

Bethel Christian Church  
Agape Home Group

## *See How the Father Loves Us*

### *Studies in 1 John*

Study 3

God's Goal, Communion & Joy (2)

Brian Arthur

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

*These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. (1 John 1:1-4)*

We saw in our introductory studies that the two great foci in John's proclamation of the Gospel are communion (fellowship) and joy. But the staggering reality gripping John's heart is the substance and scope of this communion and joy. John has much to tell his beloved Ephesians but they may all be subsumed under these two great experiences of communion with the Father and the Son and knowing therefore the joy of Jesus.

***Vs. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.***

What are 'these things' who is the 'we' and who is the 'our' John refers to? We see later that John's letter is to all ages and maturity levels (2:12-14). So John's 'these things' are not just for the mature. We assume John referred to the whole of his letter. We must avoid the scissors and tape method of meditating on the Scriptures. The 'our joy' can equally be translated 'your joy' and begins with the Apostles but includes all Christians.

John's passion was driven by what he received from Christ. He knew the joy of Christ as Christ had promised (John 17:13). This is what freed his heart for love and ministry. **It all began and was fed by what Christ gave and continues to give.** As to motivation (worldly word, the Scripture uses heart), it therefore begins and ends with the Apostles Words about Christ and in particular his cross. "Only he who has progressed in the Gospel who reckons himself happy in communion with God and rests in that alone. He puts it before the whole world and is ready for its sake to give up everything" (John Calvin). "To the extent we are convinced of the total sufficiency and efficacy of that sacrificial death, we shall know a deep joy that no-one can drain, a full joy that no-one can quench" (David Jackman).

**What the Scriptures say concerning the Joy of Christ**

Sin did not just put a lid on joy it killed it. Humanity had to invent something else to fill the created need for joy. In the place of joy the Garden became a place of joyless fear and morbid anger resulting in murder. So Christ came into a human scene which had no true joy and no place in their world view that could provide it. He had to become then the Revealer of true joy and the Provider of true joy. The only true joy in sinful humanity is 'the joy of the Lord'. So Jesus had to assure his disciples that his joy would become their joy and that it would remain with them for he remained with them (John 15:11). The staggering depths of Christ's joy is seen in that it was in his

darkest hour that he prayed for the Father to make his joy full in his disciples, "*But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves* (John 17:13). No doubt 'these words' of Jesus still burned joy deep into John's heart. Not in some merely reminiscing way but because the words had actually delivered the same joy Jesus had.

We see in Jesus that his joy was the Father's gift to him. Not as a substance called joy but the fruit of communion with the Father as a human being. His joy was full, complete. What did this mean for Him, for us?

### **The Source of the Lord's Joy**

In his Gospel John revealed the source of our Lord's joy (John 3:26-35). Jesus the Son has the Father's love and everything the Father has (Vs 35) and Jesus has the Bride (Vs 29).

- John the Baptist must have seen by revelation the joy of Christ and thus his joy as the Bridegroom's friend was complete. Did he recall Isaiah 62:5? "*As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you.*" The continuing joy of Jesus revealed in giving himself up for his Bride (who was at best only mildly interested) must have deeply rearranged the experience of true joy for the disciples. As the Father's Son he rejoiced over the Bride the Father had given him. As the Father had always rejoiced over the Bride for his Son (Isaiah 62:5) now the Son enters into that joy.
- All through his life the reality of having the Father flooded each moment with joy. We cannot create this joy by any human method. It is entirely linked with communing with the Father. Communing with the Father meant receiving freely all the Father was to him and for him. That was what kept Jesus through youth, manhood, tiredness, suffering and the opposition of the masses.

This joy was his strength. Not because it kept him always beaming and bright but because it kept his heart buoyant in love, trusting in every situation and focused on the eternities. These are the blessings which he desires us to embrace.

- At twelve he knew sufficient of his Father's business for it to move his heart to express and revel in it (Luke 2:49).
- At Jacob's well he was revived as he saw the father about his business of saving sinners (John 4:32-34).
- After suffering great rejection he sent out his disciples. Upon their return he expressed great joy in the sovereign grace of his Father (Luke 10: 21-24. See too John 6:37, 38, 44, 45; 17:6-8, 20-26, Ephesians 5:22ff; Revelation 21:2, 9).
- Even the dread agony of Calvary could not destroy his joy (Hebrews 12:2). The harmonics of this joy can be heard in the words of his passion, "Father, glorify thy Son so that he might glorify Thee" (John 17:1), "Shall I not drink the cup which my Father gives me?" (John 18:11), "Father thy will be done" etc.

There was joy lying before him, as he hangs on the accursed tree; not merely the joy of hopeful anticipation merely, in the near prospect of victory, but the stern joy of battle in the hot and heady fight, as – true to the trust committed to him by his Father and loving to the last his own whom he came to save – he bares his bosom to the sword awaking in its righteousness to smite the willing victim. That joy no man or devil takes from him; the joy which meets the Father's just demands of a great propitiation. (John Candlish)

## The Joy Christ Gives

Remember John's emphatic revelation that Jesus came in our actual flesh. We can begin to understand why that is so important if Christ is to give us exactly what he knew and felt. If he was not exactly like us he could give us nothing of his. So the impartation of his exact joy in breadth length and depth into a humanity which knew nothing of it or its source is a supreme miracle. When by grace he takes us to his Father and our heart newly leaps from its binding chains of death to cry with him "Abba Father!" then his joy becomes ours. Reflect on the following common factors we now share with Christ and thus share his joy.

- **Unashamed brothers in the Father's House.** Jesus spoke warmly of his Father's house (as he did about his Father's business, his Father's gifts, Father's Kingdom, Father's name, Father's hand, Father's words, Father's commandments etc.). No sinner has entry or acceptance in the Father's house. We may only be taken there by Christ. We may only be shown by Christ how free we are when there. When we see him as he is then we will fully know how at one we are with him in the Father's house. Meantime shame and fear so quickly diminish what is already made so by Jesus. Total identification with him in his death and resurrection means we are totally identified with him in his life with the father. That he is glorified humanity assures us of our goal. (See again 4:17).
- **Receivers of the same Spirit.** Jesus joy was not the product of his divinity. It was not the product of a special connection with God that we don't have. His joy was the fruit of the Spirit and the Word (John 5:19). His knowledge of the Father and the great betrothing of the Bride was given and sustained by the Scriptures and the Spirit. In him the Spirit found a ready and fitting abode. In him the Spirit found ready acceptance. The Spirit we have received is the Spirit of the Son (Romans 8:8-10). This does not make us mini messiahs but it does make us fully children of God.
- **Sharers in Christ's destiny.** Being 'in' Christ means all that is true of him is true for us. By trust we take it that we are now pure in him, righteous in him, holy in him, adopted in him, kept in him, sustained in him. Being in Jesus means being in the Father. We now go into the world with Father speaking to us as friends and revealing all he is about (John 5:14 15). This principle of friendship is powerful indeed. Being in Christ we move into the world bearing all the covering and care of his sovereign Lordship. This means that like with Christ on earth there is no place we may go where joy is absent. So much for the friendless wastelands we so often imagine we are in. Being his Bride over whom he rejoices means we are sure of the consummation.
- **Bearers of the same yoke.** The yoke of slavery rubs and chafes. We were not structured to be slaves of sin. Sin has no valid (creational) place in us or the world. It is the ultimate irritant and allergy to how we were created by the Son for the Father. Jesus spoke of his yoke. His yoke was his Sonship. Sonship in our flesh and blood yet free from the self interest of sin or the self justifying of guilt. He was meek and lowly. Not as a religious duty or a religious badge but because that is the essence of God and he was made in God's image in the flesh. His joy was not deflected by meekness and lowliness but enhanced by it. "No true joy is or can be selfish. I may hug myself, and applaud myself and pamper myself...But I do but kick against the pricks. The task of vindicating my self-sufficiency and asserting my self-will... I soon find to be no child's play, but a hard yoke indeed, and a heavy burden. Let me get out of my own narrow self into Christ, and the large heart of Christ. Then I may have freedom, enlargement, joy as Christ had (Candlish)

Some are confounded that we are commanded to have joy. It sounds like the ultimate positive thinking trick, doomed not to deliver. But as we see the source of Christ's joy and gift of that joy to us in the form of communion with his Father then we must either obey his grace transportation to the new world of his Father or remain locked into our slavery to self pity.