

That Your Joy May be Full

C. S. Lewis in one of his books tells of his search for joy, a spiritual journey which led him from the Christianity of his youth into atheism and then, by way of theism back to Christianity. He describes his conversion as "surprised by joy."

Joy is a rather scarce commodity in our mad and violent world. It is natural that there should be sad people in this world filled with problems and the continual threat of global warfare always so real and haunting. So much is being said about the possibility of living creatures on other planets. Yet the Martian who would step out of his capsule one day would have little cause for reporting to his control station that he had found a planet filled with creatures who had discovered the secret of joy. Even Christians who supposed to have found the secret of joy, show so little of it. H. L. Mencken defined one variety of Christian thought as the "haunting fear that someone, somewhere I may be happy." Of course, this is ridiculous. Yet it is thought provoking. The Christian faith is not like other religions characterized by uncertainty and fear. Faith in God dispels fear. Jesus said: "These things I have spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." In the Old Testament we find this beautiful thought "...for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Why is there such a lack of joy amongst Christians? Much Christianity since Christ's first coming has been grim and severe. Some feel that Christians should not laugh. The world is under sin. Trouble is all around us. God is so severe. And here is the problem - a failure to properly understand God. Dr. A. W. Tozer wrote: "The Christian life is thought to be glum, unrelieved cross-carrying under the eye of a stern Father who expects much and excuses nothing. He is austere, peevish., highly temperamental and extremely hard to please." The truth is that "the hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation." (C. S. Lewis). When God has taken hold of you through Jesus Christ His Son and through the work of the Spirit, you'll find that gloom will be dispelled. The new found fellowship with God is then delightful beyond all telling. The God of the Bible is not temperamental or mean. What He is today, we shall find Him tomorrow and forever. When you have God in your life you have the joy that God Himself possesses and which He shares with His children. God is easy to live with. He remembers that ye are but dust. He knows our weaknesses better than we do ourselves. He has more patience with us than we have with our fellowman. Christians don't need to be jumpy or scorned, We don't please Him by desperately trying to make ourselves good and trying to be nicer than nice. We please Him most when we throw ourselves into His arms of mercy with all our imperfections and failures, and believing that He forgives and that He understands. Should Christians be radiant? Of course they should be! We have the victory already. Christ has overcome the world and "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Therefore the Bible tells us also to "rejoice in the Lord always." Is this not asking too much? Not if we realize that we share our life with the God who knows no failure or frustration and whom we can call through Christ-Father. Find inspiration for your daily living in Him" who is able to keep us from falling, and to present its faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

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