

## We Can Rejoice

Many years ago, a little boy was given a priceless possession: his deceased grandfather's gold pocket watch. How he treasured it! But one day, while playing at his father's ice plant, he lost the watch amid all the ice and sawdust. He searched and scratched, becoming frantic, but no watch. Then he suddenly realized what to do. He stopped scurrying around and became very still. In the silence, he heard the watch ticking. (Hewett 284)

God has given a priceless possession to those who seek it. It is a possession that everyone seems to seek, happiness. Many will not find that possession, however, because they are scurrying about looking for that happiness in the ways of the world. Some will find what they think is true happiness in riches, in relationships, or in some other worldly matter. Yet, such happiness will be fleeting because it is dependent upon outward circumstances. True happiness will be found only when one pauses from the hustle and bustle of this life and listens to the guidance of God's word.

God wants His children to be happy. In fact, one of the eight commands Paul left with those at Thessalonica as he completed his epistle was, "Rejoice always" (1 Thessalonians 5:16). This command must be viewed within the context of a life lived to the glory of God. The whole of man is to fear God and to keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). As he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul knew of that joy that he commanded. Though he had suffered many things for the kingdom's sake, Paul knew the joy of being a Christian. He knew that God fills those who believe with all joy (Romans 15:13). Paul, also, recorded some of the ways God fills the Christian's life with joy.

### God Fills Those Who Believe with All Joy

Paul recorded, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that Ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). So, in believing, the God of hope fills one with joy.

But doesn't the non-Christian have joy? Does he not find joy in family, in accomplishments, and in the joys of life? He may. But such joys are

dependent upon the outward circumstances of this life, upon contentment and satisfaction found in family, accomplishments, and in the things of this life.

On the other hand, consider the joy of the Christian. For instance, Luke records the conversion of the Ethiopian who was returning from worshiping at Jerusalem (Acts 8:26-39). As Philip taught him about Jesus from the prophet Isaiah, the eunuch was convicted. When they came to a body of water, he asked to be baptized. Philip took him down into the water and baptized him. The eunuch then went on his way rejoicing (verse 39). What changed? What made him rejoice? He had a joy that was not dependent upon the outward circumstances of life. After all, the kingdom of God is not a matter of outward circumstances, such as eating and drinking. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy (Romans 14:17). The Christian is not dependent upon the world for joy. He is set free from the enslavement of sin and the world. The wages of sin is death (Roman 6:23). Yet, when the eunuch was baptized, he was buried with Christ in baptism into Christ's death (Romans 6:3-4). He was not "buried alive." He had put to death the old man of sin (Romans 6:6). That was done through repentance, turning away from sin and the ways of the world (Acts 2:38). Then he was raised up to walk in a new life (Romans 6:4), no longer being under bondage to sin (Romans 6:6). He was free from the condemnation of the world, free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).

One in the world cannot truly understand and realize the joy found in Christ. It can be illustrated in this manner. One born blind does not realize the joy of sight. How can one describe to that person the joy given through sight, seeing the colors, beauty, shapes and more? He cannot. Yet, if the one born blind had sight given through some medical advancement, he would then understand the joy of sight. As long as he was blind, he did not realize the joy that was being missed. So it is with the non-Christian. He does not realize the joy of being free from the world and condemnation. It is only after he sees the light of God that he can realize that joy. It is only then that he walks in a newness of life. The old life of sin and death has been done away. He walks in a new life, a life of hope and joy. He has the God of this universe as

his Father. It is only then that he becomes a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). No longer is he separated from God. No longer does sin rule in his life. No longer is he a creature of sin, a child of the devil. He has been set free. He has put off the old that he might become new. Peter wrote of the believer, "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

### Ways by Which God Filled Paul's Life with Joy

*Paul found joy in the hope of the glory of God.* He wrote that we "...rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). He later wrote of "rejoicing in hope" (Romans 12:12).

Paul's hope was in the glory of God. Paul knew that his citizenship was not on this earth (Philippians 3:20-21). He knew of the Almighty God, filled with glory and righteousness. He knew that he would receive a body of glory. He could rejoice in that hope of dwelling eternally with the God of all the earth.

Hope is that anchor of the soul that keeps one from being tossed to and fro, that gives stability in life (Hebrews 6:18-19). Paul needed that stability as he was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned and left for dead, and more. He suffered much in this life because of his commitment to Christ. How could he continue to endure under such circumstances? He could endure because he had that anchor of hope. He knew that no matter what happened to him it was merely temporary. He knew there was something better awaiting him. Man could do nothing to separate him from God and the promise of eternal joy.

That hope brought Paul joy through peace and contentment. To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). He went right on to record that one should not be overly anxious. He should make his request known to God. In doing so, he would find peace beyond the understanding of those in the world (Philippians 4:6-7). That peace comes from knowing that God is in control of every aspect of life. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe. It is by His might and authority that all things exist and continue. With peace comes joy, for one is not overly anxious about the

circumstances of life. Likewise, hope brings contentment (Philippians 4:11-13). When one realizes he is merely a sojourner here on earth, he can learn to be content for the short time he is here. With contentment one finds joy, for he is not continually wanting more. Therefore, hope in God brings peace and contentment, which, in turn, bring joy.

As Paul found joy in the hope of the glory of God, so also can every Christian.

*Paul found joy in his Christian brethren.* He rejoiced because of his confidence in the brethren at Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:16). To the brethren at Thessalonica, he wrote, "For Ye are our glory and our joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:20). And of course, he had a special relationship with the young preacher, Timothy. He wrote that he longed to see him that he might be filled with joy (2 Timothy 1:3-4).

What is it about Christian brothers and sisters that can bring joy? For one, there is that special bond of fellowship in Christ (1 John 1:7). That term "fellowship" implies sharing. There is a sharing of lives among those who are of like precious faith. Paul wrote that Christians rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). One of the wonderful aspects of being a Christian is the support among brethren. Those of like precious faith rejoice with those who have occasion for joy, such as a new baby, a marriage, a new job, and others. They find joy by being with one another, laughing together, playing games together, or just being together to talk and share their lives together. After all, those of like precious faith have a common goal of reaching heaven, and being together as they strive for that goal brings not only joy but encouragement.

Another joy found in brothers and sisters is to see them grow and develop faithfully in the Lord. Paul called his brethren at Philippi his joy and his crown (Philippians 4:1). He joyously beheld the steadfastness of faith found in those at Colosse (Colossians 2:5). Likewise, the apostle John rejoiced to find those who were walking in truth (3 John 3). One usually will find joy in seeing a child or grandchild grow and develop. He will attend their activities and rejoice in their development. The same is true regarding those whose spiritual lives one has been a part of. The Christian finds joy in the development of those they have taught

and encouraged. They rejoice as they see them marry, have families and develop spiritually. They find joy in seeing them teach their children, lead their families spiritually, lead in worship, teach others, and develop as spiritual leaders.

As Paul found joy in his Christian brethren, so also can every Christian.

*Paul found joy in the furtherance of the gospel.* He wrote that he rejoiced in the proclamation of Christ (Philippians 1:18). He even rejoiced in his suffering for the sake of the gospel (Colossians 1:24-29). It is a true joy to labor in the gospel. Why? Because in doing so one is doing the will of God (Mark 16:15). Because in doing so one is glorifying God (John 15:8). Because in doing so one is snatching lost souls from the grips of Satan (2 Timothy 2:24-26). There is no greater joy than seeing one born into the family of God. Undoubtedly, as the eunuch went on his way rejoicing after being baptized (Acts 8:39), Philip must have done the same thing after he taught him and baptized him.

As Paul found joy in the furtherance of the gospel, so also can every Christian.

### Conclusion

God has given a priceless possession to those who seek it. That possession is the joy found only in Christ. God wants you to share in that joy. Won't you be baptized into Christ and raise up to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:3-4)? You will go on your way rejoicing. You will rejoice always.

### Works Cited

Hewett, James S. (1988). *Illustrations Unlimited*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

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## God's Precious Promises... We Can Rejoice

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