

The Joy of the Lord

"Though the figtree not blossom, neither be fruit in the vines, the labor of the olive fail, the fields yield no meat, the flock cut off from the fold, no herd in the stalls—YET will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation"—Hab. 3

ONCE again we are assembled as one Body with one purpose in mind: to remember Christ through bread and wine—

"Do this in remembrance of me until I come."

This must be done through love of Christ and not through force of habit. The true saints of Christ though having not seen him can say they love him. Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

There is nothing in the world that can bind the hearts of men together as the love of Christ. But on the other hand there is nothing in the world that can divide the sentiments of man as differences with regard to Christ. It is in this which we see the importance of us coming together with one mind, with one feeling, with one love, with one motive, as one living Body in harmony with the thoughts of Christ.

When we say we love Christ we are not speaking empty words as the world does, but it has a meaning, it is a true reality. He is coming soon and we must be ready when he does.

Indeed we have every reason to say we love Christ. He is beautiful in every aspect because he comes from God. By any other class than the saints his beauty can not be fully appreciated. He is not as the world would have him—a moral, artistic, or religious person, but he is holy, forgiving, just, and kind. Not only this, but he is the impartial judge of every man according as his work shall be. He is more than man, he is God manifest—the Lamb which "taketh away the sins of the world."

A right acquaintance with him will allow us to embrace ALL of the features of his beauty—to build our character after his own. Many try to imitate him in general principles, but leave out his **righteousness and zeal for the Father**.

We must develop ourselves in our daily lives to the point where we think only of God and what He has commanded us to do.

We must ask ourselves, Will he be pleased with what we are doing? Do we say to ourselves, "Perhaps it will not matter if we do it just this once, then we can ask for forgiveness"? Once having come to a knowledge of the Truth, if we continue to disobey there is no more place for forgiveness of sins.

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LET us keep before our minds all the elements of his perfect character. They constitute the Lord Jesus as the only personage of his kind past, present, or future. No name in the world today comes near to him.

Even in the present evil world of today no one has such fame or renown as Christ. He is the object of universal homage, though it is done with ignorance and insincerity, and not from the heart. Christ has shed a great light upon the earth in that he abolished paganism.

But the light of his past is as a candle to the sun, as compared with his future.

This present animal, fleshly-motivated order of things on earth will be abolished and he shall be all in all. The importance of today will vanish as the stars of a great dawn. The important political personages of the world will be brought low, every knee will bow to him and pay homage to the King of the earth, the ruler and judge of mankind.

Christ will build foundations that cannot be moved, his Kingdom will have no end, the earth will be filled with his glory, and nothing will be important but his people and his affairs.

Well will we have chosen our portion and inheritance if we put our trust in him. The present is all we have of our own, which is as a nightmare of trouble and toil, but the future which belongs to him is a reign of everlasting glory.

Yes, it is well that we choose to serve him, for apart from him we have nothing, there is nothing left. What does mortal man have other than Christ? What is life without light? If we live in darkness all our lives what have we to look forward to except the grave, everlasting death and darkness?

Yet it is within our power to have everlasting life and joy with him in the Kingdom which God has prepared for those that love Him and keep His sayings.

All that does not come from God is vanity, without meaning, and void of feeling and love.

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SOME have said that their life on earth is all they want, they will be content to live and die. This is the talk of darkness, and a lack of understanding is apparent. To have nothing better or higher to hope for we are like a pig wallowing in the mire which knows nothing else but to eat and sleep.

To have any idea of the glory which lies in store for the righteous and not try to attain unto it is foolishness and ignorance. We should all drink freely of the pure water of righteousness for it is able to soothe the parched throat and heal the weary mind.

When Christ does come we will see how much it has been to our advantage to keep the ways of his commandments, and to have waited on the memorial of his Name.

This is why it is so important to keep this memorial, to remember the love of Christ, to keep before us the purpose which we are to fulfil.

It is not good that we should, let anything keep us from partaking in this exercise, for it brings to our minds the hour of his humiliation, and the day of his glory.

It was designed for a great purpose, for Jesus knew what was in the heart of man and he knew that we needed a continual reminder to lead us in the right way.

It also shows us how completely dependent we are on him for our hope of all future ages. This memorial helps us to realize that we are servants, and to stir up our minds from day to day that we might diligently seek to make our calling and election sure. It is at this table of the Lord we can find hope and comfort and rest, to continue our weary journey through this evil world.

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WE must take heed though, for it could be possible, as at Corinth, to come together, "not for the better, but for the worse." We must guard against the conditions which would lead to this, we must have a wanting for unity of the mind and spirit. We must have faith that God will perform the things which He has spoken, without which, it is impossible to please God.

The unity of the Spirit will keep us in the bond of peace. Disagreement of the spirit will lead to the condition where it will be impossible to maintain peace in the ecclesia. The ecclesia should, when coming together speak only on the things and principles of the Truth.

We are told to turn away from the perverse disputings of men and the corrupt mind, for the first characteristic of a true saint is zeal for God and His Word. We cannot be as the fleshly mind which tends to base friendship with the Father merely on fleshly instinct.

We must stand with oneness of mind in Christ, we must walk in the principles that God has set forth, for they are the rule of life. They are the standards of his friendship, which we must measure up to, and the foundations of all His doings.

Oneness of the Spirit will help us to grow together in love and hope, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, abounding in the whole work of the Lord with thanksgiving.

It would be well for us all to take heed to the words of Paul when he said to abstain from strifes of words, foolish questions and contentions, which he says are unprofitable and vain—

"Charge them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subversion of the hearers; shun profane and vain babblings."

Paul warns the believers to maintain good works, which are to their profit, and to be diligent in every good work, against the impending day of account, relieving the afflicted, comforting the saints in their tribulations, and leading sinners into the way of justification and eternal life.

These good works will wither however in the midst of contention, strife, back-biting, and vainglory.

LET us take heed, and show ourselves men of God, whose seed remaineth in them, who cannot be moved away from the path of duty or the hope of the Gospel by the wildest storms that may come. We must be able to stand firm in the face of trials and hardships—

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

Those of us who are wise will keep the principles of the Truth before our minds, honouring the Lord and sowing bountifully, that we may reap bountifully, and in that day which is about to dawn, we might be approved of, and given the prize even eternal life.

Let us not be careless with the things which have been given to us in this life. They are few, but, if put to use, they will return unto us an hundred-fold. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.

We are instructed in Hebrews to follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

We should keep our minds pure at all times, reading the Word continually with constant prayer to God. We should associate only with those whose mind is in harmony with the mind of Christ.

We will always speak like the company we keep. If we seek the company of those of the flesh, we cannot expect to be free from their customs and language. If we read the literature of the world, our minds will never rise above the godless state of those which have written it.

But give us the atmosphere of the Spirit and we are altogether in a different state—

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His Law doth he meditate day and night."

Jesus says (Luke 16:13)—

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

And again—

"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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ANOTHER point which we should weigh is the cares of the flesh which we entertain every day as we go through life—the things that worry us and burden our minds daily. We are instructed to lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us.

We are people on a journey. When we literally take a journey we do not carry anything which will cause discomfort to us or burden us, or slow us down.

The principle is the same. In the race for life eternal, there are many things of this life which we think we cannot get along without, but if viewed and weighed in relation to the object to be attained, they are highly expendable, and to be laid aside as Paul advises.

It is safe and wise, and gives us cause for joy, to dispense with every habit or pleasure, or occupation, or friend that hinders our progress in the narrow way. This is but another way of saying what Christ said—

"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into the fire."

It is better to make our calling and election sure at the expense of worldly friends and engagements than to secure all these, in this present time, and find, at last, that we have cherished them at the expense of the love of Christ, and have to pay for them with the loss of the Kingdom of God.

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OUR minds may in this life be pre-occupied, causing us to take the warning of God's words lightly. But in that day which is certain to come—and **soon**—these warnings will be felt by us with a force and a grief that will cause "Weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It is better to listen to wisdom now in the day of her call. She stands at the door and knocks, saying—
"Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

The Spirit tells us to hear; and the reason is beautiful—

"Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand, riches and honor.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

"She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her."

But if we turn away from her voice, a terrible retribution waits—

"Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.

"But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.

"I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

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THERE is another lesson which we should dwell upon, which was manifested perfectly by Jesus. That is to—

"Give praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name."

We know that this is far from the minds of the flesh, for their laws are not subject to the thoughts of the Spirit. The thoughts of the world have no trace of God. They say, Who is Lord over us?

If there is one lesson that we must learn more than another, it is that it belongs to our calling in Christ to offer the sacrifice of praise to God CONTINUALLY. God declares of Himself—

"I will be exalted in the earth."

"My glory will I not give another."

"He that offereth praise glorifieth Me."

He has revealed that all things are formed for His glory, and for His pleasure were they created. All intelligence is out of Him, and must bow to Him, as the Scripture says—

"Holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of His glory.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

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MEANWHILE in giving praise to God and His Son, and obeying the commands which are given, we are to wait for his coming with patience. This involves self-denial on all parts.

It makes those who accept it the poor, the sorrowful, the meek, the weeping, the weary, the hungry, and the thirsty; and, in times past, the killed.

But the future of this class is so glorious that Jesus tells them to rejoice and be exceeding glad in the midst of their tribulations. Theirs is the turning of weeping into laughter, theirs is the great joy of being, in the great day at hand, the manifested children of God with glory, honor, and immortality.

Who would not, in view of such a coming reversal of position, choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Peter says—

"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

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WHAT will our joy be like if we are found faithful? It is beyond our mortal minds to comprehend what God has in store for those who love Him. But we get a glimpse of its beauty in the last chapters of the Bible (Rev. 21 and 22)—

"There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him."

"And they shall see his face, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

It will be a wonderful day, a glorious day, when Christ will rule the earth in righteousness and goodness, and even a greater day when the rulership will be given to God.

There is no way possible to express the full extent of the glory of that day. But we do have some idea, and this is what we are striving for, when our vile bodies shall be made like unto the Son's glorious body.

Let us build upon a sound foundation which will stand in the coming day of trouble and wrath. Let us ever stay in the straight and narrow way, the path of glory and grace in the sight of God. And perhaps, God willing, Christ will at last say unto us—

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" —R. J.
