

Christian Joy!

I got up at 4:30 am, went to the church and prayed with those gathered for “Alive at Five,” our early morning prayer time. I came home for breakfast before daylight. After parking the car in the garage I quietly entered the house and to my surprise, my wife was standing just inside the door, lights off with a flashlight under her chin, grinning at me. We both burst into laughter. I have not been able to get this merry moment out of my mind all day. After all these years, we’re still having fun. I have believed for years and believe even more now than ever, that God’s people have more real happiness than anyone in the world. The worst day for the Christian is better than the best day in the world without God. I would like to discuss with you the Christian’s life of joy.

1. The joy of the Christian exceeds the happiness of the world.

The world lives for happiness. It takes happenings to make the world happy. When they run out of happenings or the happenings get old, they run out of joy. The Christian lives for Jesus. Our joy doesn’t require happenings; we have a built in joy so that no matter what the circumstances, we have joy. Come rain or shine, we joy! Jesus said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (John 15:11). The promise is full joy, not partial, not temporary, but in Christ we have the potential of permanent joy to the maximum capacity. Peter re-affirmed this promise when he said, *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). The joy we have is so good it does not require visible, audible, or tactile manifestation. The joy we have in Jesus is birthed in the spirit and flows through the heart and emotions alone and is beyond anything that is activated by all five of our senses. Peter classified this joy as indescribable, unspeakable and full of His glory!

2. Christian joy is “out of this world.”

True joy originates in Heaven. There was joy in Heaven before the world was created and before you and I ever breathed our first breath or laughed our first laugh. In the oldest book of the Bible, God asks where we were, *“when the morning stars (angels) sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* (Job 38:7). In the early days of creation the angels of God were praising God with joy over every creative act He performed! It appears when God made the sun, moon, stars and this planet the angels were joyfully praising God. Think of it, when God formed man of the dust of the earth and Eve from man’s side, the angels were praising God with unleashed joy! I submit to you that Christian joy is not inculcated by our modern worldly comedic induction; it comes from God and it was with Him from before the foundation of the world.

Joy was not dispersed as a heavenly dispensation to earth and then vacated. Why, there is a party in Heaven every time someone gets saved! Jesus

said, *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"* (Luke 15:7). *"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:10). It doesn't require hundreds or even thousands to repent and believe; if only one repents, that is enough to kick over heaven's joy bucket! Since we believe that throughout the world, somewhere, someone is being saved around the clock, there is therefore perpetual joy in heaven over this one issue alone! I say Amen and Amen!

3. Knowing God is the Christian's source of joy.

I think it is a sin to convey knowing God as boring. We can be boring, but never God. Habakkuk said, *"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation"* (Habakkuk 3:18). Jonah said, *"...Salvation is of the LORD"* (Jonah 2:9). God's *"...so great salvation..."* (Hebrews 2:3) is the very harbinger of true joy. Paul said, *"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement"* (Romans 5:11). The Westminster Larger Catechism (1648), begins with this question and answer, "Question 1: What is the chief and highest end of man? Answer: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever." I would agree wholeheartedly with this statement. And man is only able to joy in God if first of all he gets to know God.

Isaiah said, *"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"* (Isaiah 12:3). Salvation was compared to a well. Jesus said to the woman at the well, *"...He (referring to Himself) would have given thee living water"* (John 4:10). Three chapters later, Jesus said, *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:38). Returning our thoughts to the woman at the well, she asked, *"...Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?"* (John 4:11). Soon she believed on the Lord Jesus and discovered that He was Himself the Source of the living water. John 4:28 says, *"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"* (John 4:28,29). I don't think it is too much metaphorical meandering to surmise the woman left her water pot because she took the whole well with her! Can you not hear the joy in her expression, *"Come see a Man!"*?

4. Christian service is the natural expression of Christian joy.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:35, 36). After the Lord saved the woman at the well and the disciples are mystified by His care and concern for this formerly lost woman, Jesus explains that they, too, need to observe that it is time for a spiritual harvest and when we partner with Him, we shall all end up rejoicing. Just to list a few joys that come from serving Christ: 1) We have the joy of soul winning, *"They that sow in tears*

shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5,6). 2) We have the joy of answered prayer, *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:24). There is the resulting joy from preaching: *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them...And there was great joy in that city”* (Acts 8:4,5, 8). There is joy in ministry of music: *“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God”* (Psalm 43:4). *“...Is any merry? let him sing psalms”* (James 5:13). There is the joy of giving: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (II Corinthians 9:7). And there are more joys for which I do not have to space to list!

5. Christian joy gives strength.

God’s Word says, *“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10). What a blessed promise, *“...the joy of the LORD is your strength”!* The word “strength” is translated from the Hebrew word: “mauwz” which means a fortified place; a defense; a fortress, a rock, harbor, refuge or a stronghold. Our joy becomes a protective agent against all discouraging influences. Notice the contrasting, overcoming and strength- providing joy God gives His people who trust in Him: *“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken”* (Proverbs 15:13). *“All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast”* (Proverbs 15:15). *“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones”* (Proverbs 17:22). So don’t forget to take you medicine today. Be joyful!

-Pastor Pope-