

"JOY UNSPEAKABLE"

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I Peter 1:8.

This verse reminds us of that which many of us know from experience, namely, that the person who really believes on Jesus Christ rejoices with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." All of the deepest and richest things are unspeakable. A mother's love is unspeakable. Nobody has discovered a symbol by which to express it. It is unspeakable. A profound grief is unspeakable. Where is the speech in which it can be enshrined? A bleeding sympathy is unspeakable. It just has to remain dumb. We stand or sit with interlocked hands, bereft of all adequate expression. It is unspeakable.

The Greek word which is translated "joy" in our text is a very strong word and means exultant joy. The word "unspeakable" declares that this exultant joy is of such a character that it is utterly impossible to tell it all out to others. Everyone who really believes on the Lord Jesus Christ does rejoice with an exultant joy that is beyond all description. Others may have a certain measure of gladness, but the only people who really know "joy unspeakable and full of glory" are those who really believe on Christ.

Who is there among us who does not wish to be happy? Happiness is the one thing which all men are seeking. One seeks it in one way, and another seeks it in another way, but all are in pursuit of it. While all are seeking happiness, the majority of people do not find it. But, thank God, there is a sure way to achieve happiness and be unspeakably happy. "On whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

This statement is true. How do I know it is true? I know that it is true because the Word of God says so. I know it also because I have put it to the test and found it true. The person who really puts himself in Christ's hands to do whatever He wants to do with him will find "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Why do Christians have "joy unspeakable and full of glory"?

I. They knew that their sins are all forgiven.

How does a Christian know that his sins are all forgiven?

1. God says so.

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39). A woman who had been a terrible sinner came to Christ one day, washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. While men looked at her with scorn, Christ turned and said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:47).

2. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the fact.

While preaching in the house of Cornelius the Apostle Peter said of the Lord Jesus, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). When you and I believed in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came into our hearts bearing witness with our spirits that our sins are all forgiven, and that we are the children of God.

There is no joy like that of knowing that your sins are all forgiven and blotted out, and that God does not hold them against you any longer. David was a great

sinner, but God forgave him. David had so much to make him happy -- he was the greatest king of his day, he had a beautiful palace, great wealth and great armies -- but he wrote, not happy is the man who is greatly beloved by his people, but "Happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; happy is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

II. They are set free from the power of sin.

A sinner is a slave of Satan. Some slaves have had kind masters. Others had masters who were exceedingly cruel. It makes our hearts ache to think of what some slaves have suffered. But there has never been a slave owner who was as cruel as Satan. No bondage is as bad as being the subject of Satan. Some are bound by the appetite for strong drink and dope. Others are bound by a bad temper. Everyone who is not a child of God is a slave of Satan. When one receives Christ as his Saviour He sets him free. Christ said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). When Christ sets one free, he is free indeed.

III. They know that they are the children of God.

It is a wonderful thing to possess this knowledge. How can one know that he is a child of God? By what the Scriptures say in such verses as John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The very moment you receive Christ you become the child of God. Imagine how you would feel if you knew that you were the child of a millionaire! Your happiness, in such an event, would not even compare with the joy which comes with the realization that you are a child of God. And the glorious thing about it is that either the richest or the poorest can become the children of God.

IV. They are delivered from fear.

Rich people do not enjoy their riches because they are afraid that they will lose them. People who have all of the comforts of life do not enjoy them because they are afraid that some calamity may sweep them away. But the true child of God is delivered from such fear. The true Christian, who studies his Bible, believes it, learns it and remembers it, is not afraid of anything or anybody. He is not afraid because of what Paul wrote in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He also remembers Romans 8:32, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

A living faith in Christ takes away all fear of man. It also takes away the fear of death. A Christian knows that death is simply a departure to be with Christ. It is wonderful to be delivered from the fear of death. A child of God is also delivered from the fear of the judgment. To people who are unsaved, the judgment is a terrible thing to think about. But for those who are God's children it is not to be dreaded or feared. In eternity the Christian will be where there is no sin, sickness, suffering, separation or sorrow forever.

V. They know that they will live forever.

It will be wonderful to live on and on through the endless ages. God's Word says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:17).

Before one becomes a child of God, he does not give much thought to the future. After he becomes a Christian he thinks much about the future. I sometimes wonder how many more years I shall preach the gospel. I do not know, certainly, but they will not be many. Then what? Eternity! That will be better than preaching. It is a great joy to preach the Word of God. But it is a greater joy to know that I am going to live for all eternity in joy ever increasing. I don't wonder that God's children are joyous.

VI. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

As such, they know that they have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," as Peter wrote. It is nice to live here in the property which God has permitted us to earn, but none of us will get to keep and to enjoy it very long, for we must go the way of all the earth. But the poorest person who is a child of God will receive an inheritance that will last forever. We become rich when we are born into the family of God. Some people have a very hard time on earth. Their homes are not comfortable, but they will not have to live in them very long. But, if they have received Christ as their Saviour, they will go to a mansion when they leave this world. They become heirs of all that God is and has.

To those who receive Christ as their Saviour, and surrender their hearts and lives to Him as Lord and Master, there comes into their hearts a sweet and unspeakable joy which is far above and beyond anything which can be known this side of heaven. If you want darkness turned into sunshine, sadness turned into joy and despair turned into victory, then yield your all to the Christ Who died for you.