

Joy in the Lord

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Study Given by W.D. Frazee—June 30,

Resting in Jesus' love. That's what I want everybody to experience. Are you resting in that love tonight?

Nehemiah had been brought down to Jerusalem in the providence of God, along with Ezra, and led out in the work of reformation after the captivity. They found a lot of problems and difficulties. But Nehemiah and Ezra prayed and worked their way through.

“And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength” Nehemiah 8:9-10.

It is interesting that there are times to weep, and times to quit weeping. In God's purpose, which is temporary, the joy or the sorrow? Sorrow. Which is God's plan for permanency? Joy. Do you believe that?

We are living in the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the day for man to afflict his soul. So we are to experience in a special way the sorrow for sin during the final judgment hour. But in that setting comes the deepest joy that human hearts can experience. God intends that we shall have such a clear view of His character that we shall understand that His purpose of entering into any sorrow is to get rid of sin so that we may experience His joy. “Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

What is your strength? The joy of the Lord. There are two things that the Christian needs strength for. One is to live the Christian life himself. To be an overcomer. That needs strength. The other is to win others. Is the joy of the Lord's strength on that point too? Oh, yes. As soul winners, you and I are to be salesmen for God.

Grief, gloom, mourning, even if there is a reason for it, seldom attracts people. Why? Most people have plenty of that commodity already. But if you and I can show them how to find happiness, how to rest from trouble and distress, they are interested, provided they believe it is genuine. So God intends that you and I, as salesmen for Him, shall remember that the thing that attracts is joy. So every time

we want to win souls, should we put on a fun party? Notice that the strength of the Lord is joy. Our business is not to show people how happy we can be in spite of our religion. That is not the joy of the Lord. It is our religion that is to give us our happiness. That's the joy of the Lord, and our strength.

Some people think of blowing off a bit of steam after they have been good all week. That's not the joy of the Lord. That wouldn't win very many people to Christ. God wants us to be happy both for our own strength and strength to win others. Let's be sure that what we use came from Him, because only that which came from Him can lead to Him.

Here is a man who is a salesman for General Motors. What would you think if he always drove around in a Ford? The salesman would soon call him in and labor with him, wouldn't he? Or give him his walking papers.

Are you a salesman for God? Do you believe that there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God? Have you found it? Is it phony? Is it for real? How do you get it? Do you every have any problems? Is the joy that Jesus gives us here in this world free from problems? Oh, no. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Let's learn something about the joy of the Lord.

Jesus was so anxious that we should all understand how to be happy that He came down from heaven and took humanity with all its weaknesses and infirmities and handicaps to show us how to be happy right here in this present world. Now He had other reasons for coming. He must give His life as an atonement on the cross. But notice one of the reasons He came was to show us how to live:

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” Psalms 40:7-8.

What is delight? It is another word for joy. I am delighted. That is more than just tolerating something. Jesus came from heaven to reveal the joy that is the result of setting aside one's own way and accepting the way of the Father.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” John 6:38.

Gethsemane was the place where this choice that Jesus had made, and repeated day by day, was put to the greatest test. Would He accept the plan that He knew was His Father's will? Would He accept it even if He went to the cross with the black darkness of separation from His Father? Or would He take the opportunity of leaving this world to perish and go back to heaven? That was a real temptation.

Eternity will never be long enough to fully understand what went on that night. We will be studying it a million years from now. Every time He came to that crucial test He said, Not My will but Thine be done.

He had been developing that attitude, and strengthening it by repeated choices all through His thirty years of life on earth. And the reason you and I in

Jacob's trouble will have that same attitude is that we have learned and cultivated it as the Spirit of God has worked upon our hearts. We learn it in little things. I want to learn it. What do you say?

Jesus didn't come to please Himself. Religion is more than avoiding the bad things. To keep us out of the penitentiary and hell. Religion is entering into the experience of Jesus to please the Father. And the paradox of it is that is the only way to be genuinely happy and satisfied, for that is the way we were made.

The joy of the Lord is what? Strength to do two things. The first is to overcome sin and meet temptation. The second is to win souls. Is that what you want? Well, how in this world could a person live on a program of never pleasing himself but pleasing somebody else and still be happy? Until we have learned it, we can hardly convince others that it works.

Does it work? Have you found it so? Thank God, people are finding it so all over this world. And the way to find it is not to discover a location where there are no troubles and trials and difficulties. That's all right for people who have never fallen. People on other planets don't have to have the problems you and I have. But the only way we can learn how to live the Eden life now is to be out of the Garden of Eden. That's why we are not there. That's why God told Adam and Eve, Sorry, you are going to have to leave this garden home.

Oh, we will be good. Just let us stay in this beautiful home.

Sorry. You will never learn the lesson.

They wept and Jesus wept with them, but they went out to where the thorns and briars would hurt them. They would have to work hard and sweat to make a living. The problems of life would come. And after a matter of time how the tears fell as Adam and Eve looked on the form of Able killed by his brother. Ah, yes. Pain, sorrow, and trouble. But in it all God was teaching them that the way of sin is the way of sorrow and death, but the way of obedience is pleasing Him instead of pleasing one's self. That is the way of eternal rest, happiness, and joy. Thank God, we will let Him run our lives then.

So many of our prayers are like Balaam's prayers. Did he pray? Oh, yes. What did he pray for? Let me go with Balak so I can get the rich reward. Let me go so I can get what I want. He finally got to go. Did it make him happy? Not really. And often the only way God can deal with us is to let us learn by sad experience that our way is not a good way. So let's not pray for our way, but pray for His way.

Prayer is not intended to change God to get what we want, but to change us so we will get what He wants. Is that the purpose of prayer? Is that what it is accomplishing in your life? Often our plans fail so that God's plans for us may succeed.

I want to take you halfway around this world over in the far East. An elder and his wife from Nork City were recently over there, and I want to share a few of the experiences they met.

About two weeks before they arrived, two student colporteurs had become tired and discouraged, because they hadn't sold anything for a couple of days. They had just enough money left to purchase a bus ticket home. They prayed, but it didn't seem to help, so they were sitting on the curb waiting for the bus to come.

There was a restaurant nearby, and somebody they thought was the manager came and offered to let them eat lunch in the restaurant. So they went and ate lunch. As they were leaving the restaurant they saw the person who had invited them go to the counter and pay the bill, and they knew that he wasn't the manager after all. But since he had been so kind they got courage and decided to canvas him with their literature.

He was already headed down the street so they hurried to catch up with him. He didn't seem to be interested in conversing with them. He finally turned and said, "You know who I am. You have been praying."

With that he went down the block and out of sight. These two colporteurs had been so dumbfounded by his answer that they paused a moment, but they hurried after him and he wasn't there. There were no houses nearby. There was no place for him to have gone. They were so impressed that God had sent an angel and sent money to pay the bill at the restaurant that they stayed right there and sold two thousand pesos worth of books in that town.

God heard their prayers, and they thought they were not being answered at all. So God sent an angel. Would you like to have an answer like that? Are you sure you would? Would you like to have the troubles and disappointments that led them to that?

Here is another story. A revolution was on in this country. One of our Adventist colporteurs was walking along the road in a jungle, and in that part of the country the rebels were watching for opportunities to catch people they thought were loyal to the government and execute them.

They caught this colporteur. Walking behind him was another man, who noticed what was happening and hid in some bushes. The man who was watching from the bushes was not an Adventist, but he saw what was happening. The colporteur was surrounded by the rebel soldiers who were pointing their rifles at him. He tried to tell him that he was not a spy. He was an Adventist colporteur, and if they didn't believe him they could look in his briefcase. The leader was impressed and went off to examine the briefcase, and left him guarded by the soldiers. There the colporteur fell on his knees and began to pray for the men who had their rifles pointed at him, pleading with God to have mercy upon them because they didn't know what they were doing. He pled for God to save them.

Suddenly the man in the bushes heard a rifle shot ring out, and the colporteur fell over dead. He had given his life as a witness for Jesus. But as he had watched that colporteur kneeling on the ground he saw his face shining like Stephen's face. It made a deep impression on him.

The officer who heard the shot came running back and said, Oh, I am so sorry you shot him. He is an innocent man.

As a result this man who was hiding in the bushes was so impressed that he became an Adventist and is doing God's work. Not only that, the officer who was in charge of the group told the men, I know something about Seventh-day Adventist, and I have made up my mind that as soon as this war is over I am going to be a Seventh-day Adventist. So there were at least two people won by this colporteur's death.

Did God hear his prayer? Yes. Did God hear Stephen's prayer? Yes. The purpose of prayer is not always to give us a miraculous escape. It may be that we die a martyr if God sees that is best. And it is a perfect answer to a perfect prayer, because the purpose of prayer is, Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done.

I was very much impressed with another story. Here was a pastor in the area of a mountain province who was in charge of the territory where they had no roads. His territory started where the roads ended. He had to walk six to ten hours just to get to his first church. But the area he is in is an area of headhunters. Some of those tribes still hunt for human heads. One of these headhunter tribes had been impressed by the Lord to ask for our workers to come, so this pastor was walking with his wife into this headhunting country to minister to these people physically and spiritually.

In order to get to this tribe they had to go through enemy territory. It was very dangerous, but God protected them. Now they have thirty people getting ready for baptism. This all happened just within the last few months.

This pastor is a good looking, educated man whose heart is full of love and respect for God and for his wife, who is an American citizen. She has been in this country for a number of years. Her husband wanted to come to this country, but he and his wife talked it over and turned down the chance.

They live with a very low economic standard. They have no vehicle. They have no automatic conveniences in their home. The man grew up in a city, and the wife spent seven years in the United States.

The wife told her husband, "I have had everything I have wanted, and realized that I had nothing at all. My life was empty."

She had seen the two extremes of having everything she wanted and an empty life. She would not trade her ministry at the side of her husband for the convenience of another life.

Oh, I pray that God will not have to take us to the jungles to learn that lesson. We can learn it right here, can't we? Jesus came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him.

Somebody says, Brother Frazee, I thought your text was the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Precisely, as this dear man and wife found the joy of the Lord. How did they find it? By consulting their conveniences and desires? No. They found it by turning their backs on money and all the things money can buy. They could have found a place to work for God and had things a lot better than in a headhunting country. And that doesn't mean that all of us are to head for the jungles tomorrow. There are plenty of trials right here. And if you don't know it, tell me, and I will let you in on some of it.

The issue is, What do I want? How do I expect to find rest and peace? Is it by getting people to give me what I want? The job I want? The place to live that I want? The kind of food I want? The program I want? The remuneration I want? Oh, friends, I thank God there is something sweeter. Jesus came down from heaven not to do His own will, but the will of the One who sent Him.

Somebody says, Brother Frazee, don't we need rest and recreation and sleep and time for this and that?

Yes. But notice the difference. It makes all the difference in the world whether we work in order to get those recharging experiences, or whether we get the recharging experiences so we can do our ministry. It makes a world of difference.

Most of the people in this world are working to get money to have a good time. This means that if they get enough money they quit working. Then they really have a good time. Or do they? No, they don't.

That isn't the way you and I were put together. The joy of the Lord is your strength, and the joy of the Lord is not selfish ministering to our needs. The joy of the Lord is to delight in the Father's will, and have His law written in our hearts so we are thinking all the time of how to help others.

In a practical way this is a moment by moment experience. The law of God will tell us some great principles that will keep us out of bad things. But nothing in the Bible will tell me where to be tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock. Do I have some choices to make? Does it make any difference where I am tomorrow? Does He have my life planned?

I have the joy of knowing right where I belong. I am sure of that. I trust every one of you is sure of that. We can be just as sure day by day and hour by hour. It is our privilege, and God's plan is to bring it to us. He has a thousand ways of leading and guiding those who submit.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” Proverbs 3:6.

Here is a wonderful statement:

“Study carefully the divine-human character, and constantly inquire, ‘What would Jesus do were He in my place?’” *Ministry of Healing*, page 491.

So when the dear Lord wakes me up in the morning I could say, What would Jesus do if He were in my place. What did He generally do before breakfast? He had some time alone with His Father. He listened to His Father's voice through the Scriptures. He talked to His Father in prayer. He gathered inspiration from nature and from the Word that carried Him through the day.

When I sit at the table, and my attention is on Jesus, will He help me to select the right food for me? The quality and the quantity? Will that be a burden? No, that will be a joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength. And I am so glad for the wonderful pleasure that comes in eating right. And so on through the day. The work that I am to do. The people I am to meet. The telephone calls I am to answer. And all the rest. If I am willing, God will help me to be on His schedule moment by moment, and be happy in it.

But I will often have to be interrupted, because often our plans fail that God's plans may succeed. But if it is the Father's will we are interested in, we will be willing to suffer. We will be willing to be a martyr if necessary, like that colporteur. And in that supreme surrender and perfect trust we will find the joy and happiness that Christ has promised.

Christ is looking for salesmen who have experienced enough of that to know that all they want is more of the same. Thank God, He doesn't wait until we are graduated in His school to put us to work. But if we have learned the first principles and experienced the first blessing that come from putting aside our way and taking His way, then we have something to share.

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