

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Joy Of The Christian

(Jerry Fite)

Are you happy? If so, is it because you have a new toy? Is it because everything is right in your world? If not, why not? The joy of the Christian is a command, not a suggestion. If, dear Christian, you are not presently happy, we need to be reminded of the words of Paul. He writes to the Christians in Philippi, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4).

The joy of the Christian is centered in the person of Christ. Our joy is to be in the Lord. Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, and we rejoice in His way of salvation. The announcement of Jesus’ birth was “*good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people*” (Luke 2:10). The joy is the understanding that we are reconciled to God through our Lord (Romans 5:11). We, like the eunuch from Ethiopia, walk away rejoicing when we obey the Gospel and enjoy the blessings of forgiveness at baptism (Acts 8:35-39).

The Joy of the Christian is that in the Lord we have found truth. Walking in the truth of the Lord should bring joy to every Christian’s heart (3 John 4). Would you be happy if you sold everything you had in order to

come under the Lord’s rule? You would if the Lord’s rule from Heaven meant all the world to you: “*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field*” (Matthew 13:44).

Because the Christian’s joy is centered in the Lord, it transcends painful circumstances. Paul writes to the Philippians from a Roman prison. Yet, he says Rejoice! He was not telling others to rejoice while he himself remained on the sidelines. He was rejoicing in the Lord, despite his shackles. The intent of some was to preach Christ in order “*to raise up affliction*” for Paul “*in his bonds*” (Philippians 1:17). But Paul says, regardless of the intent, the fact that Christ is preached brings him joy. “. . . *and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice*” (Philippians 1:18).

When the Lord is the center of your life, the difficulties that arise in your service unto him do not take away your joy. When the apostles were physically beaten for preaching Christ and his Lordship, they departed from the presence of the council “*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to*

suffer dishonor for the Name” (Acts 5:41). The painful circumstances do not detract from the Christian’s joy, it enhances it for the grateful and humble servant.

The Christian can rejoice “*always*” because such joy is not about health, wealth and popularity. It is about the Lord, salvation, and the hope of heaven. The Christian always has the certainty of joy for the future that brings joy to the heart in the present. The fruitful Christian knows he or she will hear one day, “*Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord*” (Matthew 25:21).

Other than for emphasis, I do not know why Paul exhorts the Christians in Philippi to Rejoice in the Lord twice. It could be that “*rejoicing always*” is not easy to do. Brothers and sisters being at odds with one another certainly can dampen our spirits, but seeing them united again in the same mind is a joy worth doing what we can to unite them in the Lord (Phil.2:2, 4:2). We can sometimes be discouraged in this world, but we must look upward. In the Lord, we can always rejoice.