

Fulness of Joy

John 15 to 17

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Amongst true believers there is nothing more lacking than spiritual joy. It is all bright on God's side. Our place before God is in all the acceptance of the Beloved. Our privilege is to share the fellowship of the Father and His Son — the circle of divine love. What wondrous grace that God should be pleased to take us up! ... "As He is so are we in this world." Many and varied are the causes which operate to hinder our enjoyment of what has been given to us in Christ. There are weights hindering, sin besetting, Satan behind all seeking to entrap our feet and impede us; but there is no necessity that we should be overcome. God is for us, and the Holy Spirit strengthens us. If we grieve Him He will not be free to minister Christ to us. In John's gospel, the Lord speaks of joy

1. re. obedience (John 15),
2. re. dependence (John 16),
3. re. separation (John 17).

[Let us see in detail:]

1. In John 15:9, the Lord assures the disciples of His love for them. His love to us is measured by the Father's love to Him. Have our hearts taken in this wonderful truth? Notwithstanding all our fickleness and feebleness the Lord's love is just the same towards us; it cannot change because it is divine and eternal. He will never love us less nor more; yet the enjoyment of His love may be lost to us because of our not seeking to please Him by walking in the path of His will. Happiness lies in obedience, but this requires the setting aside of ourselves and the renunciation of our own will. We may not always be prepared for this. But the Lord sets Himself before us as our example (Read John 15:10).
2. In John 16:24, we find our resource in His absence. What more could we desire? We are to ask the Father in His name. Prayer is the expression of dependence. How blessed for us to be so consciously weak in ourselves that we are absolutely cast on the Lord as our resource. Conscious weakness is the pathway to divine power. Paul glorified in what made little of himself before men, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Obedience and dependence are inseparable. The Lord will not support us in any path of our own devising. The latter is the cause of manifest want of joy amongst God's people. In Ps 81, we have a striking instance of what Israel lost through their disobedience. Jehovah reminded them, in v. 10, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." They would not hearken to His voice and the later part of the Psalm is His lament for what they had lost. We are often like them in our unbelief, trying to do better for ourselves than He is doing for us, and so are robbed of the blessedness found in simple dependence. The Lord is our helper (Heb 13:5-6).
3. In John 17, the Lord takes His stand on the ground of accomplished redemption. He sets His disciples in His own position before His Father and they are sent into the world to represent Him. His separation from all here is the measure of our separation. We are sanctified according to the place He has taken for us. What an honour He has conferred upon us! Oh for grace to rise to the moral dignity of such a position and ever seek to be more separate in heart and ways, and to live Christ, occupying for Him in sphere He has placed us and to have His joy filling our hearts. It is important to maintain a holy separation from this defiling world. Any compromise will hinder the realisation of His joy.

Its friendship is enmity with God (James 4:4). Nothing is more insidious and subtle than worldliness. It is sure to creep in if we are not watchful. We ought to seek grace to refuse absolutely. 1. John 2:16, classes the world under two heads, (a) self-gratification, (b) self-exaltation. Each one can test himself or herself on these. We are called to follow in the footsteps of a rejected Christ. (Read Gal 6:14; Rom 12:2).

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