

Spiritual Joy.*

By MR. GEORGE MÜLLER, BRISTOL.

WHEN we are exhorted to "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. v. 16) the joy spoken of is not of a worldly character, nor joy which arises from temporal success, nor joy even which arises from a goodly measure of health and strength of body and mind; but spiritual joy. This evidently is what is referred to by the whole connection in which the verse stands before us.

Now this spiritual joy we have not naturally, we cannot have naturally, because by nature we are far from God; we have a guilty conscience, we love to go our own way and to please ourselves instead of pleasing God, living for God, and glorifying God; on account of all this it is impossible to have joy in the Lord. There is no love in our hearts to God by nature. In order to get to this state, to love God, we must first be convinced that we are sinners, that we are far from God, and that we need a Saviour, and must seek for salvation in God's appointed way, which is through the Substitute whom He has provided. When the heart enters into it: "Jesus wrought out a righteousness for me, Jesus bore the punishment for me because I trust in Him for salvation," then begins, it may be in a little way, joy in God.

This joy is to be habitual—"rejoice evermore," at all times—rejoice when you are sick, when you have heavy losses in business, when you are greatly tried in the family, in your position and circumstances. It is not said we should rejoice in these things, but in the Lord. Thus it is possible, even while tried in great afflictions, in great difficulty, in great poverty and straits as to the affairs of this life, to be happy in God. How can this be?

The first thing is, the whole heart has to be surrendered to God on the part of those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. By this I mean that not only this great sin and another great sin in which we were living in our unconverted days should be put aside, but that everything which is contrary to the mind of God has to be surrendered, to be hated; and only that which is according to the mind of God has to be loved. This is what we have to understand by the surrender of heart to God. There remains but one single object for your whole life; not five, or ten, or twenty, but there remains only one single object for your whole life, and that is to *live for God*.

I was converted on November 1, 1825. I walked, in a little measure, in the fear of God and according to the mind of God; but my heart, my whole heart, was only surrendered to God in July, 1829. I cannot tell you the blessedness of the result. One result of it was this, that now the love of money was gone; the love of rank and power; the love of the pleasures of this world; the love of dress, and every little thing that had yet remained, was put aside. Since then, though I have not been a perfect man—for weakness, infirmity, shortcoming, failure, still have been clinging and cleaving to me—my whole life became different from July, 1829. The blessedness of the result cannot be described, so vast and so great is it. Earnest prayer, daily prayer in the consciousness of our weakness, is needed in order to be kept in this state of heart into which we are brought by surrender to God.

We have not to suppose that we can go on spiritually well and neglect the Word of God. This is one of the greatest mistakes. And let me affectionately beseech all believers on no account to neglect the habitual reading of the Word of God, with prayer and with meditation. I cannot lay too much stress on this, because I know from my own experience how even this very thing has been the great instrumentality whereby peace and joy in the Holy Ghost have continued and abounded in me now

for sixty-eight years, ever since the heart was surrendered to God.

That is, I have not merely read the Word of God, but have sought to think about it, to apply it to my own heart and circumstances. I read the Word of God in this way: How does this suit me? How does it comfort me? How does it instruct me? How does it warn me? How does it reprove me? That is what I mean by meditation on the Word of God.

I especially urge my young brethren in Christ to read the Scriptures consecutively. For the first three years and a-half I picked out here and there a chapter, and here and there a psalm. I read a little in the New Testament at one time and a little in the Old Testament another time, but I never read consecutively through the Scriptures. But when the whole heart was surrendered to God I began with Genesis and read the Old Testament through to Malachi, and I began with Matthew and read the whole New Testament to the end of the Book of Revelation; and this I have continued all these sixty-eight years now, and I never get tired of reading the Scriptures. For many years I have read the whole Bible through four times, and when I begin it again it is like a new precious book to me.

Then it is not simply prayer over the Word of God, and consecutive reading and meditation, but especially this—to seek to practise what we find in the Word of God, and to carry it out; and on no account to suppose that we may reason about it, and only practise what we think suits us. To me there is this one thing only: It is written, it is written in the Word of God. God has made a revelation of Himself, and this revelation has been recorded in the Word of God by the inspired men of God; and my business is in childlike simplicity to read it, and in childlike simplicity and obedience to act according to it; and the result of it is this—increased peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, increased deadness to the world, increased heavenly-mindedness, and increasing glory.

2. Crescent, Tav
To
W.S. W. for
E. 19 March
My dear Brother
I was given
your circular
It was read to the
yesterday and
desire me to
have full sym
fellowship with
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