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Joy

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David was King, and also the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel." In one of his Psalms he describes the secret of true joy, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Moses, too, found the source of true joy for we read, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Fulness of joy should also be our portion in Christ, as the Saviour said in John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

The dictionary defines joy as "Vivid emotion of pleasure." There is a deep longing in the human heart for pleasure. People are hurrying in every direction in search of it, but modern means of rapid travel have not enabled them to overtake the happiness that eludes them. Labour saving gadgets have given people more leisure time, but not enough for them to find the true joy they seek.

Delicious foods from many lands delight the palate and music can be plucked from the air waves. People can surround themselves with beautiful furnishings and objects of art. Their minds are enriched by all kinds of knowledge, and they are enticed into all sorts of intellectual pursuits. And yet the human heart has not changed. “All that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), cannot bring the joy they seek.

Solomon gave himself to every variety of pleasure this world could offer, and summed it up in these words, “... all is vanity (emptiness) and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

God said of the people of Israel in Jeremiah’s day, “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). So often, sad to say, this is true of the Lord’s dear people, despite His abundant provision for supreme and lasting joy.

Let us notice the Saviour’s offer of joy, as found in the New Testament. In His great prayer just before going to the Cross, recorded in John’s Gospel, He said, “And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). The Lord Jesus possessed a joy that stemmed from His own knowledge of His Father, and His intimate communion with Him. This joy did not find its source in the world in any sense. It was not dependent upon the world nor could the world change it. His joy did not change with changing circumstances — it was

higher than all circumstances. This is the joy that He offers you and me.

We previously quoted His words, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). He spoke these words on the very eve of His crucifixion, knowing that Calvary loomed on the horizon. His was fulness of joy even when all circumstances were against Him. This is the joy that He offers us.

The world cannot provide joy like this. Any joy or happiness that might be derived from the world is at best only for a season and fades with darkening times.

“Pleasures are like poppies spread,

You seize the flower, the bloom is shed;

Or like the snowflake on the river—

One moment seen, then gone forever.”

The apostle Paul is an example of a Christian who experienced this joy from above. When he was a prisoner of the Roman Government, and chained to a guard somewhere in the city of Rome; when circumstances were all against him, he wrote to Christians in the city of Philippi to thank them for their care and interest in him. We have that letter, the Epistle to the Philippians, the very theme of which is “Joy.” Notice a few verses from the last chapter in a modern translation, remembering that this was written from an ancient jail. “Therefore my friends, beloved friends, whom I long for; my joy, my crown, stand thus firm in the Lord, my beloved. Farewell. I wish you all joy in the Lord. I will say it again, all joy be yours. The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your

requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

May we too know more of this abiding joy, which can only be found through occupation with Christ!

“Satisfied with Thee, Lord Jesus, I am blest,
Peace which passeth understanding on Thy breast.
No more doubting; no more trembling; oh, what rest!
Taken up with Thee, Lord Jesus, I would be
Finding joy and satisfaction all in Thee,
Thou the nearest and the dearest unto me.”

(Henry Bennett)