

## What Is Unique About Christian Joy?

By Paul R. Blake

First, one's capacity for joy is increased by sorrow and trials. This is true even though it may appear counter-intuitive. Jesus told his disciples that the sorrow they felt over His departure will make their joy even greater upon His return (John 16:20-22). Just as thirst can make a cool drink taste more refreshing, so present sorrows can help intensify appreciation for future joy. In the world, grief robs us of joy; in Christ, grief becomes an avenue for joy.

Second, true joy helps the Christian to discover profit and advantage in his sufferings. James instructs us to take joy in trials (James 1:2-4), for trials bring patience, a much needed virtue for Christian living. The Hebrews took joy in the robbing of their property by persecutors because it reminded them of their great possessions in heaven (Heb. 10:34). The apostles joyfully viewed persecution as an affirmation that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). Jesus taught that those who suffer persecution should take joy in the sharing of suffering with Himself and the prophets (Matt. 5:11-12). Outside Christ, suffering becomes a cause for anger and despair. Among Christians, burdens are looked upon as welcome opportunities.

Third, joy is shared among Christians. In Luke 15, Jesus relates three parables designed to teach us to rejoice together, especially when the lost are restored to God's favor and to our fellowship. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd calls his neighbors together when he finds the sheep and says "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (v 6). In the account of the lost coin, the woman, upon finding the coin, summons her neighbors saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost" (v 9). Upon the return of the prodigal son, the father says to the envious older son, "It was right that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (v 32). Joy begets joy among God's children (Rom. 12:15; 1Cor. 12:26); in the world, joy often produces jealousy in the hearts of others.

Lastly, Christian joy is burglar-proof; it cannot be stolen away by anyone or anything. Jesus said in John 16:22 that no man would be able to take away their joy. Grief and suffering do not have the capacity to rob us of joy; no man can steal our joy; no force of nature can diminish our joy. The lost have a joy that is easily taken away; the saved have a joy that cannot be moved. One might ask at this point: "If Christian joy cannot be taken away, then why are some Christians unhappy?" The answer is simple... our own sins diminish our joy. Our sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2). Since our joy is based on a right relationship with God, when that relationship is damaged, our joy is damaged along with it. When David sinned, he acknowledged that he had to be restored to righteousness before he could find joy again (Psalm 51:8, 12).

### Conclusion

Joy is not elusive; it is readily found by those who pursue righteousness. Joy is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, produced by those who live according to the guidance of the Word. If we walk in fellowship with God, Christian joy will be our companion along the pathway. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

## Too Many Men of Science

"We have too many men of science; too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living." General Omar Bradley, Armistice Day Speech, 1948

## Love the Child; Hate the Dirt

Two men walking down the street saw a child who was dirty. One man says, "Look at that child; I'll bet its mother doesn't love it." The other man replied "Oh, her mother probably loves her a lot; she just doesn't hate dirt. You on the other hand hate the dirt, but you don't love the child enough to do anything about it. Until a person is found who both hates the dirt and loves the child, she will remain in this condition." The application is of course about sinners and their sins.

## The Idler

By Dr. Samuel Johnson (1758)

But idleness predominates in many lives where it is not suspected, for being a vice which terminates in it, it may be enjoyed without injury to others, and is therefore not watched like fraud, which endangers property, or like pride which naturally seeks its gratification in another's inferiority. Idleness is a silent and peaceful quality that neither raises envy by ostentation, nor hatred by opposition; and therefore no body is busy to censure or detect it.

As pride sometimes is hid under humility, idleness is often covered by turbulence and hurry. He that neglects his known duty and real employment, naturally endeavors to crowd his mind with something that may bar out the remembrance of his own folly, and does anything but what he ought to do with eager diligence, that he may keep himself in his own favor. Some are always in a state of preparation, occupied in previous measures, forming plans, accumulating materials, and providing for the main affair. These are certainly under the secret power of idleness. Nothing is to be expected from the workman whose tools are forever to be sought. I was once told by a great master, that no man ever excelled in painting, who was eminently curious about pencils and colors.

There are others to whom idleness dictates another expedient, by which life may be passed unprofitably away without the tediousness of many vacant hours. The art is, to fill the day with petty business, to have always something in hand which may raise curiosity, but not solicitude, and keep the mind in a state of action, but not of labor."