

Rejoicing in Salvation

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Psalm 126:1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; [whereof] we are glad.

This is the admonition of God to us in the Bible:

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: [and] again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing;

Be worried about nothing. This is the admonition of Scripture: God's children are to be rejoicing in the Lord, not just sometimes, but always. And He emphasizes it, *Again I say, Rejoice*. Why? *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand*. Don't worry about anything. As we read these things in the Bible, there are some apparently paradoxical admonitions that we discover there which require some clarification by wider reading. Here is the example of a paradox: it says, *Rejoice in the Lord always*; but in James we read something interesting:

Be Afflicted and Mourn

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness.

This is a different note by the sound of it. First we are told to rejoice, and now we are told, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*. Don't continue laughing; *let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness*. Reading this we ponder, and we discover that there are also other things in the word of God which call for us to afflict our souls. Those of us who are aware of the investigative judgment, the anti-typical day of atonement, will remember that the children of Israel, on the day of atonement were to afflict their souls.

Leviticus 16:29 And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls,

and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

On the day of atonement, in the Jewish economy, God called for a day of affliction of their souls. And this affliction of their souls, as we see in Isaiah, was identified as an absolute and was not to be carelessly bypassed.

Isaiah 22:12 And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13 And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die. 14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

When God calls for afflicting of our soul on the day of atonement, if that is not entered into, according to this statement, it is a sin from which we will not be purged. To enlarge this to us, that there is indeed the admonition and the statement of God that we are called upon to mourn and afflict our souls, we read the following:

The whole ceremony was designed to impress the Israelites with the holiness of God and His abhorrence of sin; and, further, to show them that they could not come in contact with sin without becoming polluted. Every man was required to afflict his soul while this work of atonement was going forward. All business was to be laid aside, and the whole congregation of Israel were to spend the day in solemn humiliation before God, with prayer, fasting, and deep searching of heart. {GC 419.3}

As we contemplate the typical service which God called for there, we then turn our attention to the anti-typical service; and what is to be our attitude ever since the day of atonement commenced in 1844?

We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not

offset the want of these qualities in another. ... Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. {GC 489.3}

This is the sort of paradox to what we have read in the beginning. We are to rejoice; we are to be happy; but here it says that we are to mourn and afflict our souls; and this has to do with the consciousness of our sinfulness and the self-examination to discover more of our sinfulness. We are to search our hearts; and God steps in to help us:

God's Law Revealing My Darkness

God's law reaches the feelings and motives, as well as the outward acts. It reveals the secrets of the heart, flashing light upon things before buried in darkness. {5BC 1085.4}

Do we like that? Would we rather have certain things left in darkness, and to not be made unhappy about what a terrible a person I am? God's law will flash light into those things which are buried in darkness.

God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity. {Ibid.}

Doesn't that make you feel miserable? Does it make you feel happy that God will show us things that we would have done if we had opportunity? It goes deeper than what I actually have done.

God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures the character of every man. As the artist transfers to the canvas the features of the face, so the features of each individual character are transferred to the books of heaven. God has a perfect photograph of every man's character, {Ibid.}

All my character is all displayed there.

...and this photograph He compares with His law. He reveals to man the defects that mar his life, and calls upon him to repent and turn from sin. {Ibid.}

There we have the reason for afflicting our souls, examining to see what sort of a person I really am, the things that are hidden in darkness, things I would have done if I had opportunity. Do you like that? Is this a pleasure? The reality is that this is hardly a source of rejoicing. The people of God were shown to Sister White, and this is the description of them since 1844:

I was shown the people of God, and saw them mightily shaken. Some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, were pleading with God. Their countenances were pale, and marked with deep anxiety, expressive of their internal struggle. Firmness and great earnestness were expressed in their countenances, while large drops of perspiration fell from their foreheads. Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look would settle upon them. {1T 179.3}

That description you would hardly see as a day of rejoicing. In all this that we have just contemplated in regards to the affliction, the turning away from our light-heartedness, the call to mourn and turn our laughter to mourning, where does “rejoice in the Lord always; don’t worry about anything” fit in? How can we reconcile that scripture of Philippians 4:4-5 with the others?

Understanding the Apparent Paradox

Consider another quote from the Spirit of prophecy which tells us we are not to go mourning down our pathway:

We have everything to be thankful for. Never ought Christians to move along like a band of mourners in a funeral train. God does not require this of His followers. {4BC 1150.4}

Can you see what the perplexity is? It says we are to mourn and be afflicted; and then it says, *God does not require this of His followers.*

He does not ask them to spread sackcloth and ashes under them. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" He asks; "a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" {Ibid.}

You see the paradoxes here. It’s easy to misunderstand, isn’t it?

God tells us what kind of fast He has chosen. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" This is the fast He wishes us to observe. [Isaiah 58:7 quoted.] In these words our duty is outlined. God shows us where we should place our treasures. As we follow in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice, helping the needy and suffering, we shall lay up treasure before the throne of God. {Ibid.}

Here we have a qualification that God does not require us to be sad, oppressed; yet we read that on this day of atonement we are to turn our laughter and our joy to heaviness.

The Lord is not pleased to have His people a band of mourners. He wants them to repent of their sins, that they may enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. Then they will be filled with the praises of God, and will be a blessing to others. {4BC 1153.6}

There we have a little lead into understanding what the word of God is trying to say. He wants us to repent of our sins that we *may enjoy the liberty of the sons of God*. So let us search the word for substantial and intelligent light to make these paradoxes non-paradoxical, that we may see exactly what is meant here. Let us go back to James 4, and read this time from verse 6. We want to read widely and not just narrow down one text; and the word of God will explain it for us.

James 4:6 But he [God] giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God.

He gives grace to the humble, therefore *submit yourselves to God*.

James 4:7 ...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

As we draw near to God, and we come closer to Jesus and the Father, how will we see ourselves? The reason why the Pharisees did not like Jesus was because He showed them up for what they really were. This is what will happen to every person who comes closer and closer to Jesus. In our closeness to Jesus, the closer we come the more we will see and abhor about ourselves.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you. {SC 64.2}

No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is

unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ. {SC 65.1}

Here is this strange sensation that comes our way. We come to Jesus, we give Him our heart, and we are told that we can rejoice in Him. But as you come closer, you see that you have such serious defects in contrast to His holiness.

The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image. {SC 65.2}

Is it beginning to unfold to your mind? The Lord wants us to see ourselves as we really are, to discover our undone condition; and He will help us to discover it as we see Him in His purity. And as we do so, He says, If you will do that, if you will draw close to Me, I shall lift you up. As I draw near to God like that, and discover my helpless, undone condition, I abhor myself, as Job said when he saw God as He really was; and observing this condition we enter into a heart-rending concern. But while that awareness of me is nothing to rejoice over, He says, If you will do this, *I will lift you up.*

He Shall Lift You Up

Jesus was in that situation, and in that terrible, oppressive situation, Jesus was lifted up. And we want to compare ourselves with Jesus as He is with us. Here we see Jesus as He became us. What was His experience?

Philippians 2:7 [He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Here He was in the heavens, rejoicing in the smile of His Father and the worship of the angels, and He came down out of that happy state. He *made Himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of men;*

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Even the death of the cross – we need to study that in depth. What was that death of the cross? When He was in Gethsemane, as He was coming towards the cross, He said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.* Why was that the

case? Because Jesus felt our sins. He was *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. And because He went through that experience,

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Here is a perfect example of a person humbling himself, as written in James, and the Lord lifting him up. When the moment of truth about your character defects strikes your experience, and as the Lord shows you again and again more and more, those moments of truth are to be understood as they were in Jesus Christ. As He was hanging on the cross in the gloom which we ourselves feel because of our sins, and which He felt because of our sins,

Suddenly the gloom lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpetlike tones, that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried, "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast, and died. {DA 756.2}

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor. {DA 756.3}

Here we have it. When the Lord reveals to us our true undone condition and we see yet another dimension that was hidden in darkness, there is a moment of truth there, and I am oppressed and I feel miserable because, Look at me; and I'm so helpless and I discover that I can't change myself; that oppressiveness is what is described as mourning and affliction. This is what it's about. Jesus met it. And as we cast ourselves in faith upon the one whom we love, just as Jesus cast Himself at that moment of truth, what happens? We are in captivity to our condition, we are in captivity to sin, and we see more details and we think, Oh no. This will happen to us again and again as the Lord reveals to us more and more deeply the condition of our being. But as my mourning and agony and affliction are severe upon me at that moment of truth, this may be our experience:

Breaking Through By Faith

Psalm 126:1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. **2** Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. **3** The LORD hath done great things for us; [whereof] we are glad.

So there is that moment of truth, and by faith we break through, and the Lord turns our captivity, and there is rejoicing; just like when Jesus was hanging on the cross and He said, Father, it is finished, and He was shining. Why? His face shone when He surrendered Himself to God. And what happened after He died? The Father lifted Him up, and there was great rejoicing. In our ongoing experience, going deeper and deeper into the blood of the Lamb, we go down, and we rejoice as we arise, as it was shown to Sr. White in the vision:

Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, {1T 179.3}

Christ's face lit up on the cross. *Now and then.* What is the picture that is painted here?

2 Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

When we are called to afflict our souls and mourn and turn our laughter to heaviness, this is where we are called to: to look at Jesus and to suffer with my sins and fall in dependence upon my God; to come in true heart sorrow. And as I do this at another moment of truth of another revelation, I die with Jesus and I rise again. This is what the apostle is writing here. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* These people in Sr. White's vision were doing this. *Large drops of perspiration* were on their foreheads – Jesus in Gethsemane was their experience, and they would again rise with God's approbation. And then they were down there again in the next episode of that moment, and then they would be raised again. The Lord will *lift you up*. As we read in Psalm 126, the Lord turned their captivity. And how does that scripture continue? It brings out this reality that it must go on:

Psalm 126:4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. **5** They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. **6** He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [with him].

The repetitive experience of that moment of truth that Jesus went through at the cross, as our sins that were before hidden in darkness are revealed to us in

greater dimensions, it is an oppressive moment; it is not a moment of rejoicing. It is a moment of heartache and sorrow. But instead of walking around *as a bul-rush*, instead of wrapping ourselves in *sackcloth and ashes* and be miserable for the next day or two or three, we are to quickly take hold of what Jesus went through as I was in Him and He was in me.

As every captivity of our fallen nature is thus released, then our mouths will be filled with laughter. There is joy and rejoicing; our tongue is filled with singing because the Lord has relieved us from this oppressive condition of ours. And then the Lord comes and shows me another one, so I am dying with Jesus and I rise. Then comes another one, I am dying with Jesus and I rise. We don't have to be in a mourning condition for long. Just discover and give over, and do what Jesus did; break through the darkness. This is the source of our rejoicing. This is what Philippians 4 is referring to. It is something which is not in harmony with man's natural state of mind. This is something that can only come through the knowledge of Jesus.

Surrendering and Rejoicing

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always:

At the moment of truth, when it comes home, then surrender and you can rejoice again, and

Philippians 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand.

God is at hand. He was there with the Son. The Son, Jesus, did not know that the Father was with Him; but His faith took Him there and He shone. So it is with us. We don't feel God near us when we feel all miserable and separated because of our sins. But

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing;

What should you do?

Philippians 4:6 ..but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And what will happen?

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Doesn't the word of God come alive when you examine widely from the Scriptures the application of those things which appear paradoxical? All of a sudden

it makes sense. *Through* Jesus Christ my heart will be kept aloft, because as Jesus Christ was lifted up as He trusted the Father, so will I be lifted up. It is a falling and rising, falling and rising. This is what Simeon told Mary about Jesus – *This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel*. This is because something else becomes manifest which is horrible to me; I don't want to be like that, but I am; so I am in captivity; but He will turn my captivity as I reach out to God as Jesus did.

The Lord is at hand. You will have a peace that is beyond understanding. Our understanding doesn't rally to this. I have to be conscious of my sins and happy at the same time? It doesn't make sense to our natural man. So as the Lord is working like this, and we now understand what He is meaning, let us not remain in the condition of mourning indefinitely, but let us appreciate the blessing of Matthew 5. What does Jesus say of the poor in spirit, those who are oppressed because of their condition?

Matthew 5:3 Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

What comfort and rejoicing is contained here. As we open our hearts to the work of God in bringing us down and raising us up again, we will mourn, yes, but we are comforted at the same time. Jesus has gone through this oppressiveness, and He thought He couldn't see through the tomb; but we can see, we can understand that as we go through these horrible discoveries about our character defects and our sins, and we keep on wondering, Why am I like this? we mourn, but we are comforted. This is a strange lack of human appreciation. We can't understand. It is a peace that passeth understanding. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*. We will rejoice with laughter because the Lord is lifting us up out of this. Praise God.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

That's no reason of rejoicing when men revile you, is it?

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:

Are you? We go through these oppressive times with people and with our own sins; and this is what God's people are going to go through severely in the time of Jacob's trouble. We better learn this lesson, because we will meet it again in the time of Jacob's trouble. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad;*

Matthew 5:12 ...for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The Lord wants us to rejoice in His salvation. He wants us to know that He is saving us out of our condition. “I am revealing to you the things that mar your life, says He; don’t sit and be a mourner indefinitely. Come to Me, pour out your heart in mourning, and I will comfort you; I will relieve you. Enter into this relationship.”

I Will Rejoice in His Salvation

Psalm 35:9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

My soul shall be joyful, although I was mourning. But in the midst of the mourning I can find the comfort of the Lord.

Psalm 63:6 When I remember thee upon my bed, [and] meditate on thee in the [night] watches. 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Do you know that experience? Waking up at night time and being oppressed with something, and then you realise, I’m under the shadow of God’s wings, I remember Him, I remember Jesus at the cross, and my heart is lifted up. I will never forget that experience when it really came to me with that moment of truth in a very heavy way, at one o’clock at night, with my head on my bed. The Lord said, You are like this now? What did you teach others when they were like that? My brain was oppressed heavily, and I realised: Jesus in Gethsemane. Oh, I’m not alone! I’ve got hope! and my hope rejoiced inside of me in the midst of that negative experience. “When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.” Can we do this, brethren and sisters? Let us be realistic with ourselves. Let the reality of our sinfulness not oppress and destroy us, but rather cause us to rest in God’s salvation.

Psalm 9:13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble [which I suffer] of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: 14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

The faith of Jesus. “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and *the faith of Jesus*,” rejoicing in His salvation. This is what the Lord wants us to rejoice in – His salvation

Amen.