

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord, part 1)

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007

PP 1,2

## **The Joy of the Lord**

### **Nehemiah 8:1-12 (NASB)**

8:1 AND all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place. 8 And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. 9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, **for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." 12 And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

**Introduction** We have lots of little lines we use as Christians—little sayings.

We say, "**praise the Lord,**"

"**God is good—all the time,**"

"**this is the day that the Lord has made,**"

"He's got it all in control,"

and at Christmas we put more of them to music, like,

"**Joy to the world, the Lord is come.**" We have a whole host of other little, pithy sayings which sort of encapsulate our view of God, ourselves and life in general. Another one of the little sayings that Christians have been known to say which comes from the Old Testament (I'm not sure if Jews say this or not,) is "**the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" That's what I want to talk about today—the joy of the Lord.

Here's some things we can say about the joy of the Lord:

PP 3

1. **THE JOY OF THE LORD IS A GLADNESS THAT COMES FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT,** the apostle Paul says. (Galatians 5)

2. Joy is a thing that **GOD FEELS ALL THE TIME**, and I believe the feeling that dominates in heaven. (Psalm 2:4; 37:13)
3. Joy is a combination of **FEELING, INTELLECT AND EXPRESSION**. It isn't JUST emotion but it is emotion; it isn't just ideas but it is rational. And it often has to come out in lots of ways—little pithy sayings that we like to rattle off! Or in songs. Or in testimonies or in many other ways.
4. Joy is, I think, **A DELICATE THING**—it is so susceptible to being squelched out and dampened in this very fallen world in which we live, as long as we are still struggling with our old natures, and it is only an occasional feature of this life, although God would like it to be more present for and in us.
5. Joy is **NOT REALLY THE SAME THING AS HAPPINESS**; it is a deeper thing. It isn't just what you feel IF the Patriots win (that is happiness)—it's what you can imagine you would feel if you woke up and realized, "Hey I'm ON the Patriots!" (If any of you ever saw the film *Rudy* you know what I'm talking about...)

When I first came to know the Lord there was this strange **joy** in my heart and in my mind. It was there when I went to bed and it was still there when I woke up. It lessened with time, but it was a wonderful new perspective on living. It enabled me to look at my schoolwork (which hadn't been going to well) with a new attitude. It changed my agenda with the young ladies. It made me willing and even wanting to sing, for the first time in my life. And it said to me, "Yes you are a sinner, but you don't have to live under the dread of that any longer." It made me feel that all the trauma I felt as a child, growing up in a tough home was going to be OK... It was reading a verse like Colossians 2: 13,14 for the first time and it hitting me, "Whoa, this is PERSONAL. That has to do with ME!" These are ways the joy of the Lord affected me in 1972, my first year in the faith!

I think the getting, feeling and MAINTAINING of the joy of the Lord is one of the crucial challenges we face as Christians. We are conspired against

- by remaining sin,
- by defeats in the Christian life,
- by disappointments with other Christians (especially family members,)
- by pain and hard circumstances,
- by slow growth in ministry despite long hours dedicated,
- by the tendency to slip into routine ("the same old same old" in church life,)
- by those who confusingly promote or display a false joy which others can sense is phony,
- maybe by persecution,
- by depression and/or disability,
- by the devil himself

to lose whatever sense of gladness and radiance we feel because of what we have in Christ. So, this is an important subject.

We WANT to feel what they feel in heaven.

PP 5,6,7

We WANT to catch a whiff of that fire on the beach when Jesus was cooking breakfast.

We WANT to feel the light on our faces that John felt as the resurrected Jesus appeared to Him and gave him the Revelation.

We so very much WANT the joy of the Lord to strengthen us and get us past what we're struggling with.

We want to feel the joy of the Lord in OUR lives strengthening and blessing others, ESPECIALLY non-Christian seekers that we desire to lead to Christ!

Recently we were in the book of Nehemiah on that Sunday morning when we had four men talking in one message about living for God. In chapter eight, the people assembled—its something like the year 420 B.C. or so. They had heard the word of the Lord read to them. They were focused—***gathered as one man***, Nehemiah felt... It was in Jerusalem—or what there was of Jerusalem, ***in front of the*** Watergate...[that's funny to me because for Jews mindful of their history, the word "Watergate" should evoke a happy memory, while for us it does the opposite.] Their reaction was pretty positive when they heard Ezra the priest read from something—maybe MOST of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers—yes, Numbers—and Deuteronomy cause they said ***Amen, Amen***. Then a bunch of pre-determined and trained guys fan out and do Bible study with the people for a while making sure they understood what had been read.

—By the way. It does no good at all to do Bible study or just to read it if you don't understand it. If you're in a Bible study and your group studies a passage and YOU don't get it, **ASK questions!** If you still don't get it, **ASK MORE questions.** There isn't anything magical about mindlessly just sitting through a Bible study or mindlessly reading it. You need to understand what you read, or hear read. And that is what Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites were doing—going through in small groups and making sure everyone understood what was being read.

So they hear the Word of God read, they are made to understand it and then it bums them out! What's up with that? ***For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law.*** Now, this should not surprise us because the pure Law of God is convicting. Maybe that is why we don't read in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy much. We like Philipians and Ephesians and Colossians and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, don't we? But they didn't HAVE Philipians and Ephesians and Colossians and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians like we do—they didn't even have Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy very often, but this day they did! And they were smitten of heart! They were bummed by the remembrance of how holy God is and how far they fell short. And Nehemiah said what he said then in 8:10,

***Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*** And I love verses 11 and 12 then,

***So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.***

PP 8

Knowing God is not just knowing all the bad stuff we're supposed to NOT do. Do you really understand that? That would be like being made a team member of the Patriots and all you can think of is, "Gee, now I'm going to have to go to team meetings and learn some new PINs to get into the locker room, and how to dress in this uniform and that uniform... man, bummer." It IS having wisdom and working at developing your understanding about how to stay away from evil and wickedness and how to combat your own old nature. But it doesn't end there. Knowing God is to enter into His joy! It is to know you've been adopted into His own household. It's to realize you are not just an honored guest of the New England Patriots and you get to watch them practice from a privileged box seat or maybe even go to a game and be allowed to sit in the expensive skyboxes... It's to **REALIZE YOU'VE BEEN MADE A PART OF THE TEAM.**

PP 9

I know what you're thinking... "No, no, no. That's not really true..." But it is. If the New Testament is right—and of course we are utterly persuaded that it is, the joy of the Lord is a thing He feels when He beholds His children, the BRIDE of His Son. His Son has cleansed us from all unrighteousness and given us His own righteousness to wear. The Father sees that and is joyful. That joy spills over on to us, when we're walking with Him and we're sensing what the Holy Spirit is trying to nurture inside of us. His joy does not wear out, become obsolete or get used up. He feels the same about you, if you are really a Christian—if you have really and truly embraced Him by faith and invited Him into your life—TODAY as He did the first second you were born again.

The joy of the Lord is a thing we should pray for, and promote. And if anything we are doing as a church SQUELCHES OUT or DIMINISHES or LESSENS the joy of the Lord among us, shame on us! Let us repent of that thing we are doing and get back with the program to spread His joy. Let's throw out the old leaven and let's get rid of the old wineskins! Let's have a GENUINELY joyful body here at DBC and not a phony or a trumped up or an artificially contrived joy-circus. If we're not feeling much joy, let's ask why? And let's fix it. On a personal level, on a small group level, on team level and on a whole-church level. The JOY OF THE LORD is supposed to rejuvenate us, renew our strength and courage and determination to carry on. It is not supposed to be something that just happens once in a while, if we go away on a conference or have a rare impact on someone else's life. It's supposed to be the NORM for us, not the exception.

PP 10

Lord willing, in another message we will consider 17 ways to feel the joy of the Lord. May God bless you as you think about this, as you pray about it, as you seek to bolster your brother and sister's joy in the Lord!

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord, part 2)

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007

## The Joy of the Lord Part 2

PP 1,2

### Nehemiah 8:9-12 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." <sup>11</sup> So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." <sup>12</sup> And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

### 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NASB)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup> and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

PP 3,4,5

**Introduction** Two weeks ago we said some things about the "joy of the Lord." That expression actually is a rarity in the Bible. But the concept is clearly there. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Is Christian joy the same thing as a happy face? In psychology they have the term "affect" which means how a person feels, emotionally and how it shows on their face. Is the affect of having joy always visible? I think we are confused about this. I would suggest that the joy of the Lord may or may not be visible.

What we mean by "the joy of the Lord" is **THAT GLADNESS THAT COMES FROM KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS SON, AND THAT EXISTS APART FROM EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES.**

PP 6,7,8,9

So back at the Watergate, in 430 B.C. and the people were assembled and they heard the Word of God read, they are made to understand it and then it bums them out! What's up with that? ***For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law.*** Now, this should not surprise us because the pure Law of God is convicting. Maybe that is why we don't read in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy much. We like Philipians and Ephesians and Colossians and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, don't we? But they didn't HAVE Philipians and Ephesians and Colossians and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians like we do—they didn't even have Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy very often, but this day they did! And they were smitten of heart! They were bummed by the remembrance of how holy God is and how far they fell short. And Nehemiah said what he said then in 8:10,

***Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*** And I love verses 11 and 12 then, ***So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.***

Knowing God is not just knowing all the bad stuff we're supposed to NOT do. Do you really understand that? That would be like being made a team member of the Patriots and all you can think of is, "Gee, now I'm going to have to go to team meetings and learn some new PINs to get into the locker room, and how to dress in this uniform and that uniform... man, bummer." It IS having wisdom and working at developing your understanding about how to stay away from evil and wickedness and how to combat your own old nature. But it doesn't end there. KNOWING GOD IS TO ENTER INTO HIS JOY!

- It is to know you've been adopted into His own household.
- It's to realize you are not just an honored guest of the New England Patriots and you get to watch them practice from a privileged box seat or maybe even go to a game and be allowed to sit in the expensive skyboxes... It's to realize you've been made a part of the team.
- Knowing God is to feel the same pleasure when He looks at you as He feels when He looks at His Son, Jesus.

I know what you're thinking... "No, no, no. That's not really true..." But it is. If the New Testament is right—and of course we are utterly persuaded that it is, the joy of the Lord is a thing He feels when He beholds His children, the BRIDE of His Son. His Son has cleansed us from all unrighteousness and given us His own righteousness to wear. The Father sees that and is joyful. That joy spills over on to us, when we're walking with Him and we're sensing what the Holy Spirit is trying to nurture inside of us. His joy does not wear out, become

obsolete or get used up. He feels the same about you, if you are really a Christian—if you have really and truly embraced Him by faith and invited Him into your life—TODAY as He did the first second you were born again.

PP 10

Peter wrote that his readers WERE feeling the joy of the Lord—because they had been **caused to be born again to a living hope to obtain an inheritance which is protected...** And though, yes, they had to suffer for a “little while” (I love it when he calls suffering a little while!), but he knew they were greatly rejoicing with **joy inexpressible**. He knew they were plugged in to God’s joy! And plugged into what God had done for them and would YET do...

The joy of the Lord is a quality, a feeling, a state of peace and confidence and gladness that is HIS. And we either do, or do not tie into it. We are either in touch with Him, or we are drifting in something else...

The joy of the Lord is a thing we should **pray for, and promote.**

PP 11

- And if anything we are doing as a church SQUELCHES OUT or DIMINISHES or LESSENS the joy of the Lord among us, shame on us! Let us repent of that thing we are doing and get back with the program to spread His joy. Let’s throw out the old leaven and let’s get rid of the old wineskins!
- Let’s have a GENUINELY joyful body here at DBC and not a phony or a trumped up or an artificially contrived joy-circus. If we’re not feeling much joy, let’s ask why? And let’s fix it.
- On a personal level, on a small group level, on team level and on a whole-church level.

The JOY OF THE LORD is supposed to rejuvenate us, renew our strength and courage and determination to carry on. It is not supposed to be something that just happens once in a while, if we go away on a conference or have a rare impact on someone else’s life. It’s supposed to be the NORM for us, not the exception.

PP 12

Now I have generated 17 ways to feel the joy of the Lord. Why 17? Because I think there’s a LOT. I think I could come up with another 17 ways if these are not enough... May God bless you as you think about this, as you pray about it, as you seek to bolster your brother and sister's joy in the Lord!

Before I give them to you, here’s some things that are NOT on the list:

Join a church committee; Be a part of a church split; Be a part of a new house-church that comes OUT of a church split; Go to lots of conferences; Listen to 5 sermons/week; Fill in for a “vacancy” in the

church's workforce because no one else will do it; Make sure you never miss more than one Sunday of church attendance/year; Memorize Bible verses for the sake of memorizing them or because someone told you to do it or to impress someone or to meet someone else's expectations; Try your best to MEET everyone's expectations; Never fellowship closely with anyone who isn't exactly the same as you, theologically; Tithe out of obligation; Generate enough faith to be healed of any and every sickness, financial setback or conflict; Say "yes" to every request on your time and believe that this is God's will for you; Keep track of how your spiritual life compares with that of your friends; Keep track of your friends' spiritual disciplines; ACT joyful all the time when you're around other Christians; Never admit to being prone to temptation and only confess sin if you're caught red-handed...

Here are my seventeen things that I think will help you feel the joy of the Lord...

1. Develop a close walk with Him. If you are close to Him, you cannot help but be sprinkled, sometimes doused with His joy. Conversely, if you choose to NOT walk close to Him you can expect that your faith will only rarely be characterized by the joy of the Lord.
2. Find His specific plan for your life. He HAS one. You go find it. You'll feel His joy as it starts to unfold for you.
3. Minimize giving into temptation. Nothing dampens His joy like sin.
4. Lead someone to Christ. You say, "I couldn't do that." Yes you could. Do you know how I know? Because He has chosen to use you and me.
5. Find your spiritual gift and use it. This is a process, but there's joy in discovery and then in using the gift too.
6. Spend some time with Christians completely outside your culture. You see the universality of the Gospel and of the Holy Spirit so very clearly then!
7. Develop the use of encouraging Christian music in your life. This differs from Christian to Christian but find what works for you. It's a tool for joy.
8. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. This is an old axiom, but it is largely a choice to be positive and solution-finding.
9. GIVE encouragement. We need it from you. You can learn how to do this and then when you do it, in natural settings, it really helps others and builds YOUR joy.
10. Refuse to spread bad news. This is also a deliberate determination you can make to just NOT BE PART of the spread of bad news.
11. Forgive people with the same measure of forgiveness that you need. How much is that? Give that person next to you who offended you at least what you need from the Lord.
12. Make the Word of God an effective part of every Monday through Friday. I

don't care how you do it, just DO it. Get the Word into your life, and you will get joy from feeding on the Word. I don't understand it all, but I love to be fed!

13. If you are married, seek to BE a blessing to your spouse.
14. If you are a parent, IMPART "the blessing" to your children.
15. Maintain a list of prayer requests that you are
  - a) praying about and
  - b) expecting God to answer.
16. Practice the "sabbath rest." Regularly—REAL regularly figure out how to rest and refuel and build a different pace into your life.
17. Study, develop and enjoy the subject of worship in your life. I think worship is supposed to be a thing that makes us joyful. I don't think its supposed to be boring or depressing. I think when we are WITH the Lord we will be bathed in His joy and light.

PP 15

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord)

Scripture:

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007



## **Connections to His Joy**

# PP 1,2

### **Revelation 22:1-5 (NASB)**

AND he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, <sup>2</sup> in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; <sup>4</sup> and they shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And there shall no longer be *any* night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

**Introduction** As a pastor, you see, every week, a picture of how the body of Christ is feeling. You see it among the individual members of the body that you encounter during the week and you see it in small collections of Christians, and then in big chunks at a time, which we like to call "Church." But you see how the body is doing. You feel what they're feeling. And you want, as a pastor, for them to really be in touch with Jesus Christ. I mean really, on a genuine, day-to-day level. And you want them to CONNECT with the joy that is God. I want to talk about that, a lot! I'm interested in it. And moving around within the body, as a pastor, you become aware that some say, "I'm just not feeling any joy in my Christian life these days." And you know that there others who are going through big problems these days. And there are others yet who aren't going through anything like a crisis, but they are just saddled with some long-term hard things and they need the encouragement that the joy of the Lord DOES exist! And, as a pastor, you sense and remember that it is just healthy for a church to *focus* on the goodness of God and the radiation of His joy...

# PP 3

We have said that the joy of the Lord **IS THAT GLADNESS OF HEART THAT COMES FROM KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS SON, REALLY WITHOUT RESPECT TO OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES.** It is **deep** inside of the Christian,

- a sense of His joy which is based in heaven, not here.
- It is as much a conviction as it is feeling.
- It is as much a thing seen by faith as it is "goosebumps in a concert."

- It is as much yearning for the future as it is contentment with what life has handed us, in the present.

I crave the joy of the Lord, and I want it for you, if you are really a Christian.

- ☑ We have identified some things which conspire, we feel, to undo that joy or to block it (for His joy cannot really be assailed.)
- ☑ And last week we suggested no less than 17 ways to feel the joy of the Lord, which I prefaced by another list of 17 things which are NOT expected to generate a feeling of His joy—even though they are things commonly *done* in church work by Christians...

Today I would like to suggest what I'm calling some "touchpoints" or "connections" to His joy in the Scriptures--some basic moments when biblical guys got in touch with or sensed His joy. I think we can have similar moments. They are a delight. And I would suggest today that they *may* occur simultaneously with hard times in life. When we touch His joy we transcend this world—we sense a deeper identity which we possess, with our future citizenship, far more powerful than if we even WERE outright and surprisingly invited just like that to become a full member of the New England Patriots. Such an unbelievable prospect, and silly really, is but a speck of wonder compared to the reality of what we have been promised as disciples of the true Son of God. These moments I am thinking about are foreshadowing, prelude and set-up for what is truly coming.

I am convinced the writers of Scripture felt these moments, from time to time, and that they wrote about them.

### Job 38:4a,7

PP 4

**Where were you [Job]... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?** A most basic illustration of a time before time, when it was God and His creatures of connecting to the joy of God. It is profound because most our culture has bought into a world-view today when this reality is denied and not even fascinated with. But it is a fundamental layer of philosophy, perhaps even before the Garden of Eden, when there was an awesome celebration going on in heaven. God tells Job about it, living IN time, and suffering. Why did God mention this to Job? Just to make him feel worse than he already did? Or, to point him to a place and frame of existence beyond suffering? There IS an existence where God is present, and where there are incredible creatures, where WE will be. And the JOY will be "off the chart."

PP 5

Our second scenario takes place during the reign of one of Israel's really good kings. This is like worship now. There was joy in God, invisible. His people

***bowed low and worshiped.*** It was loud. There was lots of music and instruments. They weren't watching their watches (because they didn't *have* watches) but mainly because they were having such a good time and joy was dominant. A seven day festival, and then EVERYONE said, "Yo this is awesome. Let's keep going!" So another week of worship and celebration. In fact it was so awesome, that you had to go back three hundred years to find another time when there was so much joy.

You see? God's people DO sometimes really connect with the joy of who God is! They will do it again in another three hundred years, under Nehemiah but it is certainly not a thing which they manufacture every Sabbath or year after year.

## **2 Chronicles 29:30; 30:21,23,26**

***29:30 Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped.***

***30:21 And the sons of Israel present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy, and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day after day with loud instruments to the LORD.***

***30:23 Then the whole assembly decided to celebrate the feast another seven days, so they celebrated the seven days with joy.***

***30:26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem, because there was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.***

Four hundred years after Nehemiah, Jesus comes on to the scene, and He said things about connecting to the joy of the Lord...

Like **Matthew 13:44**

PP 6

***The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.***

Why is the kingdom of heaven like that? In fact, I can't even relate to that. I don't dig in fields real often and if I did, I would probably get arrested. But fields and field-digging were common in Jesus' day and field "treasure" would be a great find. Jesus imagines how the random field-digger would FEEL if he found such a treasure, and what He would do...

The joy of the Lord is a thing we should cherish. We should not forfeit it as easily as we do sometimes with conflict and pride and self-focus. We insist forcing our way so often and the joy of the Lord just evaporates. Normally, He

intends for us to let the Holy Spirit just *generate* it and we should cherish that fact. In fact, the implication in what Jesus said here is that this is the way it WILL BE in heaven ("**the kingdom of heaven**"). Those little glimmers of heaven, of HIS JOY, ought to be the most valuable moments in our lives! We should have a sharing time in fact, when we just talk about THEM. When was the last time you felt just outside the gate of heaven? Those times happen, and FROM JOY THE MAN GOES AND SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS... I believe a real kingdom is coming. I believe that when Jesus returns He is going to rule again. Literally. On the earth. And the RULE will be His joy. He will insist on it. I really treasure those passing and too-few moments NOW when I sense that is coming.

PP 7

There is one other thing today we want to look at that Jesus said about joy. It is in Luke 15:7.

***I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance***, or at least don't *think* they do (a reference to Pharisees.) This is from Jesus' parable of the "lost sheep." Jesus hung out with sinners and it was completely okay because God is like a shepherd who searches diligently for any lost sheep. The retrieval of the lost sheep brings joy to God ("heaven" [v. 7] is another way of referring to God...God's joy comes from the repentance of the lost.<sup>1</sup> WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH YOU AND ME?

A connection with the joy of the Lord is to see what makes HIM joyful. People repenting, turning around, changing their minds, makes God joyful. It overjoys God, and therefore it overjoys any creature around God, in heaven. It isn't that the angels cheer and God goes, "Hmmm, yea that's alright." And it isn't that God is excited and the angels just go along with it. God and all heaven rejoice when ONE PERSON comes to faith and finds the Lord. Do we? You see, I think when people become saved is the most awesome thing there is!! It is the main reason we are HERE as a church. Did you know that? Maybe you thought the main reason the church is here is to give you something to do on a Sunday morning, or a place to teach your kids the Ten Commandments, or a place for free coffee, or a place to dump off your excess money, or a place to catch a certain feeling. The main reason we are here, as a church, is to work at the process of helping people repent. And then train them to serve Him. So that MORE people can hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and repent. When that DOES happen, it sends a lightning bolt of JOY into heaven. Incredible!

PP 8,9

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<sup>1</sup>Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*., electronic ed., Lk 15:1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996, c1989).

Putting it together, we have that the joy of the Lord

- Was THERE—in heaven, before, after, beyond time. It is a feeling, a conviction, a state of mind that is beyond human existence.
- During Israel's history, it was occasionally felt during worship!
- When it is here—a foreshadowing of what is to come—we should CHERISH it, treasure it. Doing whatever we can to maintain it.
- It is felt IN HEAVEN upon every single case of human repentance. Every time a single soul here feels saving faith, embraces the cross of Christ, turns from the world, turns toward the Lord, changes his or her mind ABOUT God or about themselves, it cause a party in heaven!

Lordwilling, we will continue with some more connections to His joy next week...

# 79Dartmouth

## Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord)

Scripture:

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007



### Connections to His Joy

# PP 1,2


Revelation 19:6-8

***And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." <sup>8</sup> And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.***

Revelation 21:3,4

***And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, <sup>4</sup> and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."***

**Introduction** We have been thinking and talking about the joy of the Lord.

And it occurs to me that this is a thing we probably all assumed we would get as a benefit of becoming Christians. If we thought about it at all, we probably all just took it for granted that becoming a Christian would automatically make us joyful. That would make sense. To become a Christian, you approach God with all this sin in your life... and like in the Chick Tract entitled  "One Way," you get all clean. You get heaven when you die. You get hope and purpose in your life, working for a kingdom which is far more awesome than anything you might work for here. You get a sort of semi-transparent family, who solidify over time. You get the Holy Spirit, the Bible says, when you didn't have the Holy Spirit before you trusted Christ. (And one of the qualities He cultivates inside of you, is His joy.) You get all this cool talk about the future, and a whole new cool vocabulary to go with it—words like **rapture**, **tribulation**, **reign of Christ**, **Armageddon**, **New Jerusalem**, etc. All of this, and more and so we sort of assume that joy would be a logical response from us. Right?

# PP 3-14

And yet, JOY SEEMS SO FRAGILE SOMETIMES. For some of us, it comes pretty easy and often but for many of us it *evaporates* easily. Another set of words has peppered our lives lately: **separation**, **depression**, **bankruptcy**, **cocaine**. And so we are looking FOR joy and at it and getting some biblical "touch points" or

connections to moments in the Bible when joy was effervescent—sparkling, bubbling—for one reason or another. Will listening to this sermon magically transform you into a joyful person? Probably not. But my belief is that when we constantly work to RECALIBRATE OUR PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS REAL and IN what things do the Scriptures seem to connect with the joy of the Lord, we WILL connect better. That’s my goal in these messages – I want you to be able to RECALIBRATE YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS REAL IN YOUR FAITH, AND ON WHAT THINGS THE BIBLE OFFER, AS ILLUSTRATIONS, TO CONNECT YOU WITH HIS JOY—that *deep-seated gladness of what you have in Christ, which is really independent on your external circumstances, whether they are bad or good.*

PP  
15  
-  
17

For starters, I have always found it interesting that Jesus told the parable of the lost son. It is in Luke 15:11-32... A good question to ask yourself, is why did Jesus give this story? And I think that basically this parable is a “beautiful description of the forgiving love of God, grace, and the joys of repentance.”<sup>1</sup> But you will notice in verse 20 ... ***And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.*** The son has not arrived yet, and has not yet said anything about repenting. The father just sees him coming and his heart is filled with joy. So, how does this help us with our perspective? To God, it is a great joy when one person repents. Changing of the mind is the key. It doesn’t happen to all people and we don’t see it all the time. But when it *does* happen, and if you see it in someone, take note. This is one of the meaningful moments in life. It may be in VBS, or it may be in a camp setting, or it may be just in someone’s home when you’re sharing about God or the gospel with them. Or there might not be anyone around at all! But at those moments—and let me tell you I am hungry to see some—it brings joy to God.

PP  
18

A second verse that is powerful I think, if you let it get a hold of you, is found on the lips of Jesus, also, and was recorded for us by His disciple John. In John 15:11 we have ***“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*** This comes at the end of Jesus’ last night talk in the Upper Room, and in His vine-and-the-vinedresser words... Bearing fruit, knowing then that the Father is glorified by your bearing spiritual fruit, keeping Jesus’ commandments, is a MAP for the Christian life. He gave it to give them joy. You don’t have to wonder about how to live your life. He has told us. You can have real joy—FULL joy just in knowing His words. This is a big reason why we recommend reading the Gospels: to ***remember*** what Jesus spoke to us. You might say, “Well, I read the Gospels once.” You and I need to read them again. Now that we’re older and wiser! If helps me recalibrate my perspective on what I’M GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW, when I read again HIS

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner in Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* ., electronic ed., Lk 15:11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996, c1989).

words, refresh my memory with how a person really walks with God and that my life needs to really be ABOUT keeping Jesus' commandments. We can't do it all the time. We don't watchdog each OTHER in this. Each of us *internally* is seeking to glorify the Father. We can get confused about that, or forget how to do it. So, we go back to the things Jesus said. We do this privately, on our own. And we get joy again...

PP 19

A third verse to see is from Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 2:19,20. ***For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*** How is there any joy in THIS verse for me, here in 2007? In verses 17-20 in this passage, Paul is saying to them that THEY are a source of joy to him, and to the other apostles. You and I minister to various people too. We try our best to build the faith and the kingdom in them. We don't get rewarded too much here for that, indeed, we might even take some criticism sometimes (as the Thessalonian Christians did, vs. 14.) We have people in our church who work in small groups, in Sunday School classes, in personal discipling relationships, in youth work, among senior citizens, some of whom though they are aged are not necessarily fully mature in Christ yet. They need shepherding and discipling too. And someone works with them. Many of us are doing the same kind of basic people- work as Paul did. The people we work with, as they grow, give us JOY. In fact, there is no joy like seeing someone you're working with grow. In fact, I would say this kind of joy is what keeps you going, for it surely isn't pats on the back or financial reward, or public acclaim. It is seeing someone you're working with make a little decision for Christ, or make one for doing the will of God. This is one of the reasons I so much enjoy working with college students. They're in a time of their lives when there are many opportunities to make new decisions, to struggle with the will of God, to reach out to larger numbers for Christ. I get joy each time one of them says, "Hey, I want to go on a short-term trip or I want to go to Brazil or Germany or Mexico or France for Jesus Christ!" This is a source of joy for me, as a worker, and it helps me recalibrate my perspective about what is REAL in this life, and meaningful.

PP 20

To summarize today, the joy of the Lord comes:

- When repentance (mind-changing) happens.
- Knowing Jesus' blueprint for your life.
- In seeing people you're working with grow in their faith.

His joy is here. It is His will to grow it in us. We need to see it. It helps with living, and it is a great joy to sense Jesus Christ in our lives!

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord)

Scripture: Revelation 19-22

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007

PP 1,2

## ***The Joy of the Lord at the End of Time***

**Revelation 19:6-8** (NASB) And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." <sup>8</sup> And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

**Revelation 21:3,4** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, <sup>4</sup> and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

**Revelation 22:1-5** AND he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, <sup>2</sup> in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; <sup>4</sup> and they shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And there shall no longer be *any* night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

**Introduction** It is the advertising of Christianity, at least American Christianity, that if you become a real Christian—if you get Jesus Christ into your life—if you turn your life over to Him—if you begin the process of becoming more like Him, which we say is by means of His Spirit who starts living inside of you when you receive Christ for the first time—THAT you will become joyful, or at least that you become QUALIFIED to become joyful.

PP3,4

And that is a reasonable point to advertise. We have considered a few (and they are JUST a few) of the Scriptural windows into the joy of the Lord, that are the domain and property of the person who by faith has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God. We spent two messages talking about those biblical connections to His joy. I want to do one more, and consider the end of time. Or, time as we understand it. In biblical chronology that is at the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation.

It has always sort of perplexed me when over the years I have heard more than a few Christians make snide remarks about the Book of Revelation. Even Martin Luther said some weird things about the Book of Revelation... "Yo this book has ME freaked out!" (*Yo hat dieses buch mich umgestürzt*).

I also detect in this culture that we live in, an underlying philosophical assumption that conflicts with at least a futurist view of the Book of Revelation. That is the assumption that time will *never really come to an end at all*, at least not within the next few millennia, unless man himself ends it with nuclear or biological holocaust (as countless movies imagine) or with a giant meteor, both scenarios of which have all or most of mankind vanishing with various OTHER creatures showing up. When I thought about it, with so many buying into this new bedrock philosophy, who wants to consider how the Book of Revelation "revelates" about the future?

I definitely also see within some evangelical Christians a certain eye-rolling disgust with the Book of Revelation because of some prophecy-speakers, no education in hand, but giving prophecy seminars right and left and working their audiences up into a frothy frenzy with seeing some detail in Revelation fulfilled on the front page of each day's newspaper.

PP 5,6

Taken at face value, after the first three chapters, and maybe even unfolding the first three chapters, John is SEEING DEEP INTO THE FUTURE TO THE TIME THAT IS AT THE END OF TIME. The world is coming to an end, John saw incredible events at the end of time, and beyond the end of time. The end of the world will be a thing we can hardly imagine in today's way of thinking. BUT IT WILL ARRIVE. And it will be completely under the control of God and the Captain of the end of time, Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. As we interpret the Book of Revelation, NEAR that time

- there will be a huge conflict.
- Satan will be blazing in all his fury, for as Luther wrote in the song, *Lo, his doom is sure.*

But after all the cataclysm of that time, we read some wonderful things...and embedded within those wonderful things is the full unleashing of His joy. That is where we find ourselves today: the joy of the Lord at the end of time. We wish there was MORE scripture about it. We have lots of questions. But we delve into the last chapters of Revelation and revel therein.

PP 7

In **Revelation 19:6-8** we see several interesting things. First there will be lots and lots and lots of beings there. That will include humans but I suspect not only humans. **A great multitude**, John saw. Second, I notice that the first thing here John mentions is what he HEARD: **the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder**. Somehow, this thunderous waterfall makes auditory sense and choruses into a praise of God, who is King of all. They do not

praise the majesty of some democracy. There is no voting. There is only praise and worship of a King. And of His bride who is fabulously beautiful. Her gown is somehow connected with the good works of the Christians who make up the bride. By God's grace, they were enabled in THIS life to add to the future wedding garment of the bride. All of this draws out a great chorus of joy on that day.

How often when we sing, do we do it out of great joy. Sometimes, maybe. But more often we're mired in THIS life, when we sing. We come here, or we're driving along listening to KLOVE, and we're so burdened with THIS life. We croak out the praises as best we can and I am sure the Lord is happy to receive them. He knows where we're living, and He gives much grace to our singing. But on that day there will be no more sin, no more distraction. There will be no one in that **great multitude** who was dragged there, who came out of habit or obligation. No one will be thinking, "Let's get this done with—the Patriots will be on soon." No one will be worried about their attire for the day or concerned with too much or too little attention by their fellow worshippers. There will be no problem with focus or interest. And the bride will be clothed in purity. Such joy, we can hardly imagine, if you have wrestled with sin in your life at all.

PP 8

**Then we read in Revelation 21:3,4 a second thing John says he HEARD: God's very presence will be among men. He will no longer seem absent. That will be over. There will be a familiarity and an ownership, a glimpse of which one might feel when one is adopted, or joins a good company or makes the team or even joins and is welcomed as a member into a church. You KNOW you're wanted. You KNOW you belong. But it gets better than only they shall be His people. John heard this loud voice—no noises in the Book of Revelation were missed by John—call out, every tear is dabbed by Jesus Christ Himself. Death is obsolete, no small thing. Won't that be great? Never again, the dread of dying, no more mourning and sadness and best of all NO MORE PAIN. Would you feel joy if someone guaranteed you no more pain? So, I'm thinking with the absence of mourning, crying and sadness and being bummed out and pain, what does that leave? How about JOY!?? Perhaps JOY is what life was supposed to be, without the fallenness of sin and what it got us—tears and mourning and crying and pain. So if you take those away, as Jesus Himself does, you get back to what we're supposed to experience, as His creatures and as His bride.**

PP 9,10

**A last glimpse of joy at the end of time is in Revelation 22:1-5.** This time what John was given all those years ago, an old man, bent over, on the lonely island of Patmos, was VISUAL. No sounds are mentioned. It is what he saw. It was the most incredible river, coming right from the throne of God. And on both sides was one kind of plant life, a tree, unlike any tree here for all trees and plants here bear just their own kind of fruit. Adam and Eve lost their access to

this tree way back in the Garden, when they fell into sin. Now their children, redeemed by their faith in the Lamb, will again have access. This tree bears 12 kinds of fruit, a different one apparently each month, which makes me wonder if somehow maybe indeed there will still be time of some kind. Evidently the new creation will not have a lunar calendar, since there will be no moon (21:23), but another type of calendar will define months.<sup>1</sup>

And I have no idea what this really means, but it is wonderful: **the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** The tree of life in the Garden of Eden could perpetuate life forever (Gen. 3:22, 24). Evidently that will be the function of this tree in the new earth as well, to sustain immortality. "Healing" really means "health-giving" (Gr. *therapeian*). Since there will be no death in the new earth these leaves will evidently promote well-being. They will provide healing from the conditions of the old creation as the wiping away of tears removed the sorrows of the old creation (cf. 21:4; Ezek. 47:12). The nations are groups of people in the new creation viewed according to their old creation divisions (cf. 21:24). Those there will somehow have participation in the tree of life as a regular experience of fellowshiping with God, and somehow in the eating of this monthly fruit."<sup>2</sup>

No more curse. The throne of God with the Lamb on it, and us seeing His face. And His name shall be on our foreheads. No more night. No need of light or the sun. Lit up with God Himself, who has given us to be co-regents, St. John says, **forever and ever.** At the end of time, it will be completely joyful. And you are heading there, if you really know Christ. There will be no fooling anyone then. Only the redeemed will be there.

PP 11,12

J.S. Bach wrote a song in 1716 entitled *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, which in the German is really *Jesus Shall Remain My Gladness*. .

Jesu, joy of man's desiring,  
Holy Wisdom, Love most bright;  
Drawn by Thee, our souls, aspiring,  
Soar to uncreated light.  
Word of God, our flesh that fashion'd,  
With the fire of life impassion'd,  
Striving still to truth unknown,  
Soaring, dying, round Thy throne.

Through the way where hope is guiding,  
Hark, what peaceful music rings!  
Where the flock, in Thee confiding,  
Drink of joy from deathless springs.  
Theirs is beauty's fairest pleasure;  
Theirs is wisdom's holiest treasure.  
Thou dost ever lead Thine own  
In the love of joys unknown.

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 22:2 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord)

Scripture: 2 Cor. 4

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007



## ***A Great Enemy of the Joy of the Lord***

### **2 Corinthians 4 (NASB)**

THEREFORE, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, <sup>2</sup> but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup> *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you. <sup>13</sup> But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore also we speak; <sup>14</sup> knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. <sup>15</sup> For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

**Introduction** I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart; down in my heart, down in my heart; I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Down in my heart, to stay. And I'm so happy, so very happy; I've got the love of Jesus in my heart (down in my heart.) And I'm so happy, so very happy. I've got the love of Jesus in my heart. Also: I've got the peace that passes understanding down in the depths of my heart... I've got the wonderful love of my blessed redeemer way down in the depths of my soul...

Unless depression hits. Depression is a common malady in our current society and it is the great enemy of the joy of the Lord. Even though some people scoff at the problem and say, "If you lived where I came from you wouldn't worry about depression." There are different approaches that counselors, preachers, Bible scholars, psychologists, psychiatrists, Bible study and small group leaders, church elders and your friends might

take in dealing with this subject. But all must agree it is a serious and formidable problem that even Christians face. Despite our songs, sometimes.

Depression is a **black cloud**, as described by some. It doesn't go away by simply telling it to go away. It may lessen or even be solved with certain medication, although that seems to be a hit-and-miss proposition and takes a lot of patience. But since we *are* physical beings, and we are capable of all kinds of physical weakness, illness, infection and degeneration, it stands to reason that sometimes depression might be solvable by a medical or pharmaceutical solution... I say this because sometimes Christians seem to think they are above mental illness. From my perspective, if you are depressed do not hesitate to prayerfully consider medication, under your doctor's advice of course. It isn't any less spiritual to work with a medication than it is to wear glasses.

Here's one thing we surely need NOT to do—place each other on a guilt trip and try to shame each other out of depression. That's a NEGATIVE!!! You know what? That doesn't work, and it isn't a biblical kind of thing Christians should do to one another.

Depression doesn't come casually—there's usually some deep reason why it starts building in a person's life. It comes with grief, for instance, and if the grief isn't resolved it turns into depression. You lose a job, a loved one, a church, a friend, you will grieve it. Other things can be lost too that cause sadness.

Sometimes however, depression IS caused by genuine guilt and of this there can be little doubt. Genuine guilt is what happens when we sin. You and I DO sin, you know. And if we sin, we are guilty. The Lord stirs conviction inside of us I believe. And conviction that goes unheeded can cause a depression.

- CAIN, son of Adam (having disobeyed God)  
***"Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'"*** -Genesis 4:6-7 (NIV)
- DAVID, King of Israel (having committed adultery was depressed until he confessed his sin) ***"When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah. Psalm 32:3-4"***

Release from depression caused by guilt came from CONFESSION and seeking God's forgiveness...

- ***"For I said in my haste, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes'; Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications When I cried out to You. Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, And fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the LORD. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. ...I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. -Psalm 31:22-32:2, 32:5*** (NKJV)

Ultimately as Christians we depend, over and over, on a verse like 1 John 1:9 "***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness***". (NKJV)

When you are a genuine Christian and you know that deep gladness from knowing God through Christ, you can sense that depression is a major enemy of the joy of the Lord. You feel bad that you ARE depressed and you don't want to be. But you probably can't "guilt" depression away by simply saying Bible verses at it. Although I have tried this... I am certain there are no magical or simple solutions to depression, and people testify to different things that brought relief. It may be a deep confession of sin. But it may be other things...

I was told by Dr. Paul Meier in seminary that most depression is caused at its root by HOLDING GRUDGES OR nursing DISAPPOINTMENT. That seemed overly simple at the time, and he was quite stubborn in his insistence that it really IS that simple; but I must say that I have seen over the years that depression can often be tracked with some deeply felt resentment against somebody that has never really been resolved. Forgiveness holds the key to this. I am not saying it is *easy* to forgive. Not at all. But it is necessary. You and I simply need to learn how to *cut things loose*.

Someone says, "It hurts." I know. Cut it loose.

Someone else says, "They weren't sorry for what they did." I know.

Cut it loose.

Someone else says, "They don't deserve my forgiveness." I know.

Cut it loose.

FORGIVE. It feels good to forgive, and more it feels right... Jesus told His disciples that their prayer lives should include a verbalized commitment to God TO forgive, just as we are asking FOR forgiveness from Him.

***And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB)***

We also know that somehow, believers in Jesus Christ are supposed to be able to DEPEND ON EACH OTHER FOR SUPPORT, in times of trial and that includes times of depression. We need to be able to say that, free and clear—and not get a lecture in response. Depression is not exempted from situations where we should be able to help each other. And I think we're OK with this generally. More often, we just don't know HOW to help each other in depression. But perhaps it is when we are depressed that we MOST NEED someone to love us, hold us, listen to us, be patient with us, pray with us. We don't need a lecture and we don't need someone to put us on a schedule for healing. It takes as long as it takes...

We know that God wants us to have His joy. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit that Paul said were growing in the Galatian Christians, or SHOULD be anyway. God wants us to be strengthened and renewed over and over by a gladness that we know Him. And if we could keep our perspective about what is coming in the future, we would remember that gladness.

But most of this we know... And still depression rages in our circles and in our culture... I can only take you to a place like 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4. With all the things listed in that chapter, I want to ask how could Paul or any of those first Christians NOT be depressed? They had fear to contend with; they had few resources or insurance to fall back on. They were the first disciples of Jesus and so there was no prevailing “Judeo-Christian” culture to appeal to. They were apart from families often. It isn’t hard to imagine that the apostles had to fight depression frequently. And so Paul writes the Corinthian believers that ***Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*** (2 Cor. 4:16,17). Not losing heart, being renewed (we might say “rebooted”) daily in the inner man, realizing we are called to be a people who look at things unseen—a paradoxical way to live, for sure. These are the things that mark a Christian. These qualities stand in defiance of depression, I feel. We look deeply and honestly inside ourselves and say, “Well, I’m depressed. I’m so down. Things look so bleak. The cloud darkens my spirit and even my will to live... I admit that. But I will not be defeated by these feelings because I KNOW my outer man—including my sanity maybe—is decaying. Inside, I trust Jesus is rebuilding me. He is giving me fresh grace every day. I just trust that. And I decide to believe that all this darkness inside, is just so much “momentary light affliction” which will force my faith to a deeper level. It is teaching me that this life isn’t an end in itself.”

I think if we would organize a full campaign against two things, it would help. First, a campaign against “Fear from Being Open.” And second, a campaign against “Discouragement.” Now this would take a full effort, as a church. But if people could just be honest, and get a concentrated effort from the body to defeat discouragement, that might help a bit. Not that we would just have a free-for-all about depression. If you are depressed, tell someone. If you are in a small group, tell them. And ask prayer. Prayer is the last thing to mention today and it is important. Many who have been depressed, and recovered give prayer the credit. We pray when it is hard to pray. We lift up our heads and ask God for healing, relief, understanding if that is what we need, and patience. And we wait on Him. We ask others to just pray for us. And we ask again... And we keep asking. That in itself is a little step or exercise of faith, and we act like we COMPLETELY believe the promises of Scripture. And maybe we even make a little effort to rediscover those promises. Not the things that are difficult to interpret; the PLAIN promises of the word of God! And we CLING to them.

Maybe depression is one of the greatest challenges a Christian can face, in this culture anyway. And here is where we live. In 2007. We aren’t living in the Reformation or in the 1860s or in the 1930s. We’re living now, and here. I think some people are just called on to endure this epidemic and hang on; and they learn some deep lessons about grace and compassion along the way. But we must do what we can to ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER and to wait on the Lord. He wants us to take responsibility for ourselves, but we wait on His faithfulness too. And His joy will return, I am sure.

# Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General (Joy of the Lord)

Scripture: Romans 8:28-39

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007

PP 1

## ***All Those Other Joys...***

**Romans 8:28-39** (NASB) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PP 2

**Introduction** When you're a teenager, there is a special glee and mirth associated with that first moment when it strikes you that someone you, yourself are interested in, of the opposite gender has noticed you and likes you back. It makes you light-headed with happiness and even a little goofy, maybe. You can hardly think of anything else... ***There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the middle of the sea, And the way of a man with a maid.*** Proverbs 30:18-19



I know this differs for the father and the mother, but when that first little one comes into your family and you realize that you made this person, and they are part of each of you and you get to keep it! It is wonderment and pure joy! ***But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.*** Luke 2:19

PP 3

You wait so long and labor week after week for months maybe years, and finally the team you love wins a big game! Fabulous happiness and excitement—you feel such pride! ***And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued***

***the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. 1 Samuel 17:52***

Finally, you manage to put together the time and the money for your dream trip. And the day comes and you get on that plane—you are so excited and anticipating of the fun and coolness of going some place you have want to go for a long time. It's a great feeling!!! [pic of Masada]



PP 4

When you have interviewed for a job that you really want, perhaps endured *multiple* interviews and then you get a phone call or an e-mail with an offer for the job, it is a great feeling! ***There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. Ecclesiastes 2:24***

PP 5

I have only experienced it once, but the feeling I had in January of 1975 when I asked Renée to marry me and she said, “Yes” was wonderful. No feeling like it when you're young and you know someone loves you! ***I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine...Song of Solomon 6:3a Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. Proverbs 5:18***

You are sent for medical testing. When the doctor calls you up or counsels with you in his office, and says, “Well, you are cancer free,” it is a tremendous feeling of relief. The worry just drains right out of you. ***And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. Acts 3:8***

There is a unique happiness to closing on your home, driving home a new vehicle, and perhaps in the acquisition of some other possession, that gives you a great lift and you feel such happiness at getting something wonderful and new. ***And Solomon amassed chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots, and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 1:14 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. 1 Samuel 18:4***

Life is marked by ALL THESE JOYS and we love them and we work to sustain the great feeling of those joys as long as we can... But they are joys of THIS WORLD. And all these other joys fade, and slip away.

PP 6

- Mr. Wonderful or Miss Wonderful turn out to be less than perfect
- The baby turns into a two-year old
- Your team loses their next four games in a row
- The trip costs you more than you thought it would
- The new job involves working with some people you don't like too much
- Engagement, assuming you got to the wedding, results in 45% divorce rate
- The cancer returns
- New possessions get dings in them, or start to wear out

And do you know that some poor folks go through life with none of those joys or few of them.

So as Christians we are not really driven by these joys. We appreciate them and we consider such joys worthy of giving God thanks for them when they DO come our way but they are not the purpose of life. What IS the purpose of life? Why DO we *live and breathe and move and play fantasy football and marry and buy Hondas and go to college and learn a trade and mow the grass and celebrate birthdays and pay our taxes and recycle our recyclables and take our vitamins and do church and play ultimate Frisbee?* IS IT JUST TO SURVIVE AND MAXIMIZE PLEASURE AND MINIMIZE PAIN?

PP 7

Once again, I refer you to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1648) which I think is a good document. **Q: What is the chief end of man? A: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

PP 8

We have tried to say recently that the joy of the Lord is a thing which is normal in heaven. Among the inhabitants and within the godhead (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) there is always a sharply focused and pure and holy joyfulness and gladness. A little of that trickles down the creeks and hillsides from heaven to God's children here—to Christians, when they find Christ and while they walk with Him here, by faith, yet invisibly. God ignites some of His joy in us while we're still here. He wants us to start feeling here, what they feel there. He equips us for that—by His Spirit. We catch a glimpse now and then. We feel it for a few minutes here and there, and He wants us to nurture a sense of His gladness more and more as we grow in Him. We should be a joyful people!

And I want you to appreciate the basis for feeling happy as a Christian, for being GLAD you're a believer in Jesus Christ! Consider then this passage in Romans 8...

First, in verse 28 we have this foundation to all of life that says—according to Paul at least—that God causes everything that happens to have a purpose, even if we can't see it at the time. We can go through ALL of life with that underlying assumption. Because we are Christians.

Second, as believers we have been marvelously set up for that. I have never understood why some people are threatened by the idea of God predestining stuff and people. Paul says we who are Christians have been foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified—those five actions done by God on us.

It means, thirdly, that God is FOR US. He is on our side. And if HE is on our side, does it matter who's on the other side? Who can stand against us, Paul says, and who can accuse us?

PP 9

And you have to be intrigued with verse 32: ***He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not freely give us all things?*** All things that we might get, and that would exclude nothing good, are but a pittance compared to Christ, whom we have by grace. But I am looking forward to all things. I need anything God would offer to me.

Last, we have an inseparable love. We cannot be cut off from it, we cannot lose it, we cannot become unlovable by Him. ***But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** Romans 8:37-39

The Christian, unique in this world, goes from day to day with this in his or her heart. No Muslim, no matter how zealous, can claim this. No Buddhist no matter how serene they might look has this assurance. And no regular, run of the mill merely Protestant or default Catholic has any conception of what we have unless by His grace they really know the Savior. These are the confidences of the foreknown, predestined, called and justified man and woman, who will be glorified in His plan at just the right time.

PP 10

We have much to be glad about, if we are Christians. All those other joys are important and pleasurable but they are shallow really, compared to what we own in Christ!