



THE BELIEVER'S JOY *in* GOD

"We joy in God."—ROMANS v., II.

The phrase with which this verse commences—"*And not only so, but...also*"—shews plainly that we are now about to enter upon a higher grade of the believer's privileges. We have arrived at the summit of the climax of the believer's joys. In the first two verses Paul speaks of **peace, access, and joyful hope of glory**, as the first and immediate privileges of the believer. From the third to the tenth verse he speaks of **the joy of the believer occasioned by tribulations**. But now he leads us deeper into the bosom of the believer, and reveals to us his highest privilege—his sweetest joy.

We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And surely this privilege is more than all that went before. Peace with God is a blessed thing, but it does not imply that the heart is burning with intense joy and love in view of a reconciled God. Access to His favour is a blessed thing; but it only implies liberty of coming before Him with acceptance. Joy in hope of glory is a blessed thing; but is in the very nature of it a happiness whose object is unenjoyed and afar off. Joy

in tribulation, again, is a blessed thing; but it is a happiness which can only be enjoyed upon the earth. It is a joy, too, in spite of misery—a perfecting, but surely not a perfect joy. But Joy in God is the most blessed thing of all. This is the third heaven of the believer's privileges—a joy which all the redeemed are sharing with angels—a joy begun in this world, made perfect in glory.

Oh! my believing friends, how little do we live, in this age of dead and heartless Christianity, like those who have God for their present portion—like those who, amid the full tide of prosperity, or the low ebbings of adversity, have a constant and unfailling springing up of this holy joy within.

There are flowers which always turn their faces to the sun, and follow him in his daily journey, ever looking towards him with most loving assiduity. Though the storm may make them droop for a little, still they point to the one beloved orb. And so should the believer, whether his sky be clear, or covered with clouds; God—his God—his reconciled, reconciling God—is the sun in his heaven to which his face is ever directed, and from which his beams of gladness ever descend. Who can tell the holy joy thus poured into his cup!

When he goes forth to his morning toil, who can tell how the sunlight of the countenance of a God whom he loves is shed around all his paths?—how the cheerful step and open brow that graced the green sward of primeval paradise are restored to man, whilst he whispers in his own bosom, “*O LORD, Thou hast searched and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways*” (Psalm 139:1-3). And when he comes home weary, and lays down his head on his pillow to

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rest, after the fatigues of a hard wrought day, who can tell the calm delight that steals over him while he whispers to his reconciled God and Father, "*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: When I awake, I am still with thee*" (Psalm 139:17-18).

Let us consider several of the SPRINGS of this joy.

The believer joys in God because

HE IS OMNISCIENT.

He only can say, I am glad that God knows all my past history, that He hath been witness of my long ungodliness, of the sins of my heart—of my tongue—of my hand; for this makes me sure that the Saviour He has sent and offers to me is a Saviour that answers my case. Just as the sick man is glad when the physician seems to understand perfectly the whole of the disease, when he has probed to the bottom of every wound, and knows every symptom of the malady, so am I glad that God is the hourly witness of my diseased heart, that He knows every one of my indwelling corruptions; because this good Physician will give me grace according to my need. He will not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able to bear. He will perfect His strength in my weakness, so that as my day is, so shall my strength be.

The believer joys in God because

HE IS ALMIGHTY.

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So long as we are unconverted, the Almightyness of God should be terrible to us. If you cast your eye over the dwellings of the ungodly, it is quite true you see them all living in perfect security. And you may often see them filled with admiration of Jehovah's power. They will stand and gaze beside the foaming cataract—they will stand and listen while Jehovah is rending the heavens with His thunder—they will gaze with admiration when He is guiding the moon athwart the sun's golden path, and they are not reminded of the time when the sun shall be darkened and the moon not give her light. But just imagine for a moment that the eyes of all unconverted men were opened to see the situation in which they stand. Oh! what doleful cries of agony and terror would rise from every dwelling, when they saw that the Almightyness of Jehovah is all ready to be let loose upon them, body and soul, for ever. We would hear something like the cries which pierced the heavens when the flood came upon the world—we would hear something like the cries which shall one day soon rise from every unconverted heart, when Christ shall come in the clouds, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.

If sinners could but see that there is nothing but the hand of God staying back the fury of His anger, and that only for a time—that there is nothing but the good pleasure of God keeping any of them out of hell—if they could but see that the same hand which balances the earth upon nothing, the hand that wields the thunderbolt, the hand that darkens the sun with ominous eclipse—that that very hand is pledged to destroy every Christless soul, oh! Who would be able to bear the sight? The stoutest hearted among the wicked would find their knees becoming weak as water—they would cry “...*to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide*

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us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16).

The terribleness of wrath is always in proportion to the might of the being who is angry. The wrath of a child is contemptible, because it has no power to put it in execution. The wrath of the lion is terrible, because it excels in strength. When the sea is lashed into fury by the storm, it is fearful to look upon it, there is so much power in every one of the surges that dash upon the rocks. The wrath of the king, says the Bible, is terrible. But, ah! What must the wrath of God be—the King of kings, for He is almighty. When the Almightyness of God is roused up to destroy, oh, who can stand? Who can tell the dreadfulness of being *treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

But the believer exults in the thought of abiding "*under the shadow of the Almighty, I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me upon a rock"* (Psalm 91:1-2).

The believer joys in God because

HE IS JUST.

So long as we are unconverted, the justice of God should be terrible to us, for it is pledged to destroy us; and accordingly, this is the attribute of God which of all others is vilified and opposed by the natural heart. Regarding Him in the light of a tender Father, some think He is far too lenient to look with any eye but one of compassion on their

weaknesses and sins, forgetting that He is also the Lawgiver and Ruler of the universe. Others would grant Him to be a Lawgiver and Sovereign, but then so very great and exalted above His subjects, that he would not stoop to punish every sin. The Gospel alone tells us that every idle word God will bring into judgment—that all men are on a coming day to be judged in righteousness—that no sin can ever go unpunished—that God can by no means clear the guilty—that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one tittle of the law pass away.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul,” exclaims the justified believer, “I have found a perfect righteousness in the life and death of my glorified Lord. In his death I have borne all the penalties of the outraged law—in His life I have fulfilled all the demands of that holy law. The heavens are not clean in His sight, but I in Christ am clean. The angels He charged with folly, but in Jesus I am more righteous than angels.”

The believer joys in God because

HE IS LOVE.

This is the sum of the reasons why the believer joys in God—this is the oil which feeds the lamp of his joy. It is the fuel which keeps the fire of his joy for ever kindled, and for ever blazing toward heaven. He joys in God’s past love—in His present love—in His love which is to come.

He looks back to his condition when he was a child of wrath, even as others, and he remembers that then God first loved him. It was when he was in his blood that God said unto him, Live. He did not choose Christ, but Christ

chose him. Oh, who but the believer can tell the wondering joy that sparkles in his bosom when he looks back on this the compassionating love of God—How marvellous that God should have sought me when I was seeking sin—that Christ should have shed His blood for me when I saw no beauty in Him to desire Him—that the Spirit should have awakened me when so many around are slumbering. Oh, my believing friends, you know what I mean—you feel the joy which I cannot describe!

The believer joys in God because

GOD LOVES HIM.

To one who has been long confined to a sick-room, there is something unspeakably refreshing in the cheering beams of the summer sun; and so to the soul that has been all its life under wrath, there is something unspeakably joyful in abiding under the beams of God's reconciled countenance.

There are two things which make it peculiarly delightful—

1. That we are accepted through imputed righteousness. There is something inexpressibly pleasing to a justified mind, to know that God was all the honour of our salvation, and we have none—to know that God's honour is not violated, but on the contrary, shines more illustrious—to know that God's law is not injured, but magnified and made honourable—to know that we are safe, and God has all the glory. Oh! This is a blessed assurance.

2. That God will keep us always in a state of acceptance—that it will continue. How often are worldly joys embittered by the thought that they will not last till tomorrow's sun.

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Like spring flowers—the sweetest aye the fleetest. But though our sense of acceptance should fall away and leave us comfortless, we know that God will put His fear in us, and not suffer us to go away from Him.

Has God begun a work in your heart? Oh, be glad in the Lord, for He will finish it. Mountains may lie in your way; but He will make the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

Has God carried you through the Red Sea? Be sure He will bring you to the green pastures and still waters.

The believer joys in God because

GOD WILL LOVE HIM FOREVER.

“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” (Malachi 3:17). Oh! if it be joyful to look back on God’s wondrous love that is past—if it be joyful to bask in the beams of His reconciled countenance now, what will it be to joy in God’s love in eternity, when all those full treasures of love are flowing out of that bosom towards us—when we are His own jewels in that day. Oh! If He be so precious to us here in the wilderness, that oftentimes the wilderness blossoms as the rose—if He feeds us and leads us so when we are pilgrims and strangers, what will He not do for us when He brings us home to Himself. If the presence of His Spirit in our bosom be so precious now, oh! What will it be to recline on the bosom of that God who is LOVE.

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Dear unconverted friends, I do not say you know anything of this joy; but I do say, that if you do not know something of it before you die, you will never come to know it after.



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