

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY.

"Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." – Psa. 16:11.

WHEN we consider how much is said in the Scriptures about joy and rejoicing among God's people, we are deeply impressed with the thought that our heavenly Father is very solicitous for the happiness of his children, even in the present life. The worldly minded cannot see this, they look upon the lot of God's children as a hard and joyless one, and upon God as a hard Master, without concern for the happiness of his children. This, however, is only because the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual-minded have meat to eat that the world knows not of; and their hearts rejoice, and their joy no man taketh from them.

How strange it seems! says the world. Why, there was Paul, a man of great talent and opportunity who might have been somebody in the world: he wasted his talents, was a poor man all his days, homeless, friendless, knocked about and persecuted, a sort of religious fanatic. But Paul, viewing the matter from the standpoint of his spiritual discernment, said, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. 7:4); for he was one of that anointed body who, like his Lord and Head, could say, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad." – Acts 2:25,26.

So the Psalmist bids all the anointed body rejoice, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is [R1949 : page 53] comely for the upright." (Psa. 33:1.) And Isaiah, speaking for the same class, says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered

me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." – Isa. 61:10.

This blessed joy, which so wonderfully lifts the soul above all the vicissitudes of the present life, is, as the prophet expresses it, joy in the Lord, not a joy in earthly possessions, or earthly hopes or ambitions. These earthly things are all so transitory and so changeable that a single blast of adversity may sweep them all from us; but not so is it with those whose hearts are centered in God and to whom he has shown the path of life. These have learned to estimate the things of this present life according to their true values; they see that all of its joys are both transient and unsatisfactory and that the only real value in it is in the opportunities it affords for experience and discipline and education in the things of God and for hearing the call of God and making our calling and election sure. In thus making the proper use of the present life – walking in the path of life which God shows us through his Word – we have the present joys of hope and faith in the things unseen, but sure and eternal; knowing also that by and by in the immediate presence of God we shall have fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore at his right hand – the chief place of favor.

But while the fulness of joy in its widest sense is reserved for that blessed time when we shall be like the Lord and see him as he is (1 John 3:1,2) and be in his presence **[R1949 : page 54]** and at his right hand (in his chief favor), there is a fulness of joy in the presence and favor of God which is the privilege of every Christian now. Our capacity for joy now is not what it will be by and by, but it is possible now to have our little earthen vessels as full as they can hold of the joy of the Lord. And day by day it is our privilege to realize the presence and favor of God, if, by walking in the path of life, the path of obedience and loving service, we draw near to God. "If a man love me," said our Lord Jesus, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." – John 14:23.

In such company as this, can any Christian fail utterly to realize some measure of joy in the Lord? No, if his faith grasps the promise and holds it, the realization of joy in the Lord is sure to follow, and the more firmly his faith lays hold upon the promise the more will he realize its fulfilment, and the more fully will his joys abound; for in the presence of the Lord is fulness of joy, no matter what may be the conditions and circumstances.

In the blessed realization of this experience and the assurance of faith which it gave, in the midst of all his labors, Paul exclaimed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Rom. 8:33-39.

It was this strong persuasion, this confident faith, of the Apostle that gave him such joy in the midst of all his tribulations. His faith laid hold upon the promises of God with a strong and steady grasp, and love and gratitude impelled him to prompt obedience to the will of God and ardent zeal in his service; and evidently the Lord's promise was fulfilled to him in the abiding presence of Father and Son with him at all times and under all circumstances.

This blessed privilege is ours also, if by faith we enter fully into the Lord's will and favor. And with a blessed realization of the abiding presence of our heavenly Father, and our Lord Jesus at all times, and of their love and favor, and a faith that lays hold of all the exceeding great and precious promises of God, what soul may not rejoice and be glad, even in the midst of deep sorrow or great tribulation? In the Lord's presence, no matter where we are, is fulness of joy. Let us cultivate the Lord's acquaintance more, drawing near to him in prayer, in the study

of his precious Word, in meditation upon all his goodness, his providential care, the marked manifestations of his grace in our own individual experiences, and his precious promises which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Thus "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8), he will manifest himself to you and take up his abode with you.

It is indeed the will of God that all his children should be happy in him, that they should be always rejoicing; and if any one lacks this blessing, he is living below his privileges. Beloved, let us not be contented to live beneath our privileges. Let us appreciate the favor of God to the extent of seeking for it more and more diligently, remembering the exhortation, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." All the riches of divine favor are ours if in faith and humility we claim them and place ourselves in position to receive them as directed through the Word of God. "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." And your joy can no man take from you, so long as you abide in Him who is our life, our joy, our rest, our hope.

"Why should the children of the King
Go mourning all the day?"

"Children of the Heavenly King,
As we journey let us sing!"
