What Is Unique About Christian Joy?

(by Paul Blake)

First, one’s capacity for joy is increased by sorrow and trials. This is true even though it may appear counter-intuitive. Jesus told His disciples that the sorrow they felt over His departure will make their joy even greater upon His return (**John 16:20-22**). Just as thirst can make a cool drink taste more refreshing, so present sorrows can help intensify appreciation for future joy. In the world, grief robs us of joy; in Christ, grief becomes an avenue for joy.

Second, true joy helps the Christian to discover profit and advantage in his sufferings. James instructs us to take joy in trials (**James 1:2-4**), for trials bring patience, a much needed virtue for Christian living. The Hebrews took joy in the robbing of their property by persecutors because it reminded them of their great possessions in heaven (**Hebrews 10:34**). The apostles joyfully viewed persecution as an affirmation that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ (**Acts 5:41**). Jesus taught that those who suffer persecution should take joy in the sharing of suffering with Himself and the prophets (**Matthew 5:11-12**). Outside Christ, suffering becomes a cause for anger and despair. Among Christians, burdens are looked upon as welcome opportunities.

Third, joy is shared among Christians. In **Luke 15**, Jesus relates three parables designed to teach us to rejoice together, especially when the lost are restored to God’s favor and to our fellowship. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd calls his neighbors together when he finds the sheep and says, ***“Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost”*** (**v 6**). In the account of the lost coin, the woman upon finding the coin summons her neighbors saying, ***“Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost”*** (**v 9**). Upon the return of the prodigal son, the father says to the envious older son, ***“It was right that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found”*** (**v 32**). Joy begets joy among God’s children (**Romans 12:15**; **1 Corinthians 12:26**); in the world, joy often produces jealousy in the hearts of others.

Lastly Christian joy is burglar-proof; it cannot be stolen away by anyone or anything. Jesus said in **John 16:22** that no man would be able to take away their joy. Grief and suffering do not have the capacity to rob us of joy; no force of nature can diminish our joy. The lost have a joy that is easily taken away; the saved have a joy that cannot be moved. One might ask at this point: *“If Christian joy cannot be taken away, then why are some Christians unhappy?”* The answer is simple … our own sins diminish our joy. Our sin separates us from God (**Isaiah 59:2**). Since our joy is based on a right relationship with God, when that relationship is damaged, our joy is damaged along with it. When David sinned, he acknowledged that he had to be restored to righteousness before he could find joy again (**Psalm 51:8,12**).

Joy is not elusive; it is readily found by those who pursue righteousness. Joy is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22**, produced by those who live according to the guidance of the Word. If we walk in fellowship with God, Christian joy will be our companion along the pathway. ***“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice”*** (**Philippians 4:4**)

Praying For Patience

(Selected)

A young man visited an aged saint and asked him to pray that as a young man he might become more patient. The older man agreed to pray. The two knelt together. The older man of God began to pray: *“Lord, send this young man tribulation in the morning, and send him tribulation in the afternoon, and tribulation in the evening.”* The young man nudged the elder, saying, *“No, not tribulation; patience!”* *“But,”* said the old saint, *“it is tribulation that works patience. That’s what the Bible tells us. If you would know patience, you must have tribulation.”* (**Romans 5:3**)

**Dig Into the Word**

(Selected)

The Gospel hidden in mystery should arouse our best and most active faculties. That is why we are commanded to search the Scripture, not simply to read it. It is the great repository of all the truths and mysteries of our faith. It is a rich mine that we ought to dig into and shall never exhaust. Just as gold and diamonds and most other precious stones and metals lie concealed in the depths of the earth, so the most valued things of revelation are concealed by the great Creator and Redeemer from the common view of the world. Only as this mystery stimulates us to dig into the Word shall we unearth the treasures that God has there for us.

***“My heart stands in awe of Your word. I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.”*** *(****Psalm 119:16b, 162****)*