

Rejoice In The Lord Always

by Hendrik Joubert

Do you remember meeting one of those people who seem to never have an unhappy moment, always grinning spewing out one cliché or another? Remember thinking that he or she was a phony – no one can be happy all the time?

You are practical, more realistic. We live in a sinful world with sinful people, causing much unhappiness and distress. The Scriptures says: **Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)** How could one be happy while being persecuted? **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12)**

Consider for a moment the things which most often cause unhappiness and distress. We live in a society which places a high premium on material welfare and worldly happiness. Our children must go to college so they will be able to have a good life. One must own a home with nice furniture, and do not forget the wheels. We are socialized from an early age that material welfare is the highest priority. **But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)**

Now think of how we manipulate the Scriptures to suit our materialistic views. *God gave each one of us one or more talents and it would be sinful neglect if one does not develop these. We know the Scriptures teach that we should not be lazy; he who will not work should not eat.* Again our focus is materialistic, but notice the inspired perspective supplied through Peter: **As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)** He places the emphasis on employing these gifts to serve one another at a spiritual level, with the focus on eternity.

It is James who reminds us that we are full of plans for the extremely short time we are upon the earth – to the extent that we forget the life hereafter. **Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:13-17)**

No wonder we find it difficult to **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)** The **always** is the problem. Having that kind of disposition is not possible if we are too focused on this life and its troubles. We live in an age where we find others, as well as things, to blame for our weaknesses and failures. We get so wrapped up in ourselves, no wonder so many suffer from stress and depression. We need medicine to fix our emotional problems.

What does the Christian have to be depressed about? Am I being unrealistic? The instruction which comes through Paul reads: **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6.** You have prayed, you say, and things do not improve? What did you pray for? Does the answer lie in the following instruction received through James: **You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:3)**

Notice the preceding verse: ***You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. (James 4:2)*** Have you noticed how James tends to exaggerate – ***so you commit murder***. The Lords says: ***"You have heard that the ancients were told, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER" and "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court." ²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, "You good-for-nothing," shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, "You fool," shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (Matthew 5:21-22)***

I am convinced that if we will grow to be more spiritually minded the cares of this life would seem more like a game of monopoly. We play with dignity realizing that God is watching, and when it is over we go to spend eternity with Him. Such an attitude will influence our views of life and the decisions we make. We must always be prepared to meet our Lord. Then the following exhortation will make sense: ***Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).***