

When the Joy of Being a Christian is Gone

When Jesus was speaking to His Father just before He died, He prayed that His followers would have His joy fulfilled in themselves (John 1:13).

This privilege, like all privileges of the Christian, has been purchased by the blood of Christ and is therefore a high and holy responsibility. That is to say, the provision on God's part of privileges for us creates the obligation on our part to attain to their enjoyment.

But are you a joyful Christian? Have you a Christ-like experience in this regard? I do not ask you whether you have joyous emotions, but is the joy of Christ fulfilled in yourself?

Christ says, "That My joy may remain in you" (John 15:11). What was Christ's joy? In what did it consist?

Doing God's Will

It was the joy of Christ to do the will of His Father. "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). It was the will of God that Christ be made a sacrifice for the sins of the world. It was the joy of Christ to humble Himself and be found in fashion as a man and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

But how was the joy of Christ in this? Was He not "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" (Is. 53:3).

Yes, but joy may co-exist with sorrow; as David said, "I delight to do Your will, O my God" (Ps. 40:8); and the Captain of our salvation leads out His triumphal armies under the banner inscribed, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor.

6:10).

Then it was also for the joy that was set before Him that He “endured the cross, despising the shame, down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). It was for this that He “endured such hostility from sinners against Himself” (v. 3). It was that He might bring “many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10).

Christians, then, may be joyful, and have joy in prospect also; though, in the work of bringing souls from under the dominion of Satan to Christ, sorrows, deep and heart-searching, have to be endured.

Though opposed by fiends and men, amid sufferings, the Christian may have the joy of Christ fulfilled in himself. Aye, he may have Christ Himself within, and then he will hear his indwelling Savior say, “The works that I do [you] will do also; and greater works than these [you] will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

With Christ dwelling within, the same Spirit that inspires Christ inspires the soul. The joy that inspires Christ is the inspiration of that soul.

A conscious identification of interest in the work that brought the Savior from heaven to Earth, how blissful! Oh, the privilege of partaking of the joy of Christ in the work of saving souls!

For this joy the Savior set Himself apart, sanctified Himself: “For their sakes I sanctify Myself,” He said (John 17:19). And for this purpose is the believer sanctified, set apart, that he may be a worker together with God in the great work of saving the world.

Sanctification that does not inspire the one sanctified with feelings and sentiments regarding a perishing world similar to

those the Savior entertained in setting Himself apart, is not the sanctification of the Bible.

We are not unmindful of the fact that Christ set Himself apart as a vicarious sacrifice and that there can be nothing vicarious in the sufferings of the Christian; but there is a sense in which the Christian is left to fill up "what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1:24). And the Christian, possessing the spirit of his Master, for the joy set before him, in the hope of saving souls and bringing many sons to glory, will be brought to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

But when he looks with an eye of faith down the vista of time and, piercing the veil of eternity, beholds among the ranks of the redeemed those who, through his influence, have been won from the ranks of Satan, who can tell the joy, the bliss, of the inspiring vision? Then the joy of Christ may be—must be—the joy of the Christian. Christians must be happy; and they will be happy, if the aims that inspire the heart of the Savior inspire their hearts.

Consecrated to Christ

Is a joyless disciple now reading these lines? Pause and ask yourself, "Wherefore joyless?"

Have you yet put yourself in the way of attaining the joy of Christ? Have you set yourself apart, and placed yourself on God's altar, to live not to please yourself, even as Christ lived not to please Himself, but to consecrate yourself to the work for which Christ consecrated Himself—that is, the salvation of precious souls?

If you have not done this, you have not yet come to the point where you can have the full joy of Christ. Set yourself apart now, to live outside yourself in the will of God.

What had Christ to do with merely human satisfactions, apart from the will of His Father? He took upon Himself not the nature of angels but the nature of men and was very man as truly as very God. But He lived not to please Himself.

Resolve that you will live no longer to please yourself but that all your joys will be Christ's joys. And with this resolve set yourself apart to work for God.

After you have laid yourself and your will on every point upon the altar, you may know that God receives you; for the altar is God's altar, an altar most holy. The moment your offering is laid upon it, it is sanctified; for the altar sanctifies the gift (Heb. 2:11).

Whatever touches the altar will be holy. You present your sacrifice through Christ, and an offering presented to God through Christ is holy and acceptable.

While resting on this hallowed altar—on Christ, whose atonement takes away the sins of the world—let not your chief thought be about joyous emotion. What you need is holiness, the image of God.

This you receive in resting your whole being on Christ. The Bible says that "as many as touched Him were made well" (Mark 6:56). Thus you have only to touch Christ in faith, and according to your faith it is done unto you (Matt. 9:29).

Is the offering now presented? Can you say, in the words of the hymn "O Happy Day," "'Tis done! The great transaction's done! I am the Lord's, and He is mine"?

Then begin from this moment to act upon the principle that you are no more your own. You belong to Christ. Let Christ's work be your work.

If He came from heaven to Earth to save sinners, then deem no traveling, no work and no exile from close friends or blissful

climates too self-sacrificing. Think of your Divine Redeemer, your precious Savior, “who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and ... sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Then you shall have the joy of Christ fulfilled in yourself.

Read a companion devotional.

Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) *was a forerunner of both the Holiness and the Pentecostal-charismatic movements. This selection is adapted from Entire Devotion to God by Phoebe Palmer. Published by Schmull Publishing Co., Inc. Used by permission.*