

Chapter 8

Abundant Joy

How much like God to be able to bestow the kind of grace it takes to have an abundance of joy in great affliction and deep poverty! There was a testimony of riches to come for those who gave joyfully to God and Paul knew it. Riches that could not be measured only in terms of monetary gain. Oh, that the body of Christ would not wrestle with joy! We seem as though we are not acting pious enough if joy breaks loose. The man who reverences God is not precluded from enjoying the presence of that God. “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. 16:11) The path of life ... that is the way we should be walking in this life, to enjoy the abundant life Jesus came to give. Get into his presence.

We have the assurance of his presence when we worship him. So even at that place and time when we are awed by his majesty as we glorify his excellence, we should be overwhelmed by the joy that is contained in his presence. “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Lu. 15:7,10) “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10) We have said over the years that angels rejoice when a sinner repents. They may rejoice because of what they see, but they have no personal knowledge of salvation. Those who fell with Lucifer were reserved for an eternal fate, unable to be saved. The scripture says that there is joy in the presence of angels. Jesus said that the angels behold the face of the Father in heaven. It is God who is rejoicing over salvation. “He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” (Is. 53:11) “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” (Zeph. 3:17) God is certainly serious about salvation. He is unwavering in his demand for righteousness and godly living. But, that does not prevent him from joying over the redeemed. He appreciates what it took to buy us back. He has already counted the cost of our salvation. It is that very appreciation for the awesome price of Calvary that causes him to rejoice when one more sinner accepts the precious blood of Jesus as his cleansing. It does not denigrate the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb to rejoice. Rather, it glorifies the effectiveness of that sacrifice to reach farther down than anything else could and save a wretched world.

It is vindication of his great love wherewith he loved us. It is power over all of the power of the devil. It is proof that the devil is a liar and, yes, Jesus can and does love someone just like you. “And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” (John 16:22) It is important that we know that no man can take our joy from us. The joy of the Lord is not a tool of manipulation by a preacher or worship leader in church. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Neh. 8:10) “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” (Phil. 4:4) Why did Paul repeat himself when it came to rejoicing? It is vital to the spiritual health of the believer that he can rejoice.

Chapter 8

Abundant Joy (continued)

“ Rejoice evermore.” (I Thess. 5:17) The joy of the Lord is not tied to material wealth nor is it stirred up with a lift in the emotions. God is able to do more than we are able to even think of. Our joy comes from him, it is his possession (the joy of the Lord). When we can rejoice over the same things that he rejoices over, we will see his strength in our lives. He certainly does not lose his joy because of the failure of mankind to believe in his ability. He knows it works.

When the centurion cried out that Jesus must truly be the son of God, it was proof that what God had set out to do from the foundation of the world was working. All of the mockers said that they would believe if he saved himself from the cross. They wanted him to walk down off the cross so they could believe. But God knew that the only way he could save lost mankind was for Jesus to stay on the cross. When he drew his last breath, when religion felt smugly satisfied that they had the final say, when the skeptics all walked away sure that he was not the promised king, the centurion breathed the words of faith, “ Truly this was the son of God. “ God’s joy will last when all other imitations are gone because 2000 years later men and women from every walk of life, every tribe, nation, and tongue are still believing Jesus is the son of God.

This joy triumphs over death because the promise of life has been fulfilled. Joy defeats sorrow because the man acquainted with griefs and sorrows has persevered through the pain of the cross for the joy that was set before him. He has not run out. His joy is still being poured out in abundance. His joy has endured all of the darkness of ignorance and unbelief and has emerged in the dawn of a day of victory. “ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. “ (Ps.30:5) “ This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it. “ (Ps. 118:24) The day of deliverance is here! The sounds of mourning belong to the overcome. The shout of victory belongs to the overcomer. We are made overcomers in Christ. “ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. “ (Is. 61:3) God is in the business of turning things around. We can keep our misery and woe, or we can see him turn it around into joy and praise. He is rejoicing over us. The very least we can do is rejoice over Him!

This was only the first chapter of “Into Green Pastures - A Walk in the Abundant Life”. If you are interested in learning more about walking in God’s abundant life and want to order this book, please e-mail us at info@missionlighthouse.org.

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