

joy is characteristic of Christianity; but it cannot just be turned on at will. Joy is based on knowledge, knowing for example that God has forgiven us all our sins. There is nothing so satisfying as a guilty conscience; but a Christian knows that his sins have been forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake. Jesus bore our sins on the cross and God has said that he has our sins behind His back. (1st. 3:17) that He has blotted them out through His blood. (1st. 1:17) as if we had never sinned. They are no longer present to Him and as they do not any more, why with Him is Jesus in our hearts. When we realize that God forgives us completely for Christ's sake when we ask Him for this forgiveness, and make Jesus our Lord and savior, there comes a peace to our conscience and joy to our hearts. The joy of God's forgiveness. Have you ever longed for that peace and joy?

JOY

Another source of Christian joy is fellowship with God. When God gives His Spirit to us, we have personal fellowship with Him. This fellowship is a real and joyful experience. There is a third ground for Christian joy and that is the knowledge about our future which God's word gives us. This future is based on God's promises and clearly revealed intentions of salvation and blessing. (1st. 1:17) told His disciples (who were rejoicing in the successful results of their preaching) not to rejoice in that, for the real ground of their rejoicing should be in the fact that God had forgiven them a sin. He said, "Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." There are numerous references in the New Testament to this joy that Christians have as they consider God's glorious provision for all who put their faith in Christ, even in promises there is an underlying joy. Are you conscious of it? You

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"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

Joy is characteristic of Christianity; but it cannot just be turned on at will. Joy is based on knowledge, knowing for example that God has forgiven us all our sins. There is nothing so nagging as a guilty conscience; but a Christian knows that his sins have been forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake. Jesus bore our sins on the cross and God has said that He has put our sins behind His back, (Is. 38:17) that He has blotted them out as though with a thick cloud, (Is. 44:22) so that He no longer sees them. They are no longer present to Him and so they do not mar our fellowship with Him if Jesus is our Lord. When we realise that God forgives us completely for Christ's sake when we ask Him for this forgiveness, and make Jesus our Lord and boss, there comes a peace to our conscience and joy to our hearts. The joy of God's forgiveness. Have you experienced it? Make Jesus Lord.

Another source of Christian joy is fellowship with God. When we are forgiven God's Spirit is in our hearts and we have personal fellowship with Him. This fellowship is a real and joyful experience. There is a third ground for Christian joy and that is the knowledge about our future which God's word gives us. This future is based on God's promised and clearly revealed intentions of salvation and blessing. Thus Jesus in Luke 10:27 told His disciples (who were rejoicing in the successful results of their preaching) not to rejoice in that, for the real ground of their rejoicing should be in the fact that God had for them a sure blessing in the future. He said "Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven". There are numerous references in the New Testament to this joy that Christians have as they contemplate God's glorious provision for all who put their faith in Christ; even in troubles there is an underlying joy. Are you conscious of it? You

should be if you are a Christian. So lift up your head and remember and think about and rejoice in the heavenly blessing that God has for you.

Christian joy is based on the knowledge of God's goodness in forgiveness and fellowship with Him and in His future purposes for us. But if we forget these things or if our knowledge is defective it is not surprising that the joy evaporates. For example, one of the most important doctrines is that Christ is Lord over everything. If we do not realise that God controls everything in our life and that He controls everything for good, we may well become overwhelmed by events. So true doctrine is the ground for Christian joy, because the source of Christian joy is not the events of life so much as the underlying attitude which springs from knowledge of God's purposes which we obtain from the Bible and from nowhere else. So we need to correct and fill out our knowledge of God from the Bible, if we are to "rejoice in the Lord always".

I may illustrate this from the doctrine of purgatory taught in the Roman Catholic Church. At death the Christian enters into the joy of his Lord. Fortunately the Bible knows nothing of the doctrine of Purgatory. There is not a word about it in either the Old or the New Testaments. Indeed the New Testament excludes the possibility of purgatory. In Revelation 13 we read "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, for they rest from their labours".

If then we are to follow the Bible's call to rejoice in the Lord so that our Christian life is characterised by joy, it is very important that our knowledge of God should be true; for wrong doctrine banishes joy. But if our doctrines are to be true they must be Scriptural.

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