

#### 4. Joyous and Thankful (3Q 2012—1 and 2 Thessalonians)

**Biblical material:** 1 Thess. 1:1–10, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 Tim. 1:15, Gal. 5:19–23, Dan. 12:2.

#### Quotes

- Appreciation is the highest form of prayer, for it acknowledges the presence of good wherever you shine the light of your thankful thoughts. *Alan Cohen*
- Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough. *Oprah Winfrey*
- For what I have received may the Lord make me truly thankful. And more truly for what I have not received. *Storm Jameson*
- God has two dwellings; one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart. *Izaak Walton*
- I focus on spiritual wealth now, and I'm busier, more enthusiastic, and more joyful than I have ever been. *John Templeton*
- The great awareness comes slowly, piece by piece. The path of spiritual growth is a path of lifelong learning. The experience of spiritual power is basically a joyful one. *M. Scott Peck*
- This day and your life ... are God's gift to you , so give thanks and be joyful always! *Anon.*
- True joy is the earnest which we have of heaven, it is the treasure of the soul, and therefore should be laid in a safe place, and nothing in this world is safe to place it in. *John Donne*

#### Questions

What is the reason for Paul's joy? What do we learn from this? Knowing that they also suffered for their faith, how can the attitude of the Thessalonians help us today? What do we learn about God and how we relate to him in these verses? How can we have joyful and thankful hearts? In what way does this represent God to the universe?

#### Bible summary

Happy. Grateful. Thankful. Paul is full of expressive joy as he thinks of his friends as recorded in 1 Thess. 1:1-10. How wonderful it was for Paul to be able to write: "The word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it, for they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God." 1 Thess. 1:8, 9 NLT. He also vividly affirms his assurance of salvation in verse 5, the same assurance he passed on to the believers in Thessalonica. How important it is to know that God has saved you, is saving you, and will save you!

Paul explains "the more excellent way" that is founded on the principle of love in 1 Cor.13. He expresses his appreciation for the way God personally saved him, "the worst sinner." (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul contrasts the two different ways of living in Gal. 5:19-23. Our hope is in the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

## Comment

Earthly joy so quickly turns to sadness and despair. So there is no point running after others who suggest their own ways of finding lasting happiness and meaning to life. There is only one way. God's way. And this is shown in the coming of Jesus.

When the angels sang over Bethlehem, they announced good tidings of great joy - - this was Jesus. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jn. 10:10

When Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, he quoted from Is. 61, which he applied to himself and which also contains the words that the Lord would through Jesus provide "the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." (Is. 61:3)

This where we find the answer to our need for real joy and happiness. We are like the pearl merchant who was so happy to find the one of great price that he was glad to sell all the others so that he might possess it, or the man who found the treasure hidden in the field who "*in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field*" (Mt. 13:44)

This is true happiness—in Jesus. We dismiss all the other ways of trying to make ourselves happy and accept Jesus as our joy. For this is what God has promised to us: "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." (Ps. 16:11). "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8:10). "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Is. 12:3). "The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." (Is. 35:10).

This is God's promise! For in the happiness that God offers is not only the feeling but the sure and certain knowledge that he is saving us -- for a joy-filled eternity. And that God-sent joy begins now as we accept him into our hearts. Don't wait! Accept the joy that God offers, take Jesus as your Savior, trust in him and find the happiness that has always eluded you.

## Ellen White Comments

Into every department of God's work there is to be brought hope, courage and joy,—the joy of Christ. Then spiritual things will be spiritually discerned. The joy of the Lord is as far above every other joy as holiness is above unholiness. It gives strength to the physical, mental, and spiritual powers. {KC 146}

In Him there is joy that is not uncertain and unsatisfying. If the light that flows from Jesus has come to you, and you are reflecting it upon others, you show that you have joy that is pure, elevating, and ennobling. Why should not the religion of Christ be represented as it really is, as full of attractiveness and power? Why should we not present before the world the loveliness of Christ? Why do we not show that we have a living Saviour, one who can walk with us in the darkness as well as in the light, and that we can trust in Him? . . . {TMK 142}

Never are we absent from the mind of God. God is our joy and our salvation. {3SM 338}

Ushered into the Christian life we no longer complain of darkness; for we have the light of life and joy which Christ said would be in all who abide in him. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." {ST, August 21, 1893}

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