

From 2009

### Proverbs 3:5-6

*“...It is the trust of the heart, of all the heart. It is child-like and unwavering...confidence in our Father’s well-proved wisdom, faithfulness, and love. Any limit to this confidence is heinous provocation. He is truth itself. Therefore he would have us to take him at his word, and prove his word to the utmost extent of his power.*”

*“The great folly of man, as Dr. Owen justly remarks, is leaning to or upon his own understanding and counsel. What is the issue of it? Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, hearken to self-reasonings, though they seem to be good, and tending to our preservation; yet the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we shall in the issue be cast down by our own counsels.”*

*“Let the will be kept in quiet, subdued, cheerful readiness to move, stay, retreat, turn to the right hand or to the left, at the Lord’s bidding, always remembering that is best which is least our own doing, and that a pliable spirit secures the needed guidance. We may be led for the exercise of our faith in a way we know not – perhaps a way of disappointment or even of mistake...even this mysterious direction will in the end be gratefully acknowledged, ‘He led me forth in the right way.’”*

*“Desires bound by the will of God, and centered in the enjoyment of God will be granted to their utmost extent. God did not raise them to be our torment, but our rest...But I have desired a thousand times on my knees, and yet it has not been granted. Yet is it not worth being on our knees a thousand times more? May not the blessing be withheld a while, till our sensibility of need be quickened, or to prepare us ultimately for a richer enjoyment?” (Charles Bridges)*

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*It has always been my aim, and it is my prayer, to have no plan as regards myself; well assured as I am that the place where the Savior sees meet to place me must ever be the best place for me.” (Robert M’Cheyne)*

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### Psalm 131

*It is a blessed mark of growth and spiritual infancy when we can forgo the joys which once appeared essential; and can find solace in him who denies them to us...If the Lord removes our dearest delight we bow to his will without a murmuring thought; in fact, we find a delight in giving up our delight. This is no spontaneous fruit of nature, but a well-tended product of divine grace: it grows out of humility and lowliness...*

*Blessed are those afflictions which subdue our affections, which wean us from self-sufficiency, which teach us to love God not merely when he comforts us, but even when he tries us...Such weanedness from self springs from the gentle humility...If pride is gone, submission will be sure to follow; if pride is to be driven out, self must be vanquished. Charles Spurgeon*

Thomas Matton

*To submit to God is to give up ourselves to be governed by his will and pleasure, our thoughts, our counsels, our affections, our actions must be guided according to the strict rules of His Word...Are we willing to give ourselves up to his will without reservation?*

*It involves handing ourselves over to the disposal of God's providence...Discontent is clearly rebellion; we want our will done, and not God's. When we complain, God and we contend; his will must be done to us as well as by us.*

*The nobleness of surrender. Submission seems base, but to God it is noble...There is no baseness in the act, but there is much glory in the reward.*

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## The Place of Humility

*"...a giving up of ourselves to be governed by His will and pleasure"*

How do I capture what all has taken place in my heart the last couple of weeks? It was no coincidence that the church decided to have its members do an ABC study on I Peter. I really wasn't sure what all God would teach me from this book at the onset of this journey, but little did I realize what soothing balm was contained in the last chapter for a wounded and troubled heart desperate for relief and restoration. It's a concept I never fully considered before; it's a quality I discovered I had a very narrow understanding of. It's a point at which God could only bring me after much struggle and resistance, but how grateful I am that He broke my will! It's called the place of **humility**.

*"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5:6*

John McArthur says of this verse:

*The mighty hand of God is descriptive of God's sovereign power at work in and through the life experience of His people. Whether for deliverance, for testing, or for chastening, God's might is always accomplishing His eternal purposes on behalf of His own. In their time of persecution, suffering, and testing, that assurance would encourage Peter's audience to persevere.*

*To become proudly rebellious, fight against the Lord's purposes, or judge His providence as unkind or unfair is to forfeit the sweet grace of His exaltation when the trial has fulfilled its purpose...the Lord lifts the believer (humble and submissive) out of difficulty.*

*Peter exhorts believers to throw on the Lord all their anxiety, a word that can include all discontentment, discouragement, despair, questioning, pain, and whatever other trials they encounter because they can trust His love, faithfulness, power, and wisdom.*

**Hab. 3:17-18** Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. **This is the**

**verse that really hit home to me that my joy could not be based on my circumstances.**

**Isaiah 61:10** I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. **This is the verse that showed me that my joy stems from what God has done for me.**

**Psalms 5:11** <sup>11</sup> But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. **Joy is a by-product of trusting in the Lord.**

**Galatians 5:11** The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience... **The Spirit indwells God's people. Then why wasn't this fruit emulating from my life?**

These are only a few of the verses that God led me to study and memorize – Scripture is full of them! But they are the ones that God used to convict me the most and get me seriously thinking about biblical joy.

Now I would like to share with you some principles that God impressed upon my heart during this time that completely transformed my perspective and spirit towards God's will for me.

**1. Biblical joy cannot be based on my circumstances.** If it is, then it will naturally fluctuate because circumstances change, and God brings difficulties. (And that is what was happening to me.) My joy must solely and solidly rest in my relationship with Christ and what He has done for me. We are called to meditate on this, to consider the implications of it, to recall what God accomplished when He brought us to Himself, to consider the spiritual riches we have been given through Christ. Biblical joy is something that transcends circumstances because it is established on something that is unseen and never changes.

**2. Biblical joy accepts and embraces the will and ways of God – whatever form they may take.** And this was another key factor for me. I began to see that my sullenness and constant sadness was partly due to the fact that I was angry and bitter with God for not answering my prayers in the way I thought was best for me. (And what a proud spirit to have toward a holy God!) Bitterness and anger will instantly kill or stifle the joy of the Spirit.

Another thing I have come to see is that contentment, gratitude, and joy are all closely related. One cannot be joyful unless they are content with their circumstances; that is, they have accepted them and embraced them as the Lord's will and they are satisfied with that. Nor is contentment void of joy. Rather, joy is a result or an outflow from being content. Biblical joy is a delight in God's will and a complete rest in His definition of what that will *means* and what it *entails*.

So here is a summary statement: Joy is not an emotion. It is an inward response to who God is and what He has given.

I can't tell you how freeing it was for me when God opened my eyes to these truths! When God broke me of my pride, discontent, hardness, and bitterness toward Him, my thinking and perspective were completely transformed! No, nothing materially changed as far as my circumstances and what I hoped would happen, but my

outlook and perspective changed, and my heart was at peace and full of joy – His joy – once more.

Again, and I say this with all humility – this is not something I have “mastered”. In fact when Mrs. Wilson asked me to share and I told her what was planning, I was very honest and said that to this day, I still read over and over and over again all that I wrote in my journal about joy. It’s something I still have to remind myself of.

All that I want to leave with you today is a question to consider: What is the foundation and source of your joy? God has each of us in different places in life all facing various degrees of difficulty and growth in Him. We can’t ignore what life brings our way – things do impact us. The challenge to us is what are we doing with it? As God’s people we *have* been given a joy that far surpasses anything the world can offer. Am I (and are you) reflecting that joy, His joy?