

Experiencing The Joy Of Christ

by Octavius Winslow

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit—LUKE 10:21.



It is a frequently-quoted remark of one of the fathers, that Christ was often seen to *weep*, but never once to *smile*. We doubt both the correctness and the wisdom of the statement. Our Lord was a man of joy as well as a man of sorrow. He must, in the fathomless depths of His holy soul, have been as intimately acquainted with gladness as with grief—with the emotion of joy as with the feeling of sorrow. And can we picture Him to our mind thus rejoicing in spirit, the oil of gladness poured upon Him without measure, and insinuating itself into the innermost depths of His being, without a gleam, a smile of joy lighting up that benign, placid, and expressive countenance which more than all others must have been a perfect index of the soul's hidden, varied, and profound emotions? Impossible! A portrait of Christ, with nought but shadows,—shadows of grief and sorrow darkening the entire picture,—would be wanting in one of its most essential and life-like features. That a pure and deep joy never found a home in the Saviour's breast, we cannot, then, for a moment credit. That His heart was the seat of grief unmitigated, of sorrow unmixed—that, from that harp breathed no sounds but woe—that from that fount of sensibility welled up no emotions but found their utterance in sighs and groans and tears, is far, very far from our conceptions of the Saviour. And that, when the emotion of joy did for a moment glow in the human soul of Christ, there was no corresponding glow lighting up and illuming every feature of that wonderful countenance, and for a while clothing it with the warm sunshine and radiance of a holy *smile*, we cannot believe.

Again,—Is the statement of Christ's joyless expression wise? We think not. It gives a wrong, distorted, gloomy portrait of His holy religion. The religion of Christ is the religion of JOY. Christ came to take away our sins, to roll off our curse, to unbind our chains, to open our prison-house, to cancel our debt; in a word, to give us the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Is not *this* joy? Where can we find a joy so real, so deep, so pure, so lasting? There is every element of joy—deep, ecstatic, satisfying, sanctifying joy—in the gospel of Christ. The believer in Jesus is essentially a happy man. The child of God is, from necessity, a joyful man. His sins are forgiven, his soul is justified, his person is adopted, his trials are blessings, his conflicts are victories, his death is immortality, his future is a heaven of inconceivable, unthought of, untold, and endless blessedness—with such a God, such a Saviour, and such a hope, is he not, ought he not, to be a *joyful* man?

We propose, in the further unfolding of this subject, to state the grounds of the Lord's joy, and the corresponding grounds of the spiritual joy of the Lord's people; thus illustrating the perfect sympathy of Christ with His saints in this holy, elevated element of Christian experience.

We have already remarked in this volume, that the varied emotions of Christ never resolved themselves into empty sentiment, or evaporated into mere feeling—which, alas! is so much the case with many of His professed disciples—but that they were always in harmony with the occasions which gave them birth: that they were either an embodiment of some Divine principle or in illustration of some important truth, or in connexion with some beneficent act—a doctrine of the gospel propounded, or a miracle of mercy wrought. In the present instance, the joy of Christ is in connexion with the enunciation of one of the most important doctrines of the Bible—the gospel, hidden to the worldly-wise, revealed to the spiritually enlightened and taught. "*In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" In tracing our Lord's joy to some of its causes, let us place this one in the foreground—His joy at the sovereign revelation of His gospel to His disciples.

What a solemn, and equally true, statement of our great Teacher is this—the gospel a hidden, concealed thing to the carnal mind! *“Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.”* The “wise and prudent,” in the general acceptation of the title, include the great men of the unregenerate; all those to whom the mysteries of the kingdom are not revealed; but, doubtless, our Lord had a special reference to the carnally-wise, the lettered philosophers of the world, who, wise and prudent in the learning and science and arts of this life, were yet profoundly ignorant of the things of the Spirit of God. Now, this arises from no defect either in the nature of the gospel, or in the evidence of its divinity, or in the simplicity of its statements. There is everything in the gospel to awaken the intellect, to incite the imagination, to gratify the taste, to enlist the sympathies and sensibilities of the finest and most cultivated minds. Its themes of thought, its touches of beauty, its unveilings of grandeur, its history, its philosophy, its poetry, its science, are such as to charm and feast the noblest intellect that ever shone in the world of mind. And when the soul at first wakes up to the sublimity and power of the gospel of Christ, it marvels and it wonders that all this magnificence and beauty and tenderness, all these sources of the highest thought and purest feeling, should have been so long and so deeply veiled from its view.

Nor does this ignorance of the gospel, and lack of interest in its revelations, arise from any deficiency of evidence. God has made nothing more demonstrably true than His gospel. If ever proof, self-evident and overwhelming, accumulated around an object, that object is the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Internal and external, immediate and collateral, positive and presumptive, the evidences of the truth of the gospel are many and mighty, convincing and conclusive, leaving the sceptic, unbelieving mind without one excuse to justify or palliate at Christ’s tribunal the fearful crime of its rejection. If you, my reader, are rejecting the Bible on the ground of its unsatisfactory proof, on the plea of its lack of evidence, and at the same time, it may be, giving the fullest credence to some old wives’ fable unsupported by one shadow of evidence, I bid you pause before you advance one step further, and ponder these solemn, searching words of Christ—*“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”*

Light is come—the light of Christ, the light of revelation and the light of evidence. Not for want of light, then, will you finally be condemned. Then, for what? For your willful rejection of that light. And why this rejection of the light? Because you love the darkness of sin! Examine yourself honestly, and ascertain if your infidelity, your scepticism, your unbelief, your quibbling and cavilling at the truth of the Bible, has not its seat, not in a mind that cannot be convinced, but in a heart that will not! Infidelity is not the child of reason; it is the deformed offspring of a depraved heart. There is a love of sin—of some master, dominant sin—underlying all scepticism. The light is rejected, because the darkness is loved; the truth is renounced, because the sin is preferred. The Bible is hated and ignored, because it is against sin, and testifies of the world that the works thereof are evil. We reiterate the statement, that atheism and infidelity are not the beautiful flowers of intellect, as some affirm, but the indigenous plants of a sinful and sin-loving heart. “*The fool hath said in his HEART*”—not in his *head*; the intellect could not affirm that—“*there is no God.*” The words, “*there is,*” are in italic, denoting that our translators have supplied them, needlessly we think, so that, viewing the passage as in the original, it would read—“*The fool hath said in his heart—NO GOD*”—*i. e.*, “No God for me, I want no God, though in my judgment I know that there is one.” Such is the wisdom of the worldly-wise and prudent. Truly may the apostle affirm, “*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,*” and “*the wisdom of God is foolishness with men.*”

Nor does this blindness of the unrenewed mind to the glorious gospel of the blessed God arise from any want of *simplicity* in the gospel. Inconceivably great, indescribably grand, transcendently sublime as is the gospel of Christ, it is the very essence of simplicity—as all God’s works and ways are. Was ever any scheme, any plan, any command so simple as this, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?*” And yet, this is the whole gospel! This is the sum and substance of salvation! The first principles of Christianity, the elements of the gospel, are few and simple. And this forms the stumblingblock—the naked simplicity of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” The “wise and the prudent” stumble, not at the profoundness, not at

the grandeur, not at the difficulties of the gospel, but at its severe, its pure, its perfect simplicity. And because it submits its mysteries to faith, and not to reason; appeals to the heart, and not to the intellect; demands the evidence of the child, and not the understanding of the philosopher; the silent, lowly, believing homage of the soul, and not the haughty, towering reasoning of the mind, the philosophising, pharasaical, and proud of this world instantly, scornfully, and totally reject it.

Such is the solemn truth our Lord affirmed; and the entire analogy of Scripture maintains the fact. The gospel is a hidden glory to the unrenewed man. The apostle thus confirms the statement—“*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” The Greek is more emphatic—“he is not able to know them”—his spiritual organs are impaired; he has eyes, but the transcendent wisdom and sublimity of the gospel he sees not; he has ears, but the thunders of its threatenings and the soft-breathing music of its doctrines he hears not. With all his human acumen—his attainments in philosophy, his discoveries in science, his perfection in art, his power to sound the depths of human mystery, the Bible is to him—unenlightened, untaught, unregenerated by the Spirit—a book seven times sealed—he is not *able* to know it. And the poor, uneducated peasant, dwelling in some lowly cottage, with nought but his Bible and its Divine Author to enlighten and instruct him, shall travel far into the depths of revelation and sound their wonders; shall grasp the truths of the Bible, understand their meaning, feel their power, receive their comfort, and explain the mind of the Spirit with a lucidity, beauty, and power which might put to the blush many an acknowledged champion of literature and many a professed college divine. And what causes the difference? The cottage expositor of God’s Word is taught by the Divine Spirit; the learned expositor of the schools still belongs to the worldly “wise and prudent,” to whom the gospel is a *hidden* thing! My reader, become a disciple of Jesus! Quit the schools and the teaching of men for the school and the teaching of Christ. Receive the gospel as a little child. Become a fool that you may be wise. Lay your human learning and philosophy, your pride of

intellect and of merit, beneath the cross, and take your place at the Saviour's feet, and learn of Him, and be taught by Him the truth as it is in Jesus. Be this your petition, urged importunately until the Spirit responds—*“Open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”*

Turn we now to one of the causes of the Saviour's joy. “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and HAST REVEALED THEM UNTO BABES.” This was His joy—that His Father, in the exercise of His electing love and sovereign grace and Divine power, had passed by the worldly-wise and prudent, and had revealed the glorious things of the gospel to those whom the world regarded as “babes” in intellect, in power, and in knowledge. These “babes,” then, are not children of tender years, but children in docility, humility, and simplicity; those who not only “from a child have known the Holy Scriptures,” but who, *as a child*, have received them into their understandings and hearts. Now let us pause and press the inquiry—Has the gospel been *revealed* to you? Has it pleased God to *reveal* His Son in you? Has the spirituality of the Divine law been revealed to you? Has your condemnation under the law been revealed to you? Has the plague of your own heart been revealed to you? Has the salvation of Christ been revealed to you? In a word, has God in Christ, and Christ Himself, the sent of God, the gift of God, the Son of God, been revealed by the Holy Ghost to your soul? Take nothing for granted in ascertaining this momentous matter. Assume nothing as true, unauthenticated, unconfirmed, unsealed by the Holy Spirit. “*The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” Oh, what an unspeakable mercy—the greatness, the grandeur, the blessedness of it, who can describe?—of having a revealed Christ to our souls! To have the Divine truths, the precious promises, the glorious revelations, the sublime hopes of the glorious gospel of the blessed God made known to our minds, sealed upon our hearts, ingrafted upon our souls, is to be the partakers of a joy such as glowed in the breast and lighted up the countenance of Jesus in that hour when He looked up to heaven, and said, “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these*

things unto babes.” Rest short of this revelation by the Spirit of Jesus to your soul. Without it you are lost—your religion is vain, your evidences are spurious, your conversion is false, and your hope will make you ashamed.

Another ground of the Lord’s joy was, *the sovereignty of God* thus displayed. Seeing that the gospel, hidden from the wise, was revealed unto babes, and resolving this into the sovereign will and discriminating grace of God, He rejoiced in spirit, and said, *“Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”* And here it is we must find a solution to what would else, in our poor ken, appear partial, unjust, and inexplicable in God’s testimony of His grace—why the gospel should be a hidden thing to one, a revealed thing to another; why one should be called and another left, we can only explain and understand in the exercise of that Divine sovereignty which belongs essentially to God. *“He giveth no account of any of His matters.”* Who art thou, then, O man, that repliest against God? Shall not He, the Judge of all the earth, do right? Has He not a right to do with His own as He will? And in the merciful decisions of His grace, and in the awful decisions of His Providence, and in the yet more tremendous decisions of His judgment, He, the Most Upright, will be guided by the eternal principles of righteousness, rectitude, and wisdom. Beware, then, how you quarrel with God’s sovereignty! You touch one of the most righteous principles of His administration, you shade one of the brightest perfections of His being, you pluck one of the costliest gems from His crown, when you attempt to arrest the sovereign exercise of His own will. How clearly and emphatically is this set forth by the Holy Ghost! *“Who worketh all things after the counsel of His will.”* *“Of His own will begat he us by the word of truth.”* *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”* *“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”* *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?”* Let your whole soul, amid the mysteries and shadows of the Divine administration of grace, bow down to this glorious doctrine, exclaiming, *“Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”* This interpretation, too, of what is dark, inexplicable,

and painful in the providential dealings of God with you, will infuse joy and create repose throughout your tried and agitated mind. God will have you meekly, truthfully resolve all the mysteries, enigmas, problems of His divine dispensations into this—“*Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*” And the moment you are brought to acquiesce in the sovereignty, equity, and love of God’s trying, afflictive, correcting dealings with you—to feel that it is all right, all wise, all good, all faithful—your storm-tossed, agitated barque is at anchor in the roads of perfect security and peace. Truly, this is joy!

Here, then, is our Model—the joy of the Lord. Surely if Christ was a man of joy, we, who are Christ’s, should be joyful too. And yet how much this Christian grace is overlooked! How few aspire to this attainment in the divine life! Joy is as much a fruit of the Spirit as any other. “*The fruit of the Spirit is—JOY.*” And the Divine precept is, “*REJOICE in the Lord alway. And again, I say, REJOICE.*” And was not this one of the distinct blessings sought for His disciples in our Lord’s intercessory prayer, “*That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves?*” He here prays His Father that His own personal joy—the joy of which He was the subject—and the disciples’ joy—the joy of which He was the object—might be realized in their experience. Did Christ thus care and pray for our joy? Oh, then, let us not deem this too lofty, too holy an attainment in our Christianity to aspire to. To stimulate your aspirations after it, to aid your endeavours to climb this sun-lit height in your Christian experience, let me suggest the grounds you have for holy, spiritual rejoicing in the Lord—and then remind you how closely Christ sympathizes with you in your joy.

What a ground of joy is *your possession of Christ!* There is everything in Christ, and in the knowledge and possession of Christ, to make the believing heart joyful. You may have strong corruptions, powerful inbred sins, sore temptations, deep trials, heavy afflictions, yet if you know Christ, and have Christ in the midst of all, you have ground for the deepest, holiest joy. All joy apart from Christ is but the inspiration of the wind. The man who seeks the element of joy in his baptism, in his sacraments, in his church, in his religious duties, in his zeal, in his usefulness, yea, in anything out of Christ, is building upon that which hath no foundation. It is a false, a spurious, a

fatal joy, a joy which will prove but as the crackling of thorns under a pot. But, beloved, we hope and speak better things of you. You have found Christ, or rather, Christ has found you, and you have in Him the substance, the essence, the fulness of all holy joy. You possess in Christ a Divine Redeemer, a loving Friend, a sympathizing Brother, an ever-interceding Intercessor, a powerful Advocate; One whose presence is with you always, encircling you as an atmosphere in all places and under all circumstances—truly this is a ground of the deepest, holiest joy. Oh, what a portion is Jesus in a portionless world! What a rest is Jesus in a restless world! What a joy is Jesus in a joyless world! What a hope is Jesus in a hopeless world! Beloved, we too little and too imperfectly realize what we possess in possessing Christ. Throw into one scale all the good of the world, its rank, its honours, its wealth, its pleasures—all the love, the kindness, the sympathy, the power of the creature and of all creatures; and place in the other scale, CHRIST—Christ as your Saviour, Christ as your Friend, Christ as your Portion, and Christ as your all,—which kicks the beam? which sinks, and which rises? Nay, more—cast into one scale poverty, and sickness, and affliction of every kind, and sorrow of every form—the adversity that swept from you affluence, or the bereavement that tore from you the creature—and place JESUS in the other—Jesus in His deathless love, Jesus in His human sympathy, Jesus in His boundless fulness, Jesus bearing you upon His heart in heaven, and receiving you into His grace on earth,—and then decide what should be the nature, the depth, the music of your joy. *“This is my Friend, and this is my Beloved.”* Oh, be joyful, then, believer in Jesus! There breathes not a being in the universe—tried, tempted, sad though you are—who has greater reason to be of a gladsome spirit than you. Rejoice, then, in what Christ is in Himself—in His preciousness and fulness; rejoice in what Christ is to you, and rejoice in what you are to Christ. Truly, *“we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”*

The work of Christ is also a ground of joy to the Lord's people. There is everything in the salvation of the Lord to meet the necessities of our soul, and therefore to inspire the emotion of joy. What a source of the truest, purest, deepest joy is the blood and righteousness of Christ—the finished work of Christ—the revealed, accepted

sacrifice of Christ—the infinite suffering of Christ—the resurrection of Christ from the grave—and the present advocacy of Christ at the right hand of God! Truly may *“we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”* Is not the forgiveness of all your sins—the full justification of your person—your inalienable adoption into God’s family—the complete payment of all that great debt you owed, and the assured and certain prospect of being where Christ is, and with Christ, beholding His glory for ever, a well-grounded source of joy? Most truly! Why, then, are you not a more joyful believer? Why go you mourning all your days, without one gleam of sunshine, one thrill of joy, one ray of hope, one note of praise? Is it not because you are looking to yourself and within yourself, to the almost entire exclusion of Christ and of the great and complete salvation wrought for you in and by Christ? No material for joy and gladness, beloved, will you find within yourself. It is all sin there—all corruption there—all gloom there. Its chamber of imagery is all dark, and repulsive, and depressing. Oh, turn the eye of faith to Christ, look simply, and fully, and exclusively at Him, and every chord of your soul will thrill and resound with the joy of the Lord’s salvation. *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.”*

And what a God and Father have you to rejoice in! Truly, here is a source of spiritual joy the divinest and surest. To have a God to go to in all difficulties, troubles, and fears; a Father to fly to with every pressure, every sorrow, every want, His ear ever hearkening, His hand ever outstretched, His power equal to His goodness, His ability to aid equal to His readiness to aid, surely—with such a covenant God and such a loving Father as ours—our spirit ought to rejoice more in *“God our exceeding joy.”* There is everything in God to make us joyful all the day long. All His perfections smile upon us in Christ, and all are pledged to defend us, to provide for us, to supply us, and to bring us through all and out of all the vicissitudes, trials, temptations, and sins of this present life into life eternal. We rejoice so faintly in God, because we are so imperfectly acquainted with Him. And we are so little acquainted with Him, because we have so few close transactions

with Him. We run to the creature—we rest in the creature—we rejoice in the creature, until the Lord empties, embitters, or removes the creature; and then we learn that *“men of low degree are a vanity, and men of high degree are a lie,”* and that it is better to put confidence in God, even our own God, than in earth’s mightiest potentates. And, oh, what a new-born joy do we then find God to be! It would seem as if we had never known, had never trusted, had never loved, had never fed to Him before. The newly-broken cistern has given us a new, a more vivid view of the Divine, the never-failing Fountain. The paralyzing of the human arm has thrown us more entirely on the strength of the Divine arm. The utter vanity and disappointment we have found in the creature has brought God more really, fully, and blessedly into our soul; and we have learnt more of Him as our trust, our hope, our joy, more of His condescension, His faithfulness and love, more of Him as our Father and our God, in that one, that earthly disappointment, than we ever learnt in all the fulness of the world’s sufficiency. Child of God! rouse you to the truth that, be the depths of your soul’s distress, or mental despondency, or temporal embarrassments never so profound—too deep for human power to sound, soothe, or relieve—yet you may hope and joy in God. *“I am the Almighty God”*—God all-sufficient. God can, God will, God has promised to help you. Let your faith reason thus—*“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”* God can make you joyful amid the circumstances which else would make you sad. All things may seem against you but the promises of God, all beings but the God of the promises. Divine providences are dark, but the Divine promises are light. And the very billows that swell, and foam, and surge around you, shall but uplift and cast your soul more entirely upon the Rock that is higher than you. Oh, I desire you to see what a source of joy you have in JEHOVAH amid the joyless, sorrowful path you tread. There is everything in Him to make you happy. Everything to win your confidence, to inspire your love, to awaken your joy. Creatures shall fail, resources shall fail, hopes shall fail, but GOD will never fail you. His love is as changeless, His power is as omnipotent, His faithfulness is as firm, His resources are

as boundless, as infinite as His being. Listen to the song of faith, sung by saints who have gone to glory, once as tried, as tempted, as sorrowful as you,—*“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.”* *“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.”* *“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:”* (what condition could be more barren and desolate?) *“yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation,”* (Hab. 3:17, 18.) See how the believing soul may experience GOD, its exceeding joy—in the depth of its exceeding trial. And all that He now asks at your hands is that you will trust in Him. What though He has written you a widow, what though He has made you fatherless, what though He has blown upon riches, blighted health, bereaved you of friends, yet still He is your God, and your Father, and your exceeding joy. Not one spring of His own love, and compassion, and grace, and power is dried, whatever others have may have passed for ever away. *“Come, let us return unto the LORD; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.”* Again, we find two notable instances of deep joy in the midst of deep tribulation in the experience of David, worthy of our study. For a moment the popular idol had become a subject of popular hate. The people spake of stoning David: *“David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved; but DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD,”* (1 Sam. 30:6.) Has the creature turned against you? Have you found popular favour but a floating bubble—the fickle wind? Are those now against you who once rent the air with your acclaim? Oh, see what a source of joy you have in God, and in the Lord your God encourage yourself. The other example is taken from a yet more tender, affecting page in David’s history—the treason of Absalom. And yet, listen to his language in that the deepest of a parent’s grief:—*“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”* Beloved, take hold of this covenant in

this the dark stage of your journey. Be the cloud what it may that enshrouds your path, be the sorrow what it may that wounds your heart, be the hand what it may that wings the dart that pierces your soul, to this everlasting covenant of grace, well-ordered and sure, take a firm grasp of faith, and your soul shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

“My God, the covenant of Thy love
 Abides for ever sure;
 And in its matchless grace I feel
 My happiness secure.

“Since Thou, the everlasting God,
 My Father art become;
 Jesus my Guardian and my Friend
 And heaven my final home:

“I welcome all Thy sovereign will,
 For all that will is love:
 And, when I know not what Thou dost,
 I wait the light above.”

And overlook not the ever fresh, ever perennial spring of spiritual joy that flows *from the throne of grace*. Who can fully describe the joy which *prayer* brings into the soul? God has graciously appointed this medium of communication with Himself. Prayer is the soul's safety-valve, and God's channel. This is the outlet of the soul's deep over-charged feelings which, but for this escape, would serve to rend it in twain. And it is the channel through which the God of all comfort, who comforteth those that are cast down, conveys into the heart of His child the strong consolations of His love. Oh, then, seek to enkindle your holy, spiritual joy at this blessed altar—a throne of grace, accessible through Jesus, sprinkled with His blood, encircled by every assurance and promise of acceptance and response, from which none are debarred but those who debar themselves. Arise, and give yourself to prayer. Prayer will turn your night of weeping into a morn-

ing of joy. Prayer will dissipate the sadness, dissolve the cloud, quell the fear, and calm the tempest of your soul. Prayer will restring and retune the broken and silent chords of your heart, and you shall sing, *“Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”* Betake yourself, then, to the throne of grace, and, however sad and heavy be the heart you bear to this hallowed spot, you shall return rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

And what holy, spiritual, deep joy should fill your soul in the assured prospect of your being in heaven! Believers rejoice too little in hope of the coming glory. And yet what rich material for joy have we in the anticipation of being for ever with Jesus! Heaven should have a more direct, powerful influence upon our minds than it has. It should be more exclusively the centre of our soul’s moral gravitation. Our affections, our meditations, our aspirations, our longings should be oftener and more supremely there. Heaven has every attraction to win, every prospect to soothe, every motive to stimulate, every aspect to sanctify us in our homeward journey. Rejoice, then, in the anticipation of glory. Let sick and suffering saints be joyful on their beds; let afflicted saints be joyful in their tribulations; let the labouring servants of Christ rejoice amid their toilsome, arduous, self-denying service; let all rejoice in hope of the glory that is to be revealed, when Christ shall say, *“Come up hither.” “Whom not having seen, we love; whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”*

And should not *the coming of the Lord* be to us a cause of longing, spiritual, unutterable joy? Most assuredly! What theme more holy, what prospect more comforting, what hope more blessed, what truth more sanctifying than—the glorious appearing of our Lord! The Word of God speaks of those who *“love His APPEARING.”* It exhorts the saints to be *“looking for and hasting unto the COMING of the day of God.”* It comforts those who are bereaved of holy ones by the assurance that, *“those also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* And it supplies us with one of the most powerful, most solemn, most winning motives to *personal holiness*,—*“The very God of peace sanctify you wholly;*

and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless UNTO THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." And, oh, what links of blessing bind us to this "*blessed hope, the GLORIOUS APPEARING of the great God our Saviour!*" What are some of them? We shall see Him as He is—we shall be like Him—we shall appear with Him in glory—we shall not be ashamed at His coming—we shall be blameless—we shall have part in the first resurrection—we shall be reunited with those who died in the Lord—we shall receive a crown of life—we shall reign with Him for ever—and we shall be with the New Jerusalem saints in the new heavens and the new earth—"*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.*" Let the second coming of the Lord, then, be more a theme of your devout meditation, a subject of more prayerful study, an event of more ardent longing, and more believing, hopeful, joyful expectation. "*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*"

Did Christ rejoice in spirit? Then He will sympathize with your gospel joy. Do you rejoice that He came to save sinners—that He died for sinners—that He receives sinners—the poorest, the weakest, the vilest? Then with this holy joy trembling within your heart, Jesus your Saviour warmly, tenderly sympathizes. Think not that He will forbid, repress, or discourage it. Oh no! He will rather mend the bruised reed and fan the smoking flax; He will rather heal the broken bones that they may rejoice in His salvation. Christ delights in your joy, loves your joy, is glorified by your joy; and when He sees you resting in His blood and righteousness, coming in your poverty to the unsearchable riches of His grace, in your emptiness to His infinite fulness, in your guiltiness to His atoning blood, "*He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.*"

Spiritual joy is a holy, sensitive plant—it shrinks from the rude, ungentle touch—from every influence uncongenial with its heaven-born nature. Watch it with sleepless vigilance—shield it with every hallowed defence. There are many hostile influences to which it is

exposed, any one of which will seriously injure it. Temptation courted, sin tampered with, worldliness indulged, the creature idolized, means of grace slighted, Christ undervalued,—any one of these things will damp your joy, cause it to shrink, and compel it to retire. But nothing will sooner or more effectually do this than looking away from the Object and Source of joy—the Lord Jesus Christ. Your joy is not only *of* the Lord, but it is a joy *in* the Lord. That which caused the Ethiopian eunuch to go on his way rejoicing was, not his baptism—Christ-like as it was—it was CHRIST Himself. He had found Christ the Messiah—Christ the Sin-Bearer, Christ the sin-atoning Lamb, as preached by Isaiah in the fifty-third chapter of his evangelical prophecy, and *this* it was that sent him on his way rejoicing! Oh, there is everything in Jesus to inspire and increase your spiritual joy—and He who first awakened in your soul the celestial emotion must sustain and nourish it. As there is no music in the Æolian until the wind breathes upon it—as there is no perfume in the flower until the sun warms it—as there is no verdure in the grass until the rain and the dew moisten it, so there is no melody, no fragrance, no fruitfulness in the soul until it is brought into close believing relation with Christ. Again, I remark, there is everything in Christ to make you a joyful Christian. There is all redundance of grace to subdue your corruptions, an overflowing sympathy to soothe your sorrows, a sovereign efficacy in His blood to cleanse your guilt, infinite resources to meet all your wants, His ever-encircling presence around your path, His ceaseless intercession on your behalf in heaven. His loving cognizance of all you feel, and fear, and need,—oh, is *this* not enough to make your heart a constant sunshine, and your life a pleasant psalm?

But be not discouraged, however, if you seldom reach this high attainment in Christian experience. Many an eminent saint of God passes to the land of light and song with little or no spiritual *joy* in his soul. It is not a grace *essential* to salvation. It is but seldom remarked of our Lord that He rejoiced in spirit—often that He sighed, and groaned, and wept. He seemed more intertwined with sorrow than with joy—better acquainted with grief than with gladness. There may be many disturbing causes affecting and preventing your spiritual joy. You may be constitutionally of a sad, nervous, and pensive nature,—

you may be the subject of constant mental depression, imparting its complexion of sadness and gloom to every bright view of the present and hopeful expectation of the future. There may be in your Christianity a tendency to look more to self than to Christ; to dwell in contemplation more upon the interior of your own heart than the interior of the Lord's heart; to a microscopic view of your varied and ever-fitful feelings, to a too close and minute analysis of Christian experience; or, your path may be one continuity of shade flung upon it by the pressure of a daily cross, a home sorrow, a lone grief, a physical frame unstrung and shattered by disease; all, or any, of these causes may contribute to the absence of spiritual *joy* in your soul. But, yield not yourself, in consequence, to despondency and despair. It is not spiritual joy that saves you—you are saved by faith in Christ, by Christ, and with Christ. And in the absence of joy thrilling your soul, illuminating your countenance, and waking the echoes of the wilderness with its melody, there is, perhaps, the quiet, simple recumbance of your faith on Christ as all your salvation and all your desire, ever and anon giving vent to this its Christ-sent breathing—“*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*” Then, be still, trustful, assured that you are Christ's, and that where Christ is, there you also will be.

Let us seek more personal identity with the joy of the Lord in the progress of His kingdom in the world. What emotion in Christ's soul was deeper and superior to every other? What caused Him to long for the garments rolled in blood, to pant for His baptism of suffering, to press the cold earth of Gethsemane, to embrace the rude cross of Calvary, and to confront the serried ranks of His enemies in that fatal hour? Oh, it was this—“*Who for the JOY that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.*” It was the joy of saving sinners—the joy of ransoming His Church—the joy of supplanting earth's sin, and woe, and curse, with the holiness, the happiness, the of His gospel. Identify yourself—your intellect, your wealth, your influence, your time—with this joy of your Lord! Then shall Christ's joy be fulfilled in you. Oh, hallowed and ecstatic the joy of saving a soul from death—of reclaiming a wanderer to the fold—of planting a jewel in Christ's crown! How touching the picture of Christ's joy—“*And*

when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulder, REJOICING. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, REJOICE with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Be this, beloved reader, *your* joy, then, indeed, will you now enter into the joy of your Lord—the joy of saving *one* soul! It will give to your life a brighter sunshine—to your death a more hallowed memory—it will heighten the glory and sweeten the music of heaven.

Remember that Christ’s joy and your joy are *one*—*His* joy is fulfilled in you, and your joy flows from Him—and this brings Christ and you into the closest sympathy. You belong to Christ, and therefore Christ admits you to a partnership in His own joy. He shares it with you. He takes your sorrow, and gives you His joy; and thus you become mighty, yea, almighty in your weakness, because *“the joy of the Lord is your STRENGTH.”* This reciprocity of joy should deepen the realization of your being Christ’s. And if you are Christ’s He will guard and increase your joy, and will share and lessen your sorrow, and you shall dwell in safety by Him,—*“because you belong to Christ.”*

Live much in anticipation of the fulness of joy that awaits you in heaven. If our present is blended with sighing and weeping, with toil and temptation, with the sword and the cross, our future will be a pure, simple, unmixed joy, truly and emphatically *“a joy UNSPEAKABLE and FULL OF GLORY.”* And if now the joy of the Lord in your soul is at times so overpowering as to compel you to exclaim, “Lord, stay Thy hand, or enlarge my capacity,” oh, what will be the FULNESS OF JOY THAT IS AT HIS RIGHT HAND, AND THE PLEASURES THAT ARE FOR EVER MORE? Blessed Jesus! Thou art my joy now—and to see Thee then, will be joy, full, perfected, and eternal. Until then, keep me very near Thy side—Thou my joy, my hope, my all! *“The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long.”* ☺



“Since I belong to Thee, my Saviour-God,
All must be well, however rough my road;
However dark my way or prospects be,
All, all is right, since overruled by Thee.

“Safely in Thee shall Thy beloved dwell,
Though storms may rage, and angry tempests swell;
‘All the day long,’ their covering Thou shalt be,
What then can harm those, Lord, kept by Thee?

“Feeblest of all Thy flock, Thou knowst me, Lord,
Helpless and weak, I stay upon Thy Word;
In all my weakness, this is still my plea—
That Thou art mine, and I belong to Thee.

“Then come whatever may, I am secure;
Thy love unchanged shall to the end endure,
Frail though I am, Thine everlasting arm
Shall shield Thy child from every breath of harm.

“Thy loving eye shall guide where’er I roam;
Thy Holy Spirit lead me to my home.
Thou wilt not let Thy feeble frail one stray,
Though dark temptations oft may crowd my way.

“In sorrow’s saddest hour, Thy strength my stay;
My darkest night, Lord, Thou canst turn to day.
The most loved here may sometimes changeful be
Thou changest not—and I belong to Thee.

“Then may the life, which now on earth I live,
Be spent for HIM, who His for me did give.
Oh! make me, Lord, in all I will and do,
Ever to keep Thy glory in my view.

“And when my course is run, and fought the fight,
Life’s struggles o’er, and faith is changed to sight,
Then all triumphant I shall ever be,
Safe in Thy Home, for I belong to Thee.

“FULNESS OF JOY’ with all Thy ransom’d there,
In Thy loved presence I shall ever share;
With them I’ll sing the love that made us free,
The grace that taught us we belong’d to Thee,”

C. H. I.