

A Life of Joy
By Paul R. Blake

"Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). This instruction was written by the apostle Paul who was enduring strong trials while being inspired to write the book of Philippians. He suffered oppression from civil government, interference from his countrymen, and jealousy from some of his brethren. How could this sorely tried saint find cause to rejoice under these circumstances? His answer is in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Paul found strength in Christ to be joyful in the most difficult of times, because his joy as a Christian was the product of a right relationship with God. True joy cannot be generated and maintained by the purposes and plans of men.

What is Christian joy? Joy is the resolutely happy, peacefully content condition that comes from knowing and serving God. It is the emotional frame of mind that is excited by gaining what is good and by anticipating better things to come. Joy is not directly related to happiness, for happiness is dependent upon circumstances that are subject to change. On the other hand, the Christian's joy is rooted in things that do not change, such as God's promise of a home in heaven for the righteous, the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, and our fellowship with God through His word.

In fact, joy can be experienced during affliction, and it can thrive in the hardest of times. Paul told the Corinthians that from one perspective he had cause to be sorrowful, but instead he found himself rejoicing (2 Cor. 6:10). He further states: "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 7:4). This is easily understood when we remember that our joy is based on a right relationship with God. Can suffering separate the devout from God? On the contrary, suffering draws the disciple closer to the Lord. Can a persecutor force himself in between the faithful and the Lord? Under persecution, children of God are refined and strengthened (1 Pet. 1:3-9). As long as our fellowship with God continues, our joy remains steadfast. Remember what Paul said in Philippians 4:4... "Rejoice IN THE LORD."

What is the source of Christian joy? "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" (Isa. 61:10). We have great joy in God because it is through Him that we have obtained remission of sins. He made it possible for man to be free from all unrighteousness and its attending consequences. How can one be unhappy who has had all guilt removed? How can one not be joyful who has had the sentence of spiritual death lifted? Paul pronounced a blessing on the Romans by saying "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing..." (Rom. 15:13). God gives us joy through the happy condition of sinlessness.

The Father also grants us joy through anticipation of a home in heaven. Jesus, because of the joy to which He looked forward, was able to endure the temporary suffering on the cross just by focusing on the promised reward (Heb. 12:2). Likewise, when we anticipate heaven, we are able joyfully to endure the temporary trials in the present life.

God is also the fountain of our joy in daily living. Through Him we have joy in our families (Prov. 5:18), joy in food and things that sustain us (1 Tim. 4:4-5), and joy in our

fellowship with other Christians (Phil. 4:1). God, as the Giver of all things good, has certainly blessed us with strong cause to be filled with joy.

Afraid to Be Counted

"Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong" (1Cor. 16:13). Some years ago, Premier Khrushchev was speaking before the Supreme Soviet and was severely critical of the late Premier Stalin. While he was speaking someone from the audience sent up a note: "What were you doing when Stalin committed all these atrocities?"

Khrushchev shouted, "Who sent up that note?" Not a person stirred. "I'll give him one minute to stand up!" The seconds ticked off. Still no one moved. "All right, I'll tell you what I was doing. I was doing exactly what the writer of this note was doing--exactly nothing! I was afraid to be counted!" (From Illustrations Unlimited, by James S. Hewett, p. 128)

"Man's Wisdom"

By Hazel A. Dillehay

Said Brother Wood, "I think it's time
We have another preacher;
I know old Brother True is good,
He is a splendid teacher.
Oh yes, his daily walk in life
Is faithful to the Master,
But Sister Chaff and Brother Hay
Would like a younger "pastor."
They think our young would come much more,
Their interest would grow better;
Our youth needs one who understands—
We need a young go-getter."

So Brothers Wood and Hay agreed
To talk to Elder Stubble,
And Sister Chaff talked up the plan
To Brethren Vain and Trouble.
A business meeting then was called,
Good Brother True was slighted;
It was agreed to let him go,
A "mixer" good, was cited!
In all due time the date was fixed,
The preacher fair and youthful
Was called at a far greater sum
To preach a younger Gospel.

His manner was by most approved,

He preached of God's love given,
But he rarely gave the gospel plan
Which leads souls on to heaven.
He told some truths, all will concede,
He talked about the Savior,
But he never once condemned the dance
Or the picture show disfavored.
He never taught that booze was wrong
Or spoke against card playing.
He just preached Christ, and all the folks
Kept right on disobeying.

'Tis true we must be careful who
We choose to preach the gospel;
Some will pervert the word of God,
While some are true and faithful.
The thing which leads the young to Christ
Is not the clever preacher.
From babyhood, God's word is taught
By parents and by teacher.

So, Christian worker, study hard
And of God be approved;
Then all the Stubble, Hay and Wood
And Chaff will be removed.
By use our senses will be keen
That we may quick discern
Between the good and evil,
Then Man's wisdom we will spurn.
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