right regard unto both interests and to bring them into one. It was requisite⁶ that Jesus, Who was to be a mediator, should be thus constituted. For, indeed, had He undertaken the work and not been thus constituted, it would probably not have been so impartially managed; neither could Jesus Christ have been complete for the work of His mediation but under this constitution. For if He had been God only, then He would have been too high for the work; for He must make satisfaction. He must suffer and die for sinners. He must be made sin for sinners and be substituted in the place of sinners. Now, God, absolutely considered, cannot be thus. And if He had been man only, He would have been too low for the work; for there could not have been such dignity in His sufferings as to give a value and worth to all His being laid out for us. He must therefore be God-man, and as such He was neither too high nor too low, but equally placed between both, and so just fitted for the work—and thus do the Scriptures set Him forth to us as Mediator.

The Scriptures testify of Him as God-Man. “The Word,” that is, the Second Person, “was made flesh” (Joh 1:14). There is Jesus becoming “Emmanuel...God with us” (Mat 1:23). “God was manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16). “And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luk 1:31). “Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom 1:3-4). So, as you see, He was constituted God-man: “The Word was made flesh.” Now, being thus constituted God-man, He had His nearness to God the Father and His nearness to the sons of men, for whom He came and appeared in the flesh. You may see His nearness unto the Father in Zechariah 13:7: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts.”

⁶ requisite – required by the nature of things.

So, as Jesus Christ, He is and He was the fellow and the companion of the LORD of Hosts. Philippians 2:6 [says]: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Here you see He has His nearness to the Father, and His nearness to the sons of men, for whom He appeared in the flesh. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14). “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given” (Isa 9:6). “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35). He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” There is His nearness to the Father. And He was born of the virgin and so clothed with our flesh, and therein He was near akin unto man. Hence, He is called “Emmanuel,” that is, “God with us” (Mat 1:23).

As God-Man, Christ’s sufferings are satisfactory. Now, as thus constituted, He undertook the work of His mediation, for thus He suffered and thus He satisfied. His sufferings hereby came to be satisfactory since He was God. He died as man, and He overcame death and arose again from the grave by the power of His Godhead.

QUESTION: But you will say, “This indeed is a great mystery, worthy of all admiration, that the eternal Son of God should become man; that He should be God and man; that there should be a union of the two natures in one Person. But how is this a standing, constant ground of rejoicing in all saddening, sinking⁷ providences whatsoever?”

ANSWER: I reply, much in every way. And this would be clear to you should I enter upon and open to you the glory of His person as thus constituted, and the glorious excellences of heaven that are shining in both natures, or upon His person under its constitution in the union of both natures. And there may be a greater matter of rejoicing to our souls in the exercise of faith in our contemplating His personal glories. It may be a matter of greater rejoicing to our souls than ever there was satisfaction to the heart and mind upon any object whatsoever that it beheld with a bodily eye.

DIGNITY: Hereby is the nature of man raised to unspeakable honor and glory, in that Jesus Christ, the Second Person, has assumed our nature and taken it into union with His own divine nature in His person. And therein He now reigns upon the throne in heaven at the right hand of God. Herein is the nature of man most unspeakably advanced and dignified. The nature of man was very low before. Man was made

⁷ **sinking** – depressing.

of the earth...Man was before but a contemptible creature. But now what honor is put upon us: Jesus Christ has taken our nature and united it to the divine nature. The nature that was despised before is now honored, honorable, and worthy. It has glory and dignity from the Lord Jesus put upon it, says the apostle in 1 Corinthians 15:43-44. The body of man, or the nature of man, is both born and dies in dishonor, aye, but it is raised in glory. The body of man is a corruptible body; it is a dying body. It has a sentence of death hanging over it as soon as it has a being. But now, though it is sown in dishonor, it shall be raised in glory. There is a glory that awaits the body of man, that awaits man's whole nature. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phi 3:21). So, there is unspeakable honor given unto our nature in that Christ Jesus has taken it so near to Himself and advanced it upon the Father's throne in heaven.

We are here under the contempt and disgrace of men, but it does not matter, Christians: they cannot take away your glory. The glory of your nature is not laid in the breath of men but is founded in Christ Jesus' assumption of our nature and His uniting it to the divine nature. And if, indeed, the enemies of the Lord's people could take our nature from Christ Jesus, then they might take away our glory and our honor; but He has inseparably and everlastingly united our nature unto His divine nature. Therefore, our honor is such as can never be taken away.

It is counted [as] a great honor for an ambassador to be sent forth in the name of some great prince to represent him in another country. But, my friends, what is it for Jesus Christ to assume our nature and to represent man before His Father in heaven? This is a greater honor put upon us than if God had made man the lord of all the angels in heaven! Therefore, let this satisfy you under all the reproach and contempt that you meet with here in the world by one and another. Though you are despised and condemned here and there by a few, yet your honor in the Lord abides.

PEACE AND TRANQUILITY: In and upon the appearance of Jesus Christ as Mediator for us, there is a full, firm, and lasting peace made between God and us. Jesus Christ came as Mediator between two parties, to reconcile both and make them one, and this He has done "through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). Jesus has reconciled God and man together. He has taken away the wrath that the law of God had to pronounce against man. He has slain the enmity of our nature. He has brought these two enemies together and made them one in His own mediatorial hand, so that now you may look unto God and be at peace with Him. You may see heaven and all the powers of heaven reconciled

to you. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). And, not only so, but “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement⁸” (Rom 5:11). Here is the blessing mentioned in the text: “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:18).

But how must I consider Him? Why, consider this Lord as Mediator, making peace through the blood of His cross. And then, Christians, you may joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ because it is by Him that you have received the atonement. Jesus Christ has satisfied and reconciled God to you. He has appeased God. He has brought over the heart of God to the sinner, so that now the sinner may take comfort and encouragement in Him and go to Him as to a Father in Christ Jesus. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one” (Eph 2:13-14). Is not this a matter of rejoicing for you that now you may go unto God as your God; that you may look up to God and see Him reconciled to you and see all the properties of His nature looking towards you in a friendly way; that you may see God overruling all providences and dispensations for your interest and advantage; that you may go and comfort yourselves in your God; that you may encourage yourselves in Him and rejoice in the Lord as your God through the blood of the cross of Jesus your Mediator?

SANCTIFICATION OR HOLINESS: Hereby our corrupt natures are sanctified and made holy unto God. Jesus Christ becoming man has consecrated unto the Lord that part of human nature that He [took to Himself] and belonged to. He has taken our nature, and He has offered it up unto the Lord and [by doing so] consecrated the whole lump that it was taken out of..

Now, Jesus Christ comes from that part of the world that was the elect and the chosen of God...“For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified⁹ through the truth” (Joh 17:19). “For their sakes,” that is, for those who were the chosen of God, and given to Jesus Christ by the Father. Verse 6 [says]: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” “For their sakes I sanctify myself”—He takes our nature and offers it to God, and

⁸ **atonement** – literally “at-one-ment”; the condition of being at one with another; theologically, atonement means reconciliation with God by removing or covering the guilt of sin; this was accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. See Free Grace Broadcaster 227, *Atonement*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁹ See FGB 215, *Sanctification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

consecrates it as a part, or the first-fruit of the whole, whereby the whole nature of the elect of God is dedicated to the Lord, sanctified, and made holy, or way is made for the sanctifying of it. I may allude to Romans 11:16: “For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.” I know this is not the meaning of this text; I only allude to it. As the apostle says in that case, so I say in this case: if the first-fruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if Jesus the Root is holy, then all the branches are holy, to be under a peculiar and special consecration to the Lord.

Now here, Christian, is a ground of rejoicing for you. You are born a child of wrath, your nature is a sinful nature, and there is by nature nothing but sin dwelling in you. But Jesus Christ has taken your nature. He has worn it, and He has consecrated your nature to God and made way for the sanctifying of it. Therefore, now a way is made through Jesus Christ’s appearing in our flesh to consecrate you unto God and make you holy, so that you may rejoice, notwithstanding the remains of sin that are in you, and notwithstanding all the impurity and defilements that are to be found in your heart.

You have a stained, polluted soul. You look into yourself, and you see yourself so spotted and defiled that you are ashamed of yourself. Well, then, look upon Jesus Christ and consider how your nature is sanctified in Him. He sits upon the throne all holy, and your nature that He assumed is holy. Why, Christian, there is holiness in the Root for you. There is holiness in Christ your Head for you; and because He is holy, you also shall be holy. Because He has sanctified your nature, therefore your nature shall be sanctified...

Now, Christians, what a ground of rejoicing is here! Friends die; a bosom acquaintance in the flesh is taken from you. They die, and their places know them no more. But Jesus ever abides upon the throne, clearing the way of communion between God and you, so that God is always your Friend, always reconciled to you, always ready to make Himself known and to impart His love and grace to you. Here is an abiding ground of joy for us in Christ Jesus, if we consider Him as He is: a glorious person in His mediatorial constitution.

From *Rejoicing in the Lord in All Cases and Conditions* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 6-17.

Robert Asty (1642-1681): English Congregational Puritan minister; born in Stratford, West Ham Essex, England, UK.



THE SCRIPTURES AND JOY

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

THE ungodly are ever seeking after joy, but they do not find it: they busy and weary themselves in the pursuit of it, yet all in vain. Their hearts being turned from the Lord, they look downward for joy, where it is not; rejecting the substance, they diligently run after the shadow, only to be mocked by it. It is the sovereign decree of heaven that nothing can make sinners truly happy but God in Christ; but this they will not believe, and therefore, they go from creature to creature, from one broken cistern to another, inquiring where the best joy is to be found. Each worldly thing that attracts them says, “It is found in me”; but soon it disappoints. Nevertheless, they go on seeking it afresh today in the very thing that deceived them yesterday. If after many trials they discover the emptiness of one creature comfort, then they turn to another, only to verify our Lord’s word, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again” (Joh 4:13).

Going now to the other extreme: there are some Christians who suppose it to be sinful to rejoice. No doubt many of our readers will be surprised to hear this, but let them be thankful they have been brought up in sunnier surroundings and bear with us while we labor with those less favored. Some have been taught—largely by implication and example, rather than by plain inculcation¹—that it is their duty to be gloomy. They imagine that feelings of joy are produced by the devil appearing as an angel of light. They conclude that it is well-nigh² a species of wickedness to be happy in such a world of sin as we are in. They think it presumptuous to rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and if they see young Christians doing so, they tell them it will not be long before they are floundering in the Slough of Despond.³ To all such, we tenderly urge the prayerful pondering of the remainder of this chapter.

“Rejoice evermore” (1Th 5:16). It surely cannot be unsafe to do what God has commanded us. The Lord has placed no embargo⁴ on rejoicing. No, it is Satan who strives to make us hang up our harps. There is

¹ **inculcation** – teaching or impressing upon the mind by frequent instruction or repetition.

² **well-nigh** – almost.

³ **Slough of Despond** – a deep boggy place in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* that has become a symbol of despair, depression, or lack of hope.

⁴ **embargo** – prohibition.

no precept in Scripture bidding us, “Grieve in the Lord always: and again I say, grieve”; but there is an exhortation that bids us, “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Reader, if you are a real Christian (and it is high time you tested yourself by Scripture and made sure of this point), then Christ is yours, all that is in Him is yours! He bids you, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink *abundantly*, O beloved” (Song 5:1). The only sin you may commit against His banquet of love is to stint⁵ yourself. “Let your soul delight itself *in fatness*” (Isa 55:2) is spoken not to those already in heaven but to saints still on earth. This leads us to say that:

We profit from the Word when we perceive that joy is a duty. “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). The Holy Spirit here speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, and permanent duty for the people of God to carry out. The Lord has not left it to our option whether we should be glad or sad, but has made happiness an obligation. Not to rejoice is a sin of omission. Next time you meet with a radiant Christian, do not chide⁶ him, ye dwellers in Doubting Castle,⁷ but chide yourselves; instead of being ready to call into question the divine spring of his mirth, judge yourself for your doleful state.

It is not a carnal joy that we are here urging, by which we mean a joy that comes from carnal sources. It is useless to seek joy in earthly riches, for frequently they take to themselves wings and fly away. Some seek their joy in the family circle, but that remains entire for only a few years at most. No, if we are to “rejoice evermore,” it must be in an object that lasts for evermore. Nor is it a fanatical joy we [refer] to. There are some with an excitable nature who are happy only when they are half out of their minds; but terrible is the reaction. No, it is an intelligent, steady, heart delight in God Himself. Every attribute of God, when contemplated by faith, will make the heart sing. Every doctrine of the gospel, when truly apprehended, will call forth gladness and praise.

Joy is a matter of Christian duty. Perhaps the reader is ready to exclaim, “My emotions of joy and sorrow are not under my control; I cannot help being glad or sad as circumstances dictate.” But we repeat, “Rejoice in the Lord” is a divine command, and to a large extent obedience to it lies in one’s own power. I am responsible for controlling my emotions. True, I cannot help being sorrowful in the presence of

⁵ **stint** – limit.

⁶ **chide** – scold; rebuke.

⁷ **Doubting Castle** – fictional fortress in Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* that symbolizes despair and spiritual doubt.

sorrowful thoughts, but I can refuse to let my mind dwell upon them. I can pour out my heart for relief unto the Lord and cast my burden upon Him. I can seek grace to meditate upon His goodness, His promises, the glorious future awaiting me. I must decide whether I will go and stand in the light or hide among the shadows. Not to rejoice in the Lord is more than a misfortune: it is a fault that needs to be confessed and forsaken.

We profit from the Word when we learn the secret of true joy. That secret is revealed in 1 John 1:3-4: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” When we consider the littleness of our fellowship with God, the shallowness of it, it is not to be wondered at that so many Christians are comparatively joyless. We sometimes sing, “Oh happy day that fixed my choice on Thee, my Savior and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice and tell its raptures⁸ all abroad.” Yes, but if that happiness is to be maintained, there must be a continued steadfast occupation of the heart and mind with Christ. It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy.

“*Rejoice in the Lord alway.*” There is no other object in which we can rejoice always. Everything else varies and is inconstant. What pleases us today may pall on us⁹ tomorrow. But the Lord is always the same, to be enjoyed in seasons of adversity as much as in seasons of prosperity. As an aid to this, the very next verse says, “Let your moderation¹⁰ be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phi 4:5). Be temperate in connection with all external things; do not be taken with them when they seem most pleasing, nor troubled when displeasing. Be not exalted when the world smiles upon you, nor dejected when it scowls. Maintain a stoical¹¹ indifference to outward comforts: why be so occupied with them when *the Lord Himself* “is at hand”? If persecution be violent, if temporal losses be heavy, the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1)—ready to support and succor those who cast themselves upon Him. He will care for you, so “be careful [anxious] for nothing” (Phi 4:6). Worldlings¹² are haunted with carking¹³ cares, but the Christian should not be.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in

⁸ **raptures** – feelings of intense pleasure or joy.

⁹ **pall on us** – become unattractive, uninteresting.

¹⁰ **moderation** – forbearing (patient and restrained) spirit.

¹¹ **stoical** – enduring pain and hardship without showing one’s feelings or complaining.

¹² **worldlings** – persons absorbed by the concerns, interests, and pleasures of the present world.

¹³ **carking** – anxious.

you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:11). As these precious words of Christ are pondered by the mind and treasured in the heart, they cannot but produce joy. A rejoicing heart comes from an increasing knowledge of and love for the truth as it is in Jesus. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). Yes, it is by feeding and feasting upon the words of the Lord that the soul is made fat, and we are made to sing and make melody in our hearts unto Him.

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:4). As Spurgeon well said, “With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype¹⁴ of the altar! Clearer light should give greater intensity of desire. It was not the altar as such that the Psalmist cared for, for he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism:¹⁵ his soul desired spiritual fellowship—fellowship with God Himself in very deed. What are all the rites of worship unless the Lord is in them; what, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his joy alone, but his *exceeding* joy; not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but *that joy itself*. The margin hath it, ‘The gladness of my joy’; i.e., the soul, the essence, the very [heart] of my joy.”

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18). That is something of which the worldling knows nothing; alas, that it is an experience to which so many professing Christians are strangers! It is in God that the fount of spiritual and everlasting joy originates; from Him it all flows forth. This was acknowledged of old by the church when she said, “All my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). Happy [is] the soul who has truly been taught this secret!

We profit from the Word when we are taught *the great value of joy*. Joy is to the soul what wings are to the bird, enabling us to soar above the things of earth. This is brought out plainly in Nehemiah 8:10: “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” The days of Nehemiah marked a turning point in the history of Israel. A remnant had been freed from Babylon and returned to Palestine. The law, long ignored by the captives, was now to be established again as the rule of the newly-formed commonwealth. There had come a remembrance of the many sins of the

¹⁴ **antitype** – person or thing represented by the type or symbol; here, Christ.

¹⁵ **ritualism** – exaggerated emphasis on the importance of rites or ritualistic forms in worship.

past and tears naturally mingled with the thankfulness that they were again a nation, having a divine worship and a divine law in their midst. Their leader, knowing full well that if the spirit of the people began to flag they could not face and conquer the difficulties of their position, said to them: “This day is holy unto the LORD your God [this feast we are keeping is a day of devout worship; therefore, mourn not]...neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:9-10).

Confession of sin and mourning over the same have their place, and communion with God cannot be maintained without them. Nevertheless, when true repentance has been exercised and things put right with God, we must forget “those things which are behind” and reach “forth unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:13). And we can only press forward with alacrity¹⁶ as our hearts are joyful. How heavy the steps of him who approaches the place where a loved one lies cold in death! How energetic his movements as he goes forth to meet his bride! Lamentation unfits for the battles of life. Where there is despair there is no longer power for obedience. If there is no joy, there can be no worship.

My dear readers, there are tasks needing to be performed, service to others requiring to be rendered, temptations to be overcome, battles to be fought; and we are only experimentally¹⁷ fitted for them as our hearts are rejoicing in the Lord. If our souls are resting in Christ, if our hearts are filled with a tranquil gladness, work will be easy, duties pleasant, sorrow bearable, endurance possible. Neither contrite¹⁸ remembrance of past failures nor vehement¹⁹ resolutions will carry us through. If the arm is to smite with vigor, it must smite at the bidding of a light heart. Of the Savior Himself it is recorded, “Who for *the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2).

We profit from the Word when we attend to *the root of joy*. The spring of joy is *faith*: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom 15:13). There is a wondrous provision in the gospel, both by what it takes from us and what it brings to us, to give a calm and settled glow to the Christian’s heart. It takes away the load of guilt by speaking peace to the stricken conscience. It removes the dread of God and the terror of death that weighs on the soul while it is under condemnation. It gives us God Himself as the portion of our hearts, as the object of our communion. The gospel works joy because the soul is

¹⁶ **alacrity** – eagerness.

¹⁷ **experimentally** – experientially.

¹⁸ **contrite** – broken over sin.

¹⁹ **vehement** – showing strong feeling; intense.

at rest in God. But these blessings become our own only by personal appropriation. Faith must receive them, and when it does so the heart is filled with peace and joy. And the secret of *sustained* joy is to keep the channel open, to continue as we began. It is *unbelief* that clogs the channel. If there is but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, no wonder that the mercury marks so low a degree. If there is a weak faith, joy cannot be strong. Daily do we need to pray for a *fresh* realization of the preciousness of the gospel, a fresh appropriation of its blessed contents; and then there will be a renewing of our joy.

From *The Scriptures and Joy*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



The objects of Christian joy are clearly set forth in Scripture: the chief of these is God Himself. So says David, “I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:3). Paul says, “And not only so, but we also joy in God” (Rom 5:11). Again, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). Isaiah says, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10). In Psalm 5:11, we read, “Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.” So also in many other places, we are exhorted and commanded to rejoice in the Lord. Above all, God is fitted to be an object of unending joy because He is God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all conceivable perfections. The fulness that is in Him meets all our wants. The pious delight in God; so that prayer, which would otherwise be a task, and praise, which would otherwise be a mockery, are refreshing to the soul as it cries, “Abba, Father,” and “Hallelujah.” In like manner, all the duties of the Christian life become pleasant by our joy in God. Our Rock is perfect. “In him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5). He is an ocean of love, an infinitude of matchless loveliness. When He speaks peace, none can give trouble. When He makes glad, none can give sorrow. The mind of the child of God has no more fears than the resources which are in God will ever fail than the mariner has that the sea will go dry. There is none like Jehovah; none before Him, none with Him, none to be compared to Him, none besides Him.—*William S. Plumer*

Divine joys are so delicious and ravishing that they put our mouth out of taste for earthly delights...Paul had so tasted these divine joys that his mouth was out of taste for worldly things; the world was crucified to him, it was like a dead thing, he could find no sweetness in it.

—*Thomas Watson*

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND JOY¹

Samuel Davies (1723-1761)

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed...
—Isaiah 53:10

THIS chapter contains a most lively and moving account of very tragic sufferings; and, if we have but a small share of humanity, we cannot hear it without being affected, even though we did not know the person concerned. Here is one so mangled and disfigured that He has “no form nor comeliness” (v. 2); one “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (v. 3); one wounded, bruised, oppressed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the slaughter; one “cut off out of the land of the living” (v. 8). And who is He? Were He an enemy or a malefactor,² we could not but pity Him. But this was not His character: “He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (v. 9). And He was so far from being our enemy, that “he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (vv. 4-5), not for His own. But what if this should be *the man that is God’s fellow*³ (Zec 13:7), the Redeemer, to Whom we are bound by the most endearing obligations—a person of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our best friend, and only Savior! What if it should be He? Would this not move your hearts and raise all your tender passions? Or shall He die in such agonies unpitied, unlamented, unloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compassion?...My design in the prosecution of this subject is that [the sufferings of Jesus] may have [their due] effect. That it is Jesus Who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of passages quoted from this chapter to Him in the New Testament.

This chapter⁴ has been a successful part of the Scriptures; and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when he asked Philip, “Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”

¹ **EDITOR’S NOTE:** This article has been edited more than usual for readability.

² **malefactor** – criminal.

³ **fellow** – close associate; friend.

⁴ Isaiah 53:1-12.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” And he believed with all his heart and was baptized; “and he went on his way [and heavenward] rejoicing” (Act 8:32-39)...Oh, that it may have the same effect upon you today, my brethren, that with the eunuch, you may return home rejoicing!

The design and method I now have in view is only to illustrate and improve the several parts of my text, especially those that represent how pleasing and satisfactory the conversion and salvation of sinners, by the death of Christ, is to Him.

“When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin” (53:10)...The Lord Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. The punishment of our sin was transferred to Him, and He bore it “in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). He became our substitute⁵ and took our place in [God’s] law; therefore, the penalty of the law due to us was executed upon Him. It is in this, my brethren, *that we have any hope of salvation*: blood for blood, life for life, soul for soul! The blood, the life, the soul of the Son of God, for the blood, life, and soul of the obnoxious⁶ criminal...

You see, Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it [that] He offered?...He had blood in His veins, and that shall all go; He will offer up *that* to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. His soul an offering for sin! His pure, spotless soul! His soul that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliverance of a friend, but who would give his soul? His soul for His enemies? This is the peculiar commendation⁷ of the love of Jesus.

His soul here may signify His *whole human nature*, in which sense it is often taken in the sacred writings. And then the meaning is that both His soul and body, or His whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or His *soul* may be properly understood here for His rational and immortal part in opposition to His body; and then the meaning is that He suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of His suffering, by the temptations of the devil, by an affecting view of the sins of men, and especially by the absence of His heavenly Father. Hence, when His body was untouched in the garden of Gethsemane, He cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38); and elsewhere, “Now is my soul troubled” (Joh 12:27). In short, as one expresses it, “The sufferings of His soul were

⁵ See FGB 207, *Substitution*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁶ **obnoxious** – open to punishment; blameworthy.

⁷ **peculiar commendation** – special praise; *possibly* His own special demonstration.

the soul of His sufferings"...His soul was sorrowful, "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mat 26:38); and all this [was] for sinners such as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom He endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought and try if they can resist its energy: "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (v. 10). *Thou* shalt make, that is, *Thou*, the great God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by *Thy* wisdom and grace and appointed by *Thy* authority, Who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness. Therefore, we may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient...

Or the words may be rendered, "When his soul shall make an offering for sin." And in this sense, it is signified that this was Christ's own voluntary act...He consented to be our substitute and offered Himself a sacrifice for us. He was...subject to no compulsion.⁸ This He tells us Himself: "No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself" (Joh 10:8). Thus, it was His own free choice; and this consideration prodigiously enhances His love...Here was love indeed, that He should offer Himself a voluntary, self-devoted sacrifice!

Now, what shall be the consequence, what the reward of all these sufferings of Christ! Shall He endure all this in vain? Shall He receive no compensation...The man that hung on Calvary and lay dead in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where is He now? Oh, He has burst the bonds of death, triumphed over the grave, and enjoys an immortal life. And He spends this immortal life in a station of the most exalted dignity and perfect happiness forever. "See Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb 2:9). Because "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow..." (Phi 2:8-10). It was for this end that "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom 14:9). By His death He acquired universal government and has the keys of the vast invisible world and of death that leads into it (Rev 1:18). This was a great part of that "joy that was set before him," for the sake of which He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2)...

I may also propose the immortality and exaltation of Christ to you as an encouragement to desponding souls. So the apostle uses it: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God

⁸ **compulsion** – state of being forced to do something.

by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). In trusting your souls to Him, you do not commit them to a dead Savior. It is true, He was once dead above 1700 years ago; but now He is alive; and behold He liveth for evermore. He lives to communicate His Spirit for your sanctification; He lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness. He lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies;⁹ He lives to make perpetual intercession for you (which is the thing the apostle had in view), to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on His blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives forever to make you happy forever! And will you not venture to trust your souls in His hand! You may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to Him; and consequently, nothing can hurt you if He undertakes to be your guard...

And does He not appear to you as an object of love in His exalted state? He is all-glorious and deserves your love; and He is all benevolence and mercy; therefore self-interest, one would think, would induce you to love Him; for to what end is He exalted? Isaiah will tell you [that] He is exalted, “that he may have mercy upon you” (Isa 30:18). He has placed Himself upon His throne, as upon an eminence,¹⁰ may I so speak, that He may more advantageously scatter blessings among the needy crowd beneath Him, that look up to Him with eager wishful eyes, like the lame beggar on Peter and John, expecting to receive something from Him (Act 3:1-11). And shall not such grace and bounty, in one so highly advanced above you, excite your love? Certainly it must, unless that the principle of gratitude be lost in your breasts...

Friends naturally rejoice in the honors conferred upon one another and mutually congratulate each other’s success. And will you that love Jesus not rejoice with Him that He is not now where He once was—not hanging on a painful and [humiliating] cross—but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys? Must you not rejoice that His sufferings for you had so happy an issue regarding Himself? Oh, can you be sunk in sorrow while your Head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain He endured for you? Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all His members; and if

⁹ **exigencies** – urgent needs.

¹⁰ **eminence** – high point or place.

you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet *rejoice* for your Head; share in the joys of your Lord.

Thus, you see Jesus Christ has obtained the richest reward in His own person. But is this all? Shall His sufferings have no happy consequences regarding others, in which He may rejoice as well as for Himself? Yes, for, my text tells you, "He shall see his seed...He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied...the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (53:10-11). What an emphatical variety of expressions are here to signify the *pleasure* that Christ takes in observing the happy fruits of His death in the salvation of many of the ruined sons of men!

"He shall see his seed" (v. 10). By His seed are meant the children of His grace, His followers, the sincere professors of His religion...now by His dying, and lying entombed in the ground, He has produced a large increase. One dying Christ has produced thousands, millions, of Christians. His blood was prolific; it was indeed "the seed of the church." And, blessed be God, its prolific¹¹ virtue is not yet failed. His spiritual seed have been growing up from age to age, and oh, the delightful thought!...Jesus came into our world and shed the blood of His heart on the ground...Spiritual children are rising up to Christ from age to age, from country to country; and blessed be His name, the succession is not yet at an end but will run on as long as the sun endureth. Spiritual children are daily begotten by His Word in one part of the world or other; and even of this place it may be said that "this and that man was born" here (Psa 87:5). And now, are there none among you that feel the pangs of the new birth and [are] about to be added to the number of His children? Oh, that many may be born to Him this day! Oh, that this day we may feel the prolific virtue of the blood that was shed above 1700 years ago!

"He shall see his seed" (v. 10). It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of His life and in all the agonies of death; and this animated Him to endure all with patience. He saw some of His spiritual children weeping around Him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time and saw numerous offspring rising from age to age to call Him blessed, to bear up His name in the world, and to share in His heavenly inheritance. And oh, may we not indulge the pleasing hope that from His cross He cast a look towards...the ends of the earth; and that in His last agonies, He was revived with this reflection: "I see I shall not die in vain. I see My seed dispersed over the world and reaching the wilds of America. I foresee

¹¹ **prolific** – producing an abundance.

that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover,¹² gratefully to commemorate the sufferings I am now enduring, and devote themselves to me for ever.”

O my brethren! Will you not afford the blessed Jesus this pleasure? It is but little, very little, for all the tortures He bore for you. Your sins have given Him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant Him this satisfaction! But the cross is not the only place from whence He takes a view of His spiritual seed. He is now exalted to His throne in the highest heavens; and from thence He takes a wide survey of the universe. He looks down upon our world. He beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but these are not the objects that best please His eyes. He sees His seed. He sees one here and another there, bought with His blood and born of His Spirit; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford Him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine. They may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but He loves to look at them. He esteems them as His children and the fruits of His dying pangs...

But these are not the only children whom He delights to view. They are not all in such an abject,¹³ imperfect state. No, He sees a glorious company of them around His throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance, and resembling their divine Parent. How does His benevolent heart *rejoice* to look over the immense plains of heaven and see them all peopled with His seed! When He takes a view of this numerous offspring, sprung from His blood, and when He looks down to our world, and we hope to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when He sees some, perhaps every hour since He died upon Calvary, entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth; I say, when this prospect appears to Him on every hand, how does He *rejoice*! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled: “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (v. 11). If you put the sentiments of His benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose: “It is enough; since My death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to Me that I may save them, if they will but suffer Me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all My agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of My hanging on the tree for them.”

¹² **Hanover County, Virginia** – county in which Davies preached from 1748-1759.

¹³ **abject** – most unfortunate or miserable.

O sirs, must not your hearts melt away within you to hear such language as this! See the strength of the love of Jesus! If you are saved, He does not grudge His blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become His spiritual seed and behave as children towards Him. This He would count the greatest joy—a joy more than equivalent to all the pains He endured for you.

And O my brethren! Will you not afford Him this joy today? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you. There is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner, and Jesus has a principal share in the joy. And will you endeavor to rob Him of it? If you reject His proposal, the language of your conduct is, “He shall have no cause of joy, as far as I can hinder it. He shall, however, have none from me; all His sufferings shall be in vain, as far as I can render them so.” And are you not shocked at such blasphemy and base ingratitude? The happiness of His exalted state consists, in a great degree, in the pleasure of seeing the designs of His death accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners...

The thing in which He would rejoice, and which I am inculcating¹⁴ upon you, is, that as penitent, helpless sinners, you would cast yourselves entirely upon the merit of His atonement, devote yourselves to His service, and submit to Him as your Lord; that is, that you would become true, genuine, sincere Christians. This and nothing short of this would afford Him pleasure...In affording Christ this pleasure, you will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves; for it is your happiness, your salvation, *that He rejoices in*; therefore, in grieving Him, you ruin yourselves...If you will not suffer Him to rejoice over you in doing you good...He will glorify Himself in your destruction, in the execution of justice upon you...The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the splendors of His perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford Him joy at your conversion this day, He will reward you forever! He will reward you with all the unspeakable joys of heaven.

From “The Sufferings of Christ and Their Consequent Joys and Blessings” in *Sermons on Important Subjects*, Vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1851), 478-497; in the public domain.

Samuel Davies (1723-1761): Presbyterian minister; born in Delaware, USA.



¹⁴ **inculcating** – teaching or impressing upon the mind by frequent instruction or repetition.

PERSUASIONS TO SPIRITUAL JOY

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

EXHORTATION TO BELIEVERS TO SEEK SPIRITUAL JOY. Since believers generally aspire so little to¹ this cheerfulness, considering it to be a matter too high for them, and spending much of their time in heaviness and sorrow, we shall seek to lift them up and endeavor to persuade them to seek this spiritual joy.

Therefore, come believers: “Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing” (Psa 100:2). Have you not tolerated this heaviness and sorrow long enough and spent your time being melancholy? Recognize and acknowledge the grace which is in you—however little it may be. Consider the disposition of other children of God, not dissimilar to yours, and God’s dealings with them. Be in submission to the measure of grace the Lord bestows upon you; do not continue in sin. You and the Lord know that your sins are a heavy burden to you; therefore, go with them to the Surety.² Let neither unbelief nor [unintentional] ignorance concerning the grace that is in you, nor a coveting of greater grace apart from submission, cause you to remain sorrowful any longer. Come, allow me to take you by the hand and instruct you in this matter. Permit yourself to be persuaded, be compliant, and do not resist.

First, this sorrow and being double-minded is contradictory to your state and is harmful in every way, for:

(1) *It is a dishonor to God, your Father.* Apart from the fact that it issues forth from a lack of faith, and thus strengthens unbelief, it prevents God from being glorified or thanked. It is also capable of causing others to have a prejudice toward God, as if He were but a barren wilderness to His people, treats them too harshly, and gives them no occasion to be somewhat refreshed, whereas He is, nevertheless, so good and extraordinarily benevolent.

(2) *It can deter natural men from godliness.* Man’s nature does not find delight in sorrow and cannot imagine that godliness and salvation could consist of sorrow—and indeed, it does not. This hinders them if they begin to entertain thoughts about conversion. See to it that you are

¹ **aspire so little to** – have so little earnest desire for.

² **Surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another; as our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our deliverance by His payment of our debt upon Calvary’s cross.

neither the cause of godliness being evil spoken of, nor hinder anyone from being saved.

(3) *To mourn over sin at the appropriate time and in an appropriate measure and manner is needful and does not prevent one from living cheerfully.* However, those who accustom themselves to being sorrowful consume the strength of their body and frequently acquire an illness from which they suffer their entire lifetime. This ailment is in turn the cause of sorrow and melancholy, and this sorrow in turn worsens the ailment: “A broken spirit drieth the bones” (Pro 17:22). “By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Pro 15:13).

(4) *It is very harmful for spiritual life, injuring it.* It not only impedes its growth but exhausts it; if God by His omnipotence did not preserve it, this sorrow would extinguish it. If one gives in to such mourning, he can progress so far that he finds no delight in anything except in mourning and in consuming his own heart. He is then not fit for anything—not for prayer, believing, battling, and overcoming sin, the practice of virtue, nor for being beneficial to other people—and makes himself unfit to be restored by the common means, since he refuses to be comforted (Psa 77:2). “A wounded spirit who can bear?” (Pro 18:14). Therefore, conduct yourself valiantly, for it is as easy to yield to a mournful frame as it is to collapse for a person who is fainting. However, the harmful consequences are too dangerous. Therefore, lift your head and endeavor to break out of this.

Secondly, believers (even the feeblest) are entitled to and have reason for joy, for it is one of the promises of the Covenant of Grace. Let those of the world be troubled and fearful, and tremble about their present and future state. You, however, who have been delivered from the devil, hell, and wrath, for whom God is a reconciled God and is your portion, who have been adopted as a child of God and have become partakers of justification,³ sanctification,⁴ and eternal glorification,⁵ what reason do you

³ **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in His sight (2Co 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:19), and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9). (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 32) See Free Grace Broadcaster 187, *Justification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God’s Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 34) See Free Grace Broadcaster 215, *Sanctification*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ **glorification** – last stage of salvation, namely, the resurrection of the body at the second coming of Jesus Christ and the believer’s entrance into the consummated kingdom of God. In glorification, believers attain complete conformity to the image and likeness of the glorified Christ and are freed from both physical and spiritual defect.

yet have for sorrow? If you say, “This is still lacking, namely, the actual and effectual enjoyment of all those promised spiritual benefits; and not only the comforts, but also the deliverance from sin itself;” then I respond, “Is God’s promise null and void with you? Are future benefits of lesser value because they are reserved for the future, where they will be an eternal and unchangeable reality—as if in the future you would be able to get by without them? Is not God a God of truth to you? Would His promises be able to fail? Or do you consider the promises of future blessings to be excuses for not presently fulfilling the promises that supplicants⁶ will be heard, that hungry ones will be filled, etc. Be ashamed that you entertain such thoughts about the only wise God Who makes all things well at His time. If a great inheritance has been bequeathed⁷ to someone, and the testator⁸ subsequently dies, would it then be considered worthless because he does not yet see and have the treasures in his hands, knowing, however, with certainty that he will receive them within a short time? Behold, a natural man will convince you. Therefore, value the excellency of the promised benefits, the infallibility of the testament that is confirmed by the death of the testator. Rejoice therefore in your title to the inheritance and in the certainty of future possession, even though you do not enjoy it yet. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Psa 97:11-12). It is sown, and it has been sown for you, and therefore you will also harvest at the appointed time. Rejoice in this hope: “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple” (Psa 65:4).

Thirdly, God is pleased with the joy of His children. It is His will that they delight themselves, value the benefits, fully trust in His Word and in His promise, jubilate,⁹ leap for joy, and sing His praises with joyful and singing lips. Cheerfulness and joyfulness are a delight to Him. “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psa 22:3). “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth” (Isa 64:5). Is it your desire to do something that is pleasing to God? Is God’s nearness, His presence, and your familiar encounters with Him your desire and your delight? Accustom yourself then to live joyfully by faith.

Fourthly, to be joyful in God is heaven. In heaven, there is neither weeping nor sorrow; there is nothing but eternal, exceedingly great, and inexpressible joy. If you could but see and hear how joyful the

⁶ **supplicants** – people who ask humbly or earnestly in prayer.

⁷ **bequeathed** – left by a will after one’s death.

⁸ **testator** – person who leaves a valid will at death.

⁹ **jubilate** – show great happiness.

inhabitants of heaven are, how they jubilate and sing, your heart would indeed be stirred. If you desire heaven, you must find delight in joy, for what else would you do in heaven where there are none but those who are joyful and where there is nothing but joy? Eternal felicity is therefore referred to as joy: “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat 25:21). If there is joy in hope, what joy will possession [produce]? Therefore, let your conversation¹⁰ be in heaven, and begin this heavenly work, that is, to be joyful. Or is being joyful such a heavy and distasteful matter that you would need many persuasive arguments to be stirred up to be joyful? Our nature is naturally inclined toward joy, and every person desires joy. Since you, however, have abundant reason to be joyful, would you then, nonetheless, be sorrowful?

Fifthly, you are very much in need of this joy, for in this joy there is strength against your enemies, as well as for your work. “For the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). Believers, there is yet much to be done by you. There is a world that still needs to be conquered, a devil that still needs to be battled, and flesh that still needs to be overcome. You are yet in need of the ornament of holiness; faith, hope, and love still need to be strengthened and increased. There are yet people who need to be converted, and you yourself have yet to become the luster and the glory of the church. You must yet place a footprint on this earth so that others may know that you have been here. How will you accomplish all this without being cheerful and joyful? A melancholy person is a breeding place for all sorts of sins. The flesh, the world, and the devil have great power and advantage over such a person. Such people will very readily neglect grace received. Carelessly, they act as if present grace does not exist, and thus a melancholy person will be unfit to offer resistance. There is strength in joy, however, and a joyful person can avoid many assaults that then have no opportunity to arise; and if there are such assaults, a joyful person will be able to turn them away with little difficulty. A joyful person will very readily despise the things of this world, and cross providences¹¹ do not oppress him very much. The practice of virtue will be a delight to him, and his joy will make it so attractive; yes, it will make *him* attractive. He will be suited to woo others, comfort those that mourn, and stir up those who are lax; everything suits him, and he is desirous to do everything. Therefore “be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psa 32:11).

¹⁰ **conversation** – behavior; lifestyle.

¹¹ **cross providences** – acts of God that go against a person’s plans or desires.

EXHORTATION TO USE THE MEANS TO ATTAIN THIS JOY. To the end that you should continually exercise faith in Christ,

First, reflect upon the truths pertaining to the atonement and God's way in which He leads man to salvation. Put your trust in Jesus, leaning upon Him. To entrust yourself thus to Him, without seeing Him or apart from any feeling, is the way that leads to joy (1Pe 1:8).

Secondly, continue to read and acknowledge the Word to be what it really is: the Word of God. Acknowledge that it addresses itself at that particular moment to you. Search for the promises, deem them to be unbreakable, and when you apply them to your soul as such, you will experience joy. "For thy word hath quickened me" (Psa 119:50).

Thirdly, pray much and acquaint yourself with the Lord by praying to Him, communing with Him, making requests to Him, and laying before Him all that you lack and desire, especially your desire for joy. "Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Psa 51:8); "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psa 90:14). Pursue the promise and lift your heart to the truth that whatever you will pray for in Christ's name, He will indeed give you. While praying thus, the soul will find herself more often in a joyful frame.

Fourthly, engage much in holy contemplation and meditation. Reflect upon who and what you are, the ways the Lord has led you [this far] and upon your former mourning, seeking, and tears. Reflect upon the comforts and deliverances that the Lord has frequently given you, upon the benefits of the Covenant of Grace (each individually), and upon future glory and all that the soul will forever enjoy there. This is suitable to cause the soul quietly to rejoice. "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD" (Psa 104:34).

Fifthly, be much on guard against yielding to a sinful routine in your life. Even if there are no great falls, this yielding, this drowsy carelessness, and this departing from God will readily rob us of this joy. Rather, one ought to refrain from unrighteousness, and, upon falling, arise each time again and immediately run to the fountain once more. This will, time and again, quicken joyfulness. May the God of our exceeding joy gladden you! Amen.

From *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 455-469.

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711): Dutch theologian and major representative of the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



REJOICING IN EVERY CONDITION

Robert Asty (1642-1681)

*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
—Habakkuk 3:18*

I shall now give you some particular directions as to how you may raise your faith and your spirits in the exercise of faith unto a glorying and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ whatever your saddening, outward providences may be.

DIRECTION 1: If you would come to live upon Christ Jesus alone in the saddest providences of your state, then entertain and keep up *low* thoughts of the *great* things of this world. Truly, Christians, you may think what you will, but while you have hearts that are magnifying and adoring the things of the world and the enjoyments of the world, and counting these as great things, you will never come scripturally to live upon the Lord Jesus. Your thoughts must be altered in and about the comforts of this life, and you must possess your hearts with the thought that these are the smallest comforts of your state,¹ and that the blessings of this life are the least blessings that the Lord has given you. You must have very low thoughts of the world and of the comforts of it if you would come to live by faith in Christ Jesus alone. While you have vast thoughts of your earthly enjoyments, earthly comforts, and earthly conditions, and suppose your comforts to lie here, there, or anywhere short of Christ, you will be driven out of all the exercise of faith by an unfavorable providence...

DIRECTION 2: Acquaint yourselves more with the royalties² of Christ and the greatness of His gospel glory as He is proposed as the object of your faith if you would come to glory in Him alone and live upon Him in an empty condition. One great reason we can take no more comfort in Christ in an *empty* condition is that we are such strangers to the *fullness* of Christ Jesus. We do not know what is in Christ; we do not know what He can do, what is in His heart and hand to give forth to us. Christians, if you would live more by faith in Christ, then view Him in His royalties of grace! Look into the length and the breadth of Christ and see what He is the owner and possessor of, what the Father has

¹ **state** – condition.

² **royalties** – royal powers and magnificence.

entrusted Him with...There is no condition, but He can comfort you in it, let the condition be ever so comfortless. Study, then, the fullness of the Lord Jesus.

DIRECTION 3: Always keep the invisible things of Christ's grace and of Christ's glory in your eye. This is something strange, but it is the mystery of faith. I say, keep invisible things in your eye. Faith knows the meaning of it; faith will spy an invisible thing. That which sense can discern nothing of, faith will espy³ and keep sight of. Now, this was one way that Moses used to bring himself to live upon the Lord Jesus by faith: he kept invisible things in his eye. He saw Him Who was invisible. "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). And what is the description that the apostle gives of faith in a gospel exercise that we are speaking of but that which I have told you, the discerning of invisible things? "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Faith in its exercise will ransack⁴ among the promises, the promises of both grace and glory, and there will spy a great treasure, and show it to the soul as that which is his and belongs to him...*Never* lose the sight of these invisible things. Keep them always in your eye, and then you will see a glorious Jesus Whom your souls will love to dwell upon, and you will not dwell away from Him.

DIRECTION 4: Never ground your faith and hope upon your experience, but upon the promises, which are always attended with wonderful working power. If you ground your faith and hope upon your experiences, then if your second trial is greater than your first, your faith will be perplexed, and you will sit down under discouragement. Indeed, there is a holy and Christian use that is to be made of your experiences, but you must never ground your faith and hope upon them; for God is always an outdoing God. He will outdo His own act. He will go further in one act than He will in another. If you ground your faith upon your experiences, when you come into a new strait that you never came into before, your faith will fail...Faith in the promise will tell you that you have never experienced or seen the utmost end of Christ's power yet; you have never seen into the midst of His treasures of grace. You have seen but a little way. Faith in the promise will tell you this; therefore, never ground your faith and hope upon your experiences, though they have been large, but upon the promises, which always have boundless power working with them.

³ espy – look steadily; catch sight of.

⁴ ransack – search thoroughly.

DIRECTION 5: If you would live by faith upon Christ to receive joy and comfort from Him in every condition, then labor to bring your will to be content with your condition or lot in this world. Keep your spirit within the confines of the will of God under all the various disposals of providence. The recoiling and clashing of our will with our condition is a main hindrance unto our rejoicing in and acting faith upon the Lord Jesus under a sad providence. And the great reason some people are under such great dissatisfaction in their own spirits, and do not know how to bear the troubles of their state, is that their wills are not brought to their condition. Rather, they go about to bring their condition to their wills; and when anything considerable comes upon them that does not suit their wills, it causes disquiets, disturbances of spirit, and discomposure of heart—and such a soul will never rejoice in Christ in an evil day...

DIRECTION 6: If you would live by faith upon Jesus Christ to fetch joy and comfort from Him under the saddest providences of your state, then consider the unchangeable love of Jesus Christ that metes⁵ out and manages all the losses, crosses, trials, and tribulations of your state unto blessed ends. The hard thoughts that we have of our troubles, and the hard thoughts that we have of the Lord when we are troubled, drive us off from Him and lay our spirits under great discouragements. “What!” says the soul, “Live upon Jesus Christ and rejoice in Him? How can I do that when He comes out against me as my enemy? He writes bitter things against me. He is undoing me. He is breaking and spoiling me, and can I rejoice in Him?” The hard thoughts that the church had of the Lord were those which so overwhelmed her spirit when she came into a low condition. “His mercy is clean gone, and He hath forgotten to be gracious. He will be merciful to me no more. His mercies are shut up and fail for evermore. And how can we now rejoice in this Lord?” (see Psa 77:8-9).

Now, all this while you do not understand the Lord nor the design of the Lord; and by your ignorance you come to wrong your own spirits in your present condition by giving way to a feeling of discouragement, which, if you rightly understood the dealings of the Lord, you would know was not the purpose of His providence in this matter. For do but consider that there is unchangeable love engaged in and mixed with every adverse providence. The Lord both strikes and wounds in a way of love. He breaks in upon this or that comfort and makes breaches in your condition in a way of love and grace. The Lord takes away a

⁵ metes – measures.

creature comfort from a Christian to make more room in his heart for Christ. The Lord puts him into the furnace so that He may purify him from his dross. The Lord purges him to make him a partaker of His holiness (Heb 12:10). The Lord shakes him from every feeling of confidence and comfort in the things of this life so that he might take faster hold upon Christ Jesus.

The Lord sends out every tribulation upon you with a charge to do you good and to use you kindly. When David sent out his army he gave them a charge: “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom” (2Sa 18:5). So says Jesus Christ unto every cross that befalls you, “Use My servant kindly for My sake; treat him well.” The Lord says unto any loss, “Work for the gain of such a servant of Mine.” The Lord says unto such a cross, “You try, you refine, you purge, and you improve My servant.” Unto such a tribulation He says, “Go and do such servants of Mine good.”

There is unchangeable love and grace that metes out and manages unto blessed ends all the crosses of your condition. “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). We say, “Crossed is the man, broken is the man, and undone is the man, who is thus dealt with.” But God says, “Happy is the man.” There is a blessing under the cross; there are love and grace in the trial that you do not consider, Christian. And this will be more advantageous to you than all the disadvantages that the cross can bring upon you, in itself considered. “For whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Pro 3:12). So then there is love in all the Lord’s corrections... “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19). “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Rom 8:35). “None of these things shall do it,” He says. So, if you would come to rejoice in the Lord in a trying hour, consider the unchangeable love of Jesus Christ, Who metes out and manages the crosses that you are called to bear. “It was good for me,” said the Psalmist, “that I was afflicted” (Psa 119:71). And again, “I believed, therefore have I spoken; I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?” (Psa 116:10-12).

DIRECTION 7: Consider the relationship that Christ stands in to your souls and the grace that is dispensed to you because of this relationship... You pore over⁶ an emptying providence and do not consider the

⁶ pore over – think intently upon.

satisfying relationship that Christ has unchangeably entered with your souls. This is a relationship of grace that is *always* comforting and relieving, and that always has new supplies of grace springing up in it for your assistance. I will say a little regarding some aspects of this relationship.

He is the Father of believers. The Lord Jesus Christ is called by that name in Isaiah 9:6: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given...and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father.” So Isaiah 8:18: “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.” “Behold, I and the children”—we are the Lord’s children. And Isaiah 63:16: “Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.” This is spoken of Christ Jesus...When the Lord tells us that He stands in this relationship to us, He tells us that He will exercise the tenderness, the pity, and the kindness of a father unto this child. Now a tender-hearted father will consider his child in all conditions and in all his straits;⁷ and though it is a rebellious child, He will still consider it, and He will exercise the pity and the tenderness of a father toward it...Christ says, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luk 11:13). Why, fathers in the flesh cannot outlove Jesus Christ. They do not have a larger heart for their children than Christ has for His.

He is the Husband of believers. Now, that is a relationship of great care and tenderness. Oh, the faithful, wise, able, loving husband will defend his wife, provide for his wife, safeguard his wife, and pity his wife! In all her exigencies she will be like his own soul. “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh...This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:28-29, 32). So, all believers are betrothed and married unto Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ, as a loving, able, wise, tender-hearted Husband, will secure, defend, and provide for those who are married to Him much more than earthly husbands can do for their wives.

He is the Brother of believers. Jesus Christ is our elder Brother. Now, a brother under the law was not to see any of his younger brethren in a decayed and low condition without relieving them. “If thy brother be

⁷ **straits** – difficulties.

waxen poor, and fallen in decay...then thou shalt relieve him,” was a Scripture law (Lev 25:35). Now, Christ says, I am “not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). And He will be a most loving, tender-hearted, faithful Brother unto all His brethren, whatever their straits and their trials are.

Oh, Christians, I pray you, weigh well and receive by faith what God reveals to you of the aiding, relieving, helpful relationships of grace that Christ stands in to your souls. Receive them, I say, by faith, and exercise your faith upon them. Do you sometimes think, “What if I had such a father, so wise, so able, so loving, so tender-hearted? How would my heart rejoice in him!” Why, Christians, you have all that you can imagine in Christ as a Father to you! But you say, “If I had such a tender husband, such a kind-hearted husband, how would I take comfort in him.” Christian, you have all in Christ Jesus that you can imagine, and much more abundantly. Imagine the most loving, faithful brother there ever was on the earth; you have more in Christ Jesus than can be imagined. Christ stands in all these relationships to you, and these relationships are obligations for Him. According to these relationships will He act and dispense, and according to the obligation of every relationship shall the dispensation be...

Know further, Christians, that you can never outlive the love and the grace of the relationships of Christ; neither can you overburden the love of any of His relationships. You can never overcharge His love. There is a natural love arising in the heart of a father towards his children, a growing, springing love every day, so that, notwithstanding many provocations,⁸ still the father keeps his heart upon his child. Thus, though there are provocations between you and your heavenly Father, yet His heart is kept towards you. His heart is the heart of a Father. His heart is the heart of a Husband, and His heart is the heart of a Brother—and you can never overburden His love, nor outlive His grace, nor over-believe the fullness of these relationships of grace that He stands in to your souls.

From *Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus in All Cases and Conditions*, (Morgan, PA; Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 172-198; used by permission.



There is as much difference between spiritual joys and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.

—Thomas Watson

⁸ **provocations** – actions or speech that anger or annoy.

MAINTAINING OUR JOY AND BALANCING SORROW

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

WE profit from the Word when *we are careful to maintain our joy*. “Joy in the Holy Spirit” is altogether different from a natural buoyancy¹ of spirit. It is the product of the Comforter dwelling in our hearts and bodies, revealing Christ to us, answering all our need for pardon and cleansing, and so setting us at peace with God and forming Christ in us, so that He reigns in our souls, subduing us to His control. There are no circumstances of trial and temptation in which we may refrain from it, for the command is, “Rejoice in the Lord *alway*” (Phi 4:4). He Who gave this command knows all about the dark side of our lives, the sins and sorrows that beset us, the “much tribulation” through which we must enter the kingdom of God (Act 14:22). Natural hilarity² leaves the woes of our earthly lot out of its reckoning. It soon relaxes in the presence of life’s hardships: it cannot survive the loss of friends or health. But the joy to which we are exhorted is not limited to any set of circumstances or type of temperament; nor does it fluctuate with our varying moods and fortunes.

Nature may assert itself in the subjects of it, as even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Nevertheless, they can exclaim with Paul, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). The Christian may be loaded with heavy responsibilities, his life may have a series of reverses, his plans may be thwarted³ and his hopes blighted, the grave may close over the loved ones who gave his earthly life its cheer and sweetness; and yet, under all his disappointments and sorrows, his Lord still bids him, “Rejoice.” Behold the apostles in Philippi’s prison, in the innermost dungeon, with feet fast in the stocks, and backs bleeding and smarting from the terrible scourging they had received. How were they occupied? In grumbling and growling? In asking what they had done to deserve such treatment? No! “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God” (Act 16:25). There was no sin in their lives, they were walking obediently, and so the Holy Spirit was free to take of the things of Christ and show them unto their hearts, so

¹ **buoyancy** – cheerful and optimistic attitude.

² **hilarity** – cheerfulness.

³ **thwarted...blighted** – prevented from accomplishment.

that they were filled to overflowing. If we are to maintain our joy, we must keep from grieving the Holy Spirit.

When Christ is supreme in the heart, joy fills it. When He is Lord of every desire, the Source of every motive, the Subjugator⁴ of every lust, then will joy fill the heart and praise ascend from the lips. The possession of this involves taking up the cross every hour of the day; God has so ordered it that we cannot have the one without the other. Self-sacrifice, the cutting off a right hand, the plucking out of a right eye, are the avenues through which the Spirit enters the soul, bringing with Him the joys of God's approving smile and the assurance of His love and abiding presence. Much also depends upon the spirit in which we enter the world each day. If we expect people to pet and pamper⁵ us, disappointment will make us fretful. If we desire our pride to be ministered to, we are dejected when it is not. The secret of happiness is forgetting self and seeking to minister to the happiness of others. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Act 20:35); so it is a happier thing to minister to others than to be ministered to.

We profit from the Word when *we are sedulous⁶ in avoiding the hindrances to joy.* Why is it that so many Christians have so little joy? Are they not all born children of the light and of the day? This term "light," which is so often used in Scripture to describe to us the nature of God, our relations to Him, and our future destiny, is most suggestive of joy and gladness. What other thing in nature is as beneficent and beautiful as the light? "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1Jo 1:5). It is only as we walk with God, in the light, that the heart can truly be joyous. It is the deliberate allowing of things which mar our fellowship with Him that chills and darkens our souls. It is the indulgence of the flesh, the fraternizing⁷ with the world, the entering of forbidden paths that blight our spiritual lives and make us cheerless.

David had to cry, "Restore unto me *the joy* of thy salvation" (Psa 51:12). He had grown lax and self-indulgent. Temptation presented itself, and he had no power to resist. He yielded, and one sin led to another. He was a backslider, out of touch with God. Unconfessed sin lay heavy on his conscience. Oh, my brethren and sisters, if we are to be kept from such a fall, if we are not to lose our joy, then self must be denied, the affections and lusts of the flesh crucified. We must ever be on our watch against temptation. We must spend much time upon our

⁴ **Subjugator** – one who subdues or conquers.

⁵ **pet and pamper** – treat with favoritism and excessive indulgence.

⁶ **sedulous** – deliberately and consciously persistent.

⁷ **fraternizing** – forming friendship.

knees. We must drink frequently from the Fountain of living waters. We must be out-and-out⁸ for the Lord.

We profit from the Word when we *diligently preserve the balance between sorrow and joy.* If the Christian faith has a marked adaptation to produce joy, it has an almost equal design and tendency to produce sorrow—a sorrow that is solemn, manly, noble. “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10) is the rule of the Christian’s life. If faith casts its light upon our condition, our nature, our sins, sadness must be one of the effects. There is nothing more contemptible in itself, and there is no surer mark of a superficial character and trivial round⁹ of occupation, than unshaded gladness, that rests on no deep foundations of quiet, patient grief—grief because I know what I am and what I ought to be; grief because I look out on the world and see hell’s fire burning at the back of mirth and laughter, and know *what* it is that men are hurrying to.

He Who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Psa 45:7) was also “the man of *sorrows* and acquainted with *grief*” (Isa 53:3). And both characters are (in measure) repeated in the operations of His gospel upon every heart that really receives it. And if, on the one hand, by the fears it removes from us and the hopes it breathes into us, and the fellowship into which it introduces us, we are anointed with the oil of gladness; on the other hand, by the sense of our own vileness that it teaches us, by the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, there is infused a sadness that finds expression in “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24). These two are not contradictory but complementary. The Lamb must be eaten with “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8).

From *The Scriptures and Joy*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



From where...flows the life of spiritual joy, but from the life-giving blood of Immanuel? There can be no real joy but in the experience of pardoned sin. The joy of the unpardoned soul is the joy of the condemned criminal on his way to death—a mockery and a delusion. With all his sins upon him, with all his iniquities yet unforgiven, every step brings him nearer to the horrors of the second death; what, then, can he know of true joy? But when the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon the heart, and the sense of sin forgiven is sealed upon the conscience, then there is joy indeed, “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8).—*Octavius Winslow*

The joys that believers have are abiding; they are a blossom of eternity, a pledge and earnest of those rivers of pleasure that run at God’s right hand forevermore.—*Thomas Watson*

⁸ **out-and-out** – completely.

⁹ **trivial round** – meaningless repetition.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY OF JOY

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.—Philippians 4:4

THERE is a marvelous medicinal power in joy. Most medicines are distasteful; but this, which is the best of all medicines, is sweet to the taste and comforting to the heart. We noticed in our reading that there had been a little tiff¹ between two sisters in the church at Philippi (Phi 4:2-3). I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about; I am usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects. But, as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy *in the Lord*, are not apt² either to give offence or to take offence. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles that naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord. Should it not be so? What is this joy but the concord³ of the soul, the accord of the heart with the joy of heaven? Joy in the Lord, then, drives away the discords of earth.

Further, brethren, notice that the apostle, after he had said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," commanded the Philippians to "be careful for nothing,"⁴ thus implying that joy in the Lord is one of the best preparations for the trials of this life. The cure for care is joy in the Lord. No, my brother, you will not be able to keep on with your fretfulness;⁵ no, my sister, you will not be able to weary yourself any longer with your anxieties, if the Lord will but fill you with His joy. Then, being satisfied with your God, yes, more than satisfied, overflowing with delight in Him, you will say to yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted⁶ in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance"⁷ (Psa 42:5). What is there on earth that is worth fretting [about] even for five minutes? If one could gain an imperial crown by a day of care, it would be too great

¹ **tiff** – quarrel.

² **apt** – having a tendency to do something; likely.

³ **concord** – harmonious state.

⁴ **be careful for nothing** – do not be overly concerned or worried about anything.

⁵ **fretfulness** – irritable anxiety or complaint.

⁶ **disquieted** – disturbed; restless.

⁷ **countenance** – face or facial expression.

an expense for a thing which would bring more care with it. Therefore, let us be thankful, let us be joyful in the Lord. I count it one of the wisest things that, by rejoicing in the Lord, we commence our heaven here below. It is possible so to do, it is profitable so to do, and we are commanded so to do...

In the first place, *this is a very delightful thing.* What a gracious God we serve, Who makes delight to be a duty, and Who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy. That is the meaning of the precept, that we should be cheerful; more than that, that we should be thankful; more than that, that we should rejoice. I think this word *re-joyce* is almost a French word; it is not only joy, but it is joy over again: re-joyce. You know *re* usually signifies the reduplication of a thing, the taking it over again. We are to joy, and then we are to re-joy. We are to chew the cud of delight; we are to roll the dainty morsel under our tongue until we get the very essence out of it. "Rejoice." Joy is a delightful thing. You cannot be too happy, brother. Nay, do not suspect yourself of being wrong because you are full of delight. You know it is said of the divine wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Pro 3:17). Provided that it is joy in the Lord, you cannot have too much of it. The fly is drowned in the honey, or the sweet syrup into which he plunges himself; but this heavenly syrup of delight will not drown your soul or intoxicate your heart. It will do you good, and not evil, all the days of your life. God never commanded us to do a thing that would really harm us; and when He bids us rejoice, we may be sure that this is as delightful as it is safe, and as safe as it is delightful. Come, brothers and sisters, I am inviting you now to no distasteful duty when, in the name of my Master, I say to you, as Paul said to the Philippians under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

But, next, *this is a demonstrative duty.* "Rejoice in the Lord." There may be such a thing as a dumb⁸ joy, but I hardly think that it can keep dumb long. Joy! Joy! Why, it speaks for itself! It is like a candle lighted in a dark chamber; you need not sound a trumpet, and say, "Now light has come." The candle proclaims itself by its own brilliance; and when joy comes into a man, it shines out of his eyes, it sparkles in his countenance. There is a something about every limb of the man that betokens⁹ that his body, like a well-tuned harp, has had its strings put in

⁸ dumb – speechless.

⁹ betokens – indicates.

order. Joy—it refreshes the marrow of the bones; it quickens the flowing of the blood in the veins; it is a healthy thing in all respects. It is a speaking thing, a demonstrative thing; and I am sure that joy in the Lord ought to have a tongue. When the Lord sends you affliction, sister, you generally grumble loudly enough. When the Lord tries you, my dear brother, you generally speak fast enough about that. Now when, on the other hand, the Lord multiplies His mercies to you, do speak about it, do sing about it...What a pity it is that we do not give the Lord some of our praises when we have better times! If we are so loud and so eloquent over our present woes, why could we not have been as eloquent and as loud in thanksgiving for the blessings that God formerly vouchsafed¹⁰ to us? Perhaps the mercies buried in oblivion have been to heaven and accused us to the Lord, and therefore, He has sent us the sorrows of today. True joy, when it is joy in the Lord, must speak; it cannot hold its tongue, it must praise the name of the Lord!

Further, *this blessed grace of joy is very contagious.* It is a great privilege, I think, to meet a truly happy man, a graciously happy man. My mind goes back at this moment to that dear man of God who used to be with us, years ago, whom we called “Old Father Dransfield.” What a lump of sunshine that man was! I think that I never came into this place with a heavy heart, but the very sight of him seemed to fill me with exhilaration, for his joy was wholly in his God! An old man and full of years, but as full of happiness as he was full of days, always having something to tell you to encourage you. He constantly made a discovery of some fresh mercy for which we were again to praise God. O dear brethren, let us rejoice in the Lord, that we may set others rejoicing! One dolorous¹¹ spirit brings a kind of plague into the house. One person who is always wretched seems to stop all the birds singing wherever he goes; but, as the birds pipe to each other, and one morning songster quickens all the rest, and sets the groves ringing with harmony, so will it be with the happy, cheerful spirit of a man who obeys the command of the text, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” This grace of joy is contagious.

Besides, dear brethren, *joy in the Lord is influential for good.* I am sure that there is a mighty influence wielded by a consistently joyous spirit. See how little children are affected by the presence of a happy person. There is much more in the tone of the life than there is in the particular fashion of the life. It may be the life of one who is very poor, but oh, how poverty is gilded¹² by a cheerful spirit! It may be the life of one

¹⁰ **vouchsafed** – granted graciously.

¹¹ **dolorous** – sorrowful.

¹² **gilded** – overlaid with a thin coating of gold.

who is well-read and deeply instructed; but oh, if there be a beauty of holiness, and a beauty of happiness added to the learning, nobody talks about “the blue stocking” or “the bookworm” being dull and heavy. Oh, no, there is a charm about holy joy! I wish we had more of it! There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar; and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by happy Christians than by doleful Christians. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live; and, mayhap, some weary sinner, who has discovered the emptiness of sinful pleasure, will say to himself, “Why, after all, there must be something real about the joy of these Christians; let me go and learn how I may have it.” And when he comes and sees it in the light of your glad-some countenance, he will be likely to learn it, God helping him, so as never to forget it. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” says the apostle, for joy is a most influential grace, and every child of God ought to possess it in a high degree.

I want you to notice, dear friends, that *this rejoicing is commanded*. It is not a matter that is left to your option. It is not set before you as a desirable thing that you can do without, but it is a positive precept of the Holy Spirit to all who are in the Lord: “Rejoice in the Lord always.” We ought to obey this precept because joy in the Lord makes us like God. He is the happy God. Ineffable bliss¹³ is the atmosphere in which He lives, and He would have His people to be happy. Let the devotees of Baal cut themselves with knives and lancets and make hideous outcries if they will; but the servants of Jehovah must not even mar the corners of their beard. Even if they fast, they shall anoint their head and wash their face that they appear not unto men to fast, for a joyous God desires a joyous people.

You are commanded to rejoice, brethren, because this is for your profit. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life's machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labor. Holy joy will beautify you, and, as I have already said, give you an influence over the lives of others. It is upon this point that I would most of all insist: we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. If you cannot speak the gospel, live the gospel by your cheerfulness. For what is the gospel? Glad tidings of great joy; and you who believe it must show by its effect upon you that it is glad tidings of great joy to you. I do believe that a man of God—under trial and difficulty and affliction, bearing up, and patiently submitting with holy acquiescence¹⁴ and still rejoicing in God—is a real

¹³ **ineffable bliss** – joy too great to be described in words.

¹⁴ **acquiescence** – acceptance and submission without protest.

preacher of the gospel, preaching with an eloquence that is mightier than words can ever be, and which will find its secret and silent way into the hearts of those who might have resisted other arguments. Oh, do, then, listen to the text, for it is a command from God, “Rejoice in the Lord alway!”

May I just pause here and hand this commandment round to all of you who are members of this church and to all of you who are truly members of Christ? You are bidden to rejoice in the Lord alway. You are not allowed to sit there and fret and fume. You are not permitted to complain and groan. Mourner, you are commanded to put on beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. For this purpose, your Savior came; the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him for this very end, that He might make you to rejoice. Therefore, sing with the prophet: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10). From a sermon intended for reading on Lord’s Day, March 24, 1895, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



Though you do not now behold [Christ] as His disciples did while He tabernacled upon earth, yet you are really to regard Him in these aspects as still present with you, as still accessible to you, as standing to you in a peculiarly close and intimate relation—a help in every time of trouble, a guide in every perplexity, a comforter in every affliction, and a protector from every danger. And when you do really look to Him as your all-powerful Advocate, your never-failing Friend and almighty Protector, surely you must “rejoice” in Him with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory! You have just to open His Word, and, by the help of the Word, to enter through faith within the veil, and you then see Him possessed of these qualities, and find Him engaged in these occupations, which should not only endear Him more and more to your hearts, but call forth a joy such as you cannot express—unbounded exultation in having such a Saviour and such a Friend, and unlimited confidence in His ability and willingness to save you from all sin, sorrow, and suffering, and to give you all that is necessary for securing a happy, contented, useful life and a glorious eternity.—*William Cunningham*

Christian, this is a great ground of rejoicing, that you may look unto your Jesus and see Him always loving you. Your ways are very uneven and inconstant, and you cannot keep in as good a frame as you would; yet still Jesus loves you.—*Robert Asty*