

Living a Joyous Christian Life

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Matt 5:11,12

Note: The Beatitudes are easy to quote and memorize, but when the rubber hits the road and you find yourself being crushed, these verses almost become a mockery because there is no joy. You plead the promises in Psalms, and nothing changes. When Jesus spoke these words, what was he trying to say? And because we know he wasn't mocking us, how do we, as his children live these verses? How do you find joy when there is nothing joyous around you?

Acceptance

Jesus said - **Enter ye in at the strait gate:** for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matt 7:13,14

And **whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.** Luke 14:27 (read section: vs 25-33).

Note: When you choose to start the Christian journey, Jesus said "choose the narrow, difficult path and count the cost".

Job: But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. Job 2:10 (read section: vs 3-10).

Note: Job had counted the cost and accepted the journey. And, while he questioned why, God says that Job did not sin.

3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. 10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. 11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Ps 77 (all).

Note: David in vs 1-9 pours out his condition. In vs 10, he accepts it; "this is my infirmity". And then makes the choice to remember, meditate & talk on God's works and doings.

Wherein ye **greatly rejoice**, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the **trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth**, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.** 1 Peter 1:6-9

Note: Peter puts the outline together - Accept the narrow path, filled with trials with joy, for the end of the journey is your salvation. As gold is put in the furnace for purifying, when is it taken out?

Forgiveness

Jesus adds a second critical element necessary to being able to bear & rejoice in trial. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matt 6:14, 15. See also 2 Kings 6:8-23.

FORGIVE, v.t. forgiv'. pret. forgave; pp. forgiven.

1. To pardon; to remit, as an offense or debt; to overlook an offense, and treat the offender as not guilty. The original and proper phrase is to forgive the offense, to send it away, to reject it, that is, not to impute it, [put it to] the offender. But by an easy transition, we also use the phrase, to forgive the person offending.

- Forgive us our debts.
- If we forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. Matthew 6:14.
- As savages never forget a favor, so they never forgive an injury.
- It is to be noted that pardon, like forgive, may be followed by the name or person, and by the offense; but remit can be followed by the offense only. We forgive or pardon the man, but we do not remit him.

2. To remit as a debt, fine or penalty.

FORGIVENESS, n. forgiv'ness.

1. The act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. The forgiveness of enemies is a christian duty.

2. The pardon or remission of an offense or crime; as the forgiveness of sin or of injuries.

3. Disposition to pardon; willingness to forgive.

And mild forgiveness intercede to stop the coming blow.

4. Remission of a debt, fine or penalty.

Note: When we forgive, we let go of the crushing burden of wrong to us, which allows God to heal the hurt the wrong has caused. It is important to know that forgiveness does not equal reconciliation.

Rejoice & be exceeding glad

Wherefore seeing we also are **compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses**, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and **let us run with patience the**

race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb. 12:1,2

Note: Every child of God who has entered the straight gate, taken up his cross has had to learn how to find joy amid pain, sorrow & trial. You are not alone, you are not an exception.

The joy that we are to live in and exhibit is not the frivolous joy that is based on emotion. It is not only a feeling, and does not exist because the path becomes easier or something “good” has happened. It is the result of choice, focus, acceptance & forgiveness, based on facts outside of our situation or circumstance.

The Psalms provide the clearest picture of how we are to live in what Jesus commanded in Matthew 5. David shows how the combination of acceptance and forgiveness result in being able to find joy. He also expands the definition of joy that Peter summarizes.

Note: In the following verses, contemplate David's situation. Focus on what he chooses to find joy in & praise God for. Many times an insignificant word like “but” introduces the focus.

1 Sam 30:6: And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Ps 42:3-5: My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Ps 42:9-11: I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Ps 3:1-3: LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. 2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. 3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Ps 5:11: But 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.

Ps 13:1-5: 1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

Ps 16:8-11: I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Ps 22: 1-24: (*1st 21 verses, David is pouring his heart out*) 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Ps 28:6,7: Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Ps 30: 11,12: Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

Note: These verses do not indicate a change in surroundings because surroundings change. "My glory" = My character. Being able to rejoice in the midst of difficulties is a picture of changed character.

Ps 31:9-24: (*vs 9-13 show David's overwhelming challenges*). 14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. 24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Ps 32:11: Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

Note: Our joy is in looking at God, not our surroundings (see the entire chapter).

Ps 33:1: Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. (*The rest of the chapter gives things to rejoice in.*)

Ps 35: (*vs 1-17 David pleads for deliverance*) 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. (*vs 19-26, more pleading*) 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Ps 41:5-11: (*vs 5-9, David's circumstances*) 10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

Ps 43:3-5: O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4 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. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Note: David gives a practical "how-to". It's not only a choice we must make in our mind. It is time spent focusing on God's light & truth, ie. the Bible that makes joy amid tribulation possible.

Ps 50:23: God is speaking: Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Note: What are we to think & speak on to "order our conversation aright"? Phil 4:8; Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Ps 55:12-17: For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. 15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. 16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Note: David experienced the close pain of rejection that all God's children do.

Ps 56: 1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book? 9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me. 10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12 ...I will render praises unto thee. 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

Ps 57: (*vs 1-6, David's calamities*) 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

Note: The battle we face is fixing our heart upon God. Choosing to step out of the emotion of the situation and fix our hearts on the Word of God.

Ps 59:9,16-17: Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence. 16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

Ps 63:3, 7: Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Ps 69: (Read the full Psalm) 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

Ps 70:4: Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.

Ps 71: 14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 21 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

Ps 104:33,34: I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

Ps 118:15: The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous:...

Ps 119:111: Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

Joy & encouragement are also found through obedience. Ps 119: 85-86, 115, 134, 141, 150-151, 157-158, 161.

Joy Amid Seeming Defeat

When you are upholding & trying to share the truth & it appears that your work is a failure, you are not alone. Habakkuk had the same experience and ends his prayer thus:

Hab 3:17-19: 17 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: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 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

It's ok to be overwhelmed, it's ok to not understand, to be depressed over your situation. BUT, you cannot stop at that point. Like David, and others in the Bible, fix your eyes upward. You will experience peace & joy.

Bear Fruit!

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Gal. 5:22,23

How do you bear this fruit? “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” Col 3:1-3

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

My fellow brother or sister, choose to accept the path God has chosen for you. Embrace the Beatitudes & live them, for they are not a mockery of the path. That, like Christ, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, was victorious, you can be also. That at the name of Jesus, when every knee shall bow, that you may be able to say “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him”. And, hear in response His welcoming blessing.

May
“the joy of the Lord be your strength”
Nehemiah 8:10

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