

HOW TO BECOME FULL OF JOY.

NO. 3272

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 19TH, 1911,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEP. 17TH, 1865.

“And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full.”-1 John 1:4.

IT is a wonderful proof of our Saviour's deep attachment to his people that, having made their salvation sure, he is also anxious concerning their present state of mind. He wishes that his people should be, not only safe, but, happy; that they should be not merely saved, but that they should rejoice in his salvation. It does not delight your Master for you to bow your heads as does the bulrush, or for you to go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice, for again and again by his apostles does he exhort you to rejoice in him. We will go at once to our text. Let our first point be that-

I. A CHRISTIAN'S JOY NEEDS LOOKING AFTER. If it were not so, our text would not, have been written, for we should not have had John writing to promote what would stand and progress well enough of itself. John seems to put the whole of the apostolic band, with himself, into the verse when he says, ' These things write we unto 'you, that your joy may be full, as if their joy would not be full unless inspired apostles should be commissioned of God to write in order to promote it. The Christian's joy wants looking after.

I do not doubt but, that you have the proofs of this in yourselves, in your eternal circumstances. You cannot always rejoice, because although your

treasure is not of this world, yet sometimes your affliction is here. Poverty is sometimes, too heavy a cross for you to sing under it. Sickness casts you on a bed upon which you have not as yet learned to rejoice. There will be losses in business, disappointment of fond hopes. The, forsaking of friends, the cruelty of foes, and any of these may prove the winter nights and nip the green leaves of your joys and make them fade and fall from your bough. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a needs-be that you should be, “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” None of us, I suppose, are so perfectly happy as to be without some external trials, and our joy will, therefore, need to be looked after lest these water-floods should come in and quench it. We shall need indeed to cry to him, who alone can keep the flame burning, to trim our lamps and supply them with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that you have that within which makes you feel that it is no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will come deep depressions of heart, you can scarcely tell why or wherefore. That strong wing on which once you could mount as an eagle, will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours which once flew upwards as the lark rising from amidst the dew, will lie cold and heavy as a stone on the earth. You will find it, hard, indeed, to rejoice. Besetting sins, too, will cripple your holy mirth, so that when, like David before the ark, you, too, would dance for very joy, internal corruptions will make it almost impossible. Beloved, it is not easy to fight evil in our own souls, and to sing at the same time. Christian soldiers, we know, ought to do it, and march to battle with songs of triumph, nerving their spirits to deeds of desperate valor; but oh! how often the garment, rolled in dust and blood, compels us to stay for a while the shout of certain victory. Trials from within, from Satan’s suggestions, from the uprising of the black fountains of corruption, are not easy to bear, and we have reason enough, if our joy is to remain full, to be guarded and strengthened by a power not our own, even from God himself.

And yet, have we not learned, beloved in Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that our joy should be full? When that joy is full we are more than a match for all the devils of hell, but when it is weak and low, then we tremble, and like Peter, can be vanquished by a pert little serving-maid. When our joy in the Lord is at its full, we can bear that the fig-tree should most blossom, and that the herd should be cut off from the stall, and the flocks from the fields but how heavy our trials become when that joy has

fled! When we can see the Saviour's face without a veil between, then temptation has no power over us; for all the glittering gems that sin can offer by way of pleasure, are eclipsed in tender brilliance and divine attraction by the heavenly pearl of joy in the dear Saviour which we possess. Then we can sing with intensest truthfulness,-

*“I would not change my blest estate
For all the world calls good or great,
And whilst my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinners gold.”*

Thus the Christian by his holy joy out-braves temptation, and is strong to endure. Why, Christian! thou canst do anything when the joy of the Lord is within thee. Like a roe, or a young hart, thou leapest over the mountains, and makest them as stepping-stones across the brook! The heaviest tempest that can lower over thee, cannot chill or dismay thy courage, for thy strong wing pierces it, and mounts above it all, into the clear blue sky of fellowship with thy God. But when this joy is gone, then we grow weak, and,-

*“Like Samson when his hair was lost
Meet the Philistines to our cost.”*

We become, victims to temptation, and if we do not yield to it, yet it harasses us, and robs us of the power with which we once glorified God. The Christian's joy, then, needs looking after. If any of you have lost that joy of the Lord, I pray you do not think that your loss is a small one. I have heard of a minister who once said, that a Christian lost nothing by his sin, and then he added, except his joy. Well, what else would you have him lose? Is not that quite enough? To lose the light of my Father's countenance, to lose my full assurance of my interest in Christ, is to lose my best and purest delight, and is this not a loss quite great enough? Let us walk prayerfully, let us walk carefully, that, so we may possess unbroken peace, and joy to the full. Let none of us sit down in misery and be content to be there. There is such a thing as becoming habituated to melancholy. My own tendency is sometimes to get into that state of mind, but, by the grace of God, I shake it off, for I know it will not do. If we once begin to give way to this foolishness, we, shall soon forge chains for ourselves that we cannot easily break. Take down your harp from the willow, believer. Do not let your fingers neglect the well-known strings. Come, let us be happy and joyful! If we have looked sad far a while, let us now be

brightened by thoughts of Christ. At any rate, let us not be satisfied until we have shaken off this lethargy and misery, and have once again come into the proper and healthy state in which a child of God should be ever found, namely, a state of spiritual joy.

Again, II. A CHRISTIAN'S JOY LIES MAINLY IN REVEALED THINGS. It this were not so, it would not find its fitting sustenance in inspired words. If the Christian's joy consisted in the wine-vat, the feast, or his riches, John would not have written as he does: then, it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance, and that God should prosper trade, and send to the merchant all that his heart could wish. But the Christian's deepest and best joy does not depend on these things. They cannot satisfy his nobler nature. He thanks God for all earthly joys, but he cannot feast his soul upon them, he needs something better. When John writes, "These things write we, unto you, that your joy may be full," there is nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ, from which I infer that everything revealed to us in the Scriptures has for its supreme purpose the filling up of the believer's joy.

But what is the Scripture's great theme? Is it not, first and foremost, concerning Christ Jesus? Take thou this Book, and distil it into one word, and that one word will be Jesus. The Book itself is but the body of Christ, and we may look upon all its pages as the swaddling bands of the infant Saviour; for if we unroll the Scripture, we come upon Jesus Christ himself. Now, beloved, does not Jesus Christ make your joy full? I trust we do not sing falsehood when we sometimes say in our song,-

*“ Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.”*

Jesus-man, yet God; Jesus-allied to us in ties of blood-oh! here is a reason for holy mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round. There is great joy to us in his nativity, for by it man has been taken by God into union, with himself. Jesus the Saviour! Here is death to the groans of pain: an end to the moans of despair. He comes to break the bars of brass, and to cut the gates of iron in sunder.

*“Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease,
‘Tis music in the sinner’s ears:
‘Tis life, ‘tis health, ‘tis peace.”*

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue, for it makes us joyful: it has done well to make Christ its head and front.

The same is true of all that is written in this Book. Let me divide it into three parts, doctrinal, experimental, and practical. All these are written that our joy may be full.

I think I could prove, if there were time, that all the doctrines have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster Christian joy. Let me mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much-abused, but most delightful doctrine of election,-that before all worlds Jesus chose his people, and looked with eyes of infinite love upon them, as he saw them in the glass of futurity. What! Christian! Canst thou believe thyself “loved with an everlasting love,” and not rejoice?

Surely it was the doctrine of election that made David dance before the ark. He told Michal when she sneered at him, “I danced before the Lord that chose me before thy father Saul.” Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind, and made the favourites of the heart of Deity, surely this ought to make us in our own very worst and dullest moments sing for joy. Then there are the other doctrines which, like living waters, flow from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of redemption,-bought with a price, a price whose efficacy is not questionable,-bought so that now we are Jesu’s property, never to be lost: bought, most with that general redemption which holds before the sinner’s eyes something, somewhere in the clouds, which may or may not be, but bought with an effectual redemption which saves every blood-bought soul because he has power to save to the uttermost all who come to him. Oh, here is an occasion for song!

*“ Jesus bought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God
He to save my soul from danger
Bought me with his precious blood.”*

Canst thou see the blood-mark on thyself, and not, rejoice, O Christian? Surely thy joy ought to be full indeed.

Once agate, think of the doctrine of justification; namely, that, through faith in Christ's redemption every believer is "accepted in the Beloved," and stands, clad in Jesu's righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned;-why, surely, here is a theme again for overflowing joy!

Take the doctrine of communion; that we are one with Jesus Christ,--

"By eternal union one!"

Members, of his body, of his flesh and of his bones,-what! not sing after this? How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! And then to mention but one where there are so, many handfuls of pearls, there is the doctrine of eternal preservation and glory. You are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" you shall be with him where he is, you shall behold his glory. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." Ah! canst thou think of this, and go up in spirit to the throne where Christ has made thee sit in his own person, and not begin the song that shall have no end? Truly, I need but remind you of these truths: you can think them out for yourselves: every doctrine to the Christian is a source of joy.

Again, the Scripture is given to us to produce in us experiences, every one of which is meant to promote, our joy. "Why," saith one, "all Christian experience is not joyful!" I grant you that, but, remember that all a Christian's experience is not Christian experience. Christians experience a great deal because they are not such Christians as they ought, to be. Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God, but it, is a joyous mourning, if I may use so strange a phrase.

Sorrow for sin is a sweet sorrow, do not desire to escape it! I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that his only regret in going to heaven would be that he could no, more repent. True evangelical repentance is food to the saintly soul. I do not know, beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when; I am weeping for sin at the foot of the cross, for that is the safest place in which I can stand. I like that verse,-

*"Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground.
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."*

Remember, too, that though with regard to things of this world you may have sore trial, in every drop of bitterness your Father puts in your cup there is a whole sea of sweetness beneath. Trials wean us from the world, and surely that is a most blessed thing. Oh! to come to Christ, and find my

all in him! I; we had no idols in children, friends, wealth, ourselves, we should not need half the trials we have. Foolish loves make rods for foolish backs. God save us from this, and when he does, though the means may seem to be severe, they are intended to intensify our joy by destroying the cause of our worst sorrows. But beyond all this, there is much of a true Christian's experience that is, and must be, all joy. To have faith in Christ, to rest in him, is not that joy? To stand here, and sing from one's heart,-

*“I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power
What I've committed to his hands,
‘Till the decisive hour”*

Is not that joy? Or even that humble note,-

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling”*

Why that has the germ of heaven in it.

Hope, too, is part of the Christian's experience, and what a fountain of joy is there!

*“The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven at last.”*

This is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil. But above all things, and this is what is chiefly meant in the text, the experience of Christian fellowship is greatly promotive of Christian joy. John truly says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we, unto you, that your joy may be full.” This is the golden center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of joy. Other joys may help to fill it, but this fills of itself alone-up to the very brim, of fullness of joy. Have you not felt it? I know you have,-when you could have had no more joy, for you were full. A fullness of joy is all sorts of blessing. If I were to so fill a glass with water that the gentlest touch would make it run over, that would be a picture of the joy the Christian sometimes; has and should more constantly possess. When such is known, he is,

*“Rich to all intents of bliss
Since thou O God! art mine.”*

It is not every man who can go home to-night and say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none that I desire on earth, compared with thee! I have thee, and, therefore, I want no more.” Go ye, who crave for joy, and traverse the wide world round in the vain search for it, my soul shall sit down at the foot of the cross, and say, “I have found it here!” Oh ye, like the swallows that cross the purple seas to find another summer, now that yours is over: but my soul shall abide where it is, and find no chilling winter her joys to mar. At the cross our sun is at its solstice, and stands still for ever, never moving, without parallax, or shadows of a tropic: ever the same, bright, full, and glorious.

But I said that the Bible was also, full of practice. I can only say a brief word or two on that point. Every precept and command of the Word of God is meant be help our happiness. “Do thyself no harm,” is the very essence and law of all the ten commandments. It is love speaking in the imperative mood, saying “Thou shalt not:” but all for our good. It is God’s way of saying, “Don’t touch the fire or you will be burned. Don’t do that which will injure, hurt, and destroy your joy of soul! “ God never denies his children anything that is really for their good. His commands are freedom’s rules: never fetters to the loving Christian. Let us think of one or two. “Love one another,” that is the first. Well now, when are you happiest? When you feel bitter, and spiteful, and resentful towards others, or when you feel charity towards the sinful and unworthy, and deep love towards, your fellow-servants? I know, at any rate, when I feel happiest. There are some persons who seem to have been reared on vinegar; who wherever they go see some defeat, and where this cannot be discovered will insinuate, “ Ah! well, but we do not know what they do in secret; “ or, “ we, do not know their motives.” But those who love one another, can see much to rejoice in everywhere.

Again, we are told in the Scripture, to serve the Lord with diligence, and is it not the diligent soul that is made fat? It is the do-nothing people generally, who say,-

*“Lord, what a wretched land is this!
That yields us no supplies.”*

Indeed it ought to be a wretched land to lazy people. ““They who will not work, neither should they eat; “ and this refers even more to spiritual sustenance ‘than to material food. If in the winter you complain of the cold, get, you to the plough, and you soon will glow with warmth, but sit you down to moan and complain, and blow your blue fingers, you shall feel the cold more and more. Holy activity is the mother of holy joy.

Growth in grace, too, is a fount of true delight. Never is a believer happier than when he grows in grace. To stand still, to contract one’s self, it is like forcing a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe: it is torture to the understanding: but to have a mind capable of ever learning: to be able sometimes to admit, “I was wrong,” to know you know more to-day than yesterday, because the Spirit has been teaching you, why this is joy, this is pure delight, and such as God would ever have us to know. So I venture to repeat, that all the writings of Scripture, doctrinal, experimental, or practical, all have for their object that which John declares in these words - “that your joy may be full.”

Upon the next point we must be very brief; but, strive to be very practical. We have shown that the Christian’s joy needs: looking after, and that it is chiefly fed and maintained upon the things revealed in the Scriptures. If this be so, then-

III. LET US CONSTANTLY READ THE SCRIPTURES. Let us read them, I would say, in preference to other books. There is a great deal of reading nowadays, and a great deal of that is a kind of chaff-cutting, and nothing more. Why, even in religious newspapers and magazines they cannot command readers and make them pay, so they say, unless they include a religious novel. People’s minds must be in a queer state, when they can relish nothing but these whipped creams, and juvenile syllabubs. If they were robust and healthy, with a good appetite for divine things, they would demand something far more solid and satisfying. You will never grow sturdy men and women on such poor stuff as that: you may rear lackadaisical imitations; but the thinking soul with something in it, the Christian woman who serves God and is a true helper to the Christian ministry, the young man who is fired with the longing to proclaim Christ and win souls to him, must have stronger nutriment than this, that modern religious journalism ladles out so plentifully! Oh! my brethren and sisters, read the Bible, read the Bible; and these things that enfeeble, will lose all their attraction for you.

If the worldling must have these things, let him; but if you have a soul that is above rubbish, and has been accustomed to live on great, solid verities and substantial truths, you scarcely need that I should say, "Search the Scriptures diligently, and your joy shall spread and deepen." "Be this your happy confession,-

*“ Lord, I have made thy Word my choice,
My lasting heritage;
There shall my noblest powers rejoice
My warmest thoughts engage.”*

We say further, prefer the Scriptures even to all religious books. We say this of the best book, and sermons. We do our best to teach you God's truth: but we are, like gold-beaters, we get a little bit of truth, and we hammer it out so thin. Some of us are mighty hands at this, and can make a tiny fragment of truth-gold cover an acre of talk. But the best, of us, those who really do seek to bring out the doctrines of grace and love, are but poor workers at it. Read the Bible more, and do not care so much about us. If my sermons kept people from reading the Bible for themselves, I would like to see the whole stock in a blaze and burned to ashes'. But if they serve as finger-posts, pointing to the Scriptures and saying, "Read this, and this, and this;" then I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you from your Bibles, burn them, burn them, burn them. Do not let them overlay the Scriptures, but lie beneath them, for that is their proper place. Keep you first, to God's revealed Word.

Let me here say, that when you read the Bible, remember there are several ways of doing it. There is the superficial reading: being satisfied with the mere letter of it. There is, however, a diving into it, a going deep down into the soul of it. Read it in natural sections. What would Milton's "Paradise, Lost" be if you only read one line a day, and began at the middle and went back to the first line? You would never understand his meaning thus. Read the Bible through. Read John's gospel: not a bit of John and then a snippet of Mark, but read John through, and find out what John is at. Remember that Matthew-, though he speaks of the same Saviour as Mark, yet he does it not in the same style, nor for the same purpose; as he. There is a very distinct purpose in each gospel. Matthew tells of Jesus, the King; the parables he records all hold references to the King. "Then shall the kingdom, of heaven be likened," Mark show us Christ as the Servant devoted and tireless in his activity of loving toil; Luke as the Man Christ Jesus, full of human tenderness and sympathy, and his parables begin "A

certain man.” John reveals to us Christ in his true Deity and God-head; and gloriously does he preface it, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Get a hold of what the books mean, and may the Holy Spirit to show you the aim of each writer’ - the one book, and that studied, not scampered through, and you shall stand firm where others fall. And now, lastly, if the Scriptures are, intended to bring joy to believers, the question starts up,-

IV. ARE WE ALL BELIEVERS: IS THE BOOK A SOURCE OF JOY TO US? There are significant pronouns -”we,”-”you” -”your.” Who, is that? Is that you? Does it come to you and make your joy full? If you do not know or much care about it, then it does not speak to you. If you find plenty of joy elsewhere, and it does not speak to you, it will not force itself and intrude, upon you. It gives you no joy, because you have enough elsewhere. “ They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” But others of you long for this joy. You are uneasy, unsatisfied, cannot find a tree in which to build your nest. Oh! dear friend! I am so glad. May you grow weary and heavy-laden of spirit, for then I have a whisper for you,-Jesus Christ came to call such to him. Yes: the world may have spurned and scorned you, but Jesus will receive you. Your companions say you are mopish and miserable: come to him and he will warmly welcome you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

*“Weary souls that wander wide
From the central source of bliss,
Turn to Jesus crucified
Look to his dear wounds and live.”*

Oh! if you are sick of the world, come we to my Master. May God the Holy Spirit sanctify this sickness, and bring you to Jesus, because you have nowhere else to go. Jesus will not spurn even the devil’s castaways. The sweepings of humanity who have gone so far that their friends reject them, Jesus Christ will accept and bless.

May he accept me, may he accept you, and then in him our joy shall be full!

The Lord bless you, evermore! Amen.