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**THOUGHTS FROM JEREMY**

The Bible gives a unique picture of joy we may not commonly think about.  The Zondervan topical Bible defines biblical joy as, "the emotion excited by expectation or acquisition of good.” However, James tells suffering Christians to have joy even in trials, or bad circumstances, (**James 1:2)**.If joy is the emotion exited by the expectation or acquisition of good, how can one have joy in bad situations?

The Greek word commonly used for joy is Chara which means, “joy, delight, or gladness.” It is closely related to the Greek words for grace (charis) and gift (charisma). Then, joy can be thought as the response to the gift of God which is Grace.

When we receive gifts, we vary our reaction based on how we value the gift. Our assessment of worth may be made on monetary value, sentimental value or based on who is giving us the gift. However, we value if we find a gift worth a lot, we react in accordance. The same can be said about how we react to the gift God has given us in Christ. The more worth we see, the more joy we express!

Considering the gift that God has given us in Jesus, joy should be the response we have regardless of the circumstances. In other words, our attitude should be in direct response to God’s gift and not the circumstance. Joy is therefore a choice we must make even when bad things happen to us. How can I have joy in a difficult time? We have joy by, not responding to the situation or circumstance, rather responding to the grace we have in Christ!  The choice should be easier knowing the blessings we have in Christ. I want to encourage all of us to live a life of joy no matter what circumstances we face!

Blessings,

Jeremy

**Elder’s Corner**

"He Emptied Himself"

***5 “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”***

***Philippians 2:5-8***

I was giving some thought to the concept of a person emptying himself. Asking myself, “What would have to go?” and “What would have to be done?” On this issue of what would have to go, it is not so much that something has to depart from you, it is more that you align these things so that you are not defined by them. As to what would have to be done, we see in the quote above a two-part process, 1) empty yourself, 2) become a servant.

When we empty ourselves, we understand our opinions are of no value anymore. Rest assured we have opinions, but the variable is in how much we dwell upon them relative to how much we focus on the opinion that we need to save the world with the love of Christ. (If an opinion causes us to focus hatred toward people, it does in fact need to go, however). The body of work composed of Christ’s political opinions is non-existent because his realm was above it all. Christ was not much for observational humor (opinions about people), either. Every goal and purpose in the life of Christ came down to a specific thing he would do to achieve them (see verse 8 above). Our society is long on talk, and adherence to the left or right or neither ideologies, short on positive actions in the spiritual realm based on a love of people. When we empty ourselves, we have no choice of action other than doing what loving and caring thing would bring others to Christ.

Secondly, to empty ourselves requires a repurposing of what we have. I am not saying that what we have has to go physically (but maybe we would find some healing in that), but it has to occupy the right place in our hearts and minds and so that we are not defined by our possessions. At best, all this stuff we have is good enough in a pinch to make us go “phew!” It is not enough to bring fulfillment even on an earthly level much less happiness and even less the peace that passes understanding, which comes from your relationship with God.

Finally, anger must go. I am talking about the steady and seething anger at people who are (we think) not like us. Is this a thing for you? If you think this is not, measure your blood pressure, see if it spikes while thinking about items on this list …. (Hillary, Trump, facemask, pool party in Houston, Social Distancing, Fauci, Biden, China, AT&T, speed limit, Iron Bowl). More and more in our society we are identifying people by the things that they are angry about, all the time. We literally are referring to people as “the guy that’s so mad about….”. We do not want to be identified this way.

A soldier can only bring to battle the things he or she can carry for long periods, having a sleeping bag  but not a bed, a canteen but not a water fountain. The same principle applies to Christians in this complicated age. Choose well what you carry around in your daily life, so that nothing gets in the way of your mission.

With loving care and concern,

Vince Formica

***From a Woman’s Point of View***

Pearls of the Kingdom

The Garments of Women of Wisdom

**----Carlotta Maria Shinn Russell----**

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine, and milk without money and without cost.” Isaiah 55:1*

*“I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes.” [I Timothy 2:9]*

This is an outward adorning of the physical body…God wants the inward adorning of the inner man with wisdom and knowledge. The inner rich arraying of the spirit, does cost us a price…the price of not being worldly (being adorned outward) and not inwardly – our purity in mind*… “Let this mind be in you that was also in Jesus Christ,”* *[Philippians 2:5]* and not greedy for the riches of this world. We are to bear fruit. Fruit is a picture for Christian to identify with…from Scripture we get a full view of what type of fruit a Christian should be bearing.

A pearl of the Kingdom needs the nutrients (Word of God) to grow and flourish; our core is Jesus. The characteristics for Pearls of the Kingdom are defined as, “*Joy, peace, love, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance, and meekness, against such there is no law,” [Galatians 5:22-26.* Moreover*,* “*Let the adorning be the hidden man of the heart,” [I Peter 3:3-4].* When we consider pearls in the making, it is inside of the oyster and safe until it reaches a mature level. Not all pearls grow to the same size. The blood of Christ covers us as we mature incorruptible…a meek and quiet spirit…precious in God’s sight. We are admonished to, *“Sanctify the Lord in your heart,” [I Peter 3:15],* and *“Speak of testaments and meditate on their stature,” [Psalms 119:46].* When looking at Pearls (women) of antiquity, they were not unlike women today…they were not ordinary or in a certain category, but each one like today, were all special with their own luster.

When I think of serving God, I see these as the four main components of Christianity:

**Our Head** (We use Sound Doctrine). We can know we have eternal life and fellowship with God, *[I John 1:1-13; 4:5-6].*

**Our Heart** (Authentic Love). Our love is for the God of Heaven and for man*, [I John 4:20, 5:1-2]*. We love God whom we have not seen in Heaven and we love Man whom we have seen. “*We cannot say we love God and hate our brethren who like, we are made in the image of God,” [I John 4:7-8; 3:16].*

**Our Hands** (Obedient Service). We are to keep Jesus Commandments. Two questions we can address in this area: Do you love God? Do we keep the Commandments? He said, *“If you love me,” [John 14:15; I John 2: 3-5; I John 5:1-3].*

**Our Credibility** (Sincerity and reliability). We as women of God, our garments should be of believability.

“*If we say we have fellowship,” [I John 1:6].*

*“If we say we have no sin,” [I John 1:8].*

*“If we say I have come to know Him and do not keep His commandments,” [I John 2:4].*

Though our journey here is difficult on the road to eternity, there are good days as well. It is our refining fire preparing us for worthiness to live with God for as long as He lives. Think of the results of your faithfulness and know the journey is worth it, our destination is Heaven to live with the God we serve and love who loves and cares for us.

TEEN NEWS

**Hello family,**

**I have missed you all SO much! I, for one, cannot wait to be together and worship in person! Our summer plans have changed a lot since January. Several events have either been cancelled or postponed. For example, AIMCON has been cancelled and Camp has been pushed back to July 26-31.**

**This year, we have five seniors, who did not get to have the typical senior year. Thankfully, ALL our seniors will be walking across the stage for graduation! Because of the uncertain times we are currently experiencing our Senior Night is going to look much different this year. Our Drive-In Senior event will be held on June 20th! The time has not been set, so be on the lookout for information about this event on our website and social media.**

**Again, I miss all of you so very much! I tell the teens every time we talk, remember these things: I love you; I believe in you, I am praying for all of you, and most importantly, GOD LOVES YOU!**

Your Partner in Ministry,

Paul Wisdom