

# Taking Pleasure in God's Presence

By Josef Urban

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy;  
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psa 16:11)*

This scripture has been such a tremendous blessing to me and a wonderful promise and reality from the Lord. We don't need the things of this world to be happy, or the pleasures and pursuits of this life in following the things that the world takes pleasure in. The real 'path of life' is in following the Lord, and following the Lord means living separate from the compromised pleasures of the world and its system and being consecrated unto Him. In God's presence is not only joy, but fullness of joy! And we don't need to take pleasure in anything but what ultimately glorifies Him and furthers His purposes, because as we walk an uncompromised life in His perfect will, seeking His face, abiding in His blessed presence, we will find true pleasures evermore and holy, divine contentment in Him!

I remember before my wife and I got married. It was right after I was released from my grass-cutting job. I was staying in a dark basement. Most of the days I would be confined to the basement a majority of the day. She asked me, "Don't you ever get bored?" And I said, "Bored? No way! Christians should never get bored! There's joy and pleasure and fulfillment in the presence of God!" (paraphrased) And it's true! I would spend the days studying and praying, and would have such blessed times of fellowship with God that I didn't even want to leave to visit brethren and friends, I just wanted to continually pray and draw close to the Lord. The presence of God would sometimes come down so thick that I would be utterly enraptured in heavenly bliss, glory to God! There would be a supernatural fullness of joy and divine contentment in Him; even while I would lay prostrate on my face doing nothing but worshipping Him, there was a perfect contentment, peace and joy in His presence. There is no fleeing pleasure on this earth that even comes close to comparing with that glory cloud of His presence. And through that, the Lord taught me the blessed virtue of contentment, of being fully satisfied at all times in Him, in His grace, in the multitude of His tender mercies.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". He wasn't saying that he could lift a thousand pounds, or run an Olympic marathon and win, or anything of the sort. I know there's professional boxers who say this before a match and try to twist the promise of God to mean that they can knock their opponent's brains out -that's nonsense (and anti-Christian)! In context, Paul was talking about being content in every situation, even if his physical circumstances were less than desirable. He knew how to be content having much or having little. Even if he was in jail, Paul had the presence of the Lord with him - he would pray and sing hymns delighting himself in the Lord till the walls came crashing down, even in the most unfortunate of circumstances! Sadly to say, most Christians fail to experience the blessing of walking with God in such a way because they live a life tainted with that which is unclean, grieving the Spirit of God so that He doesn't abide with them in any sort of fullness.

Holiness is a blessed thing, and when we walk in true holiness (not Satan's counterfeit of legalism), we will take pleasure in God, God will take pleasure in us, and we will walk continually in His presence. Legalism brings bondage, condemnation and misery, but holiness

brings life, peace, and fullness of joy, because it's only a life of holiness that God honors with His continual presence. Holiness has become most misunderstood in our modern times and has become an almost dreaded word. Talk about holiness and people will shout, "God doesn't want us to be hermits! God wants us to enjoy ourselves!" Yet, if we are truly walking in holiness (separation from that which is profane and unclean, and consecration to that which is glorifying and honoring to God) we will not take pleasure in things which do not glorify or bring honor to God. In fact, the things which do not glorify God will be despised in the heart of those who are walking in uncompromised holiness, since they won't want anything to do with something that will grieve the Spirit. "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30).

The Living Creatures around the throne never leave God's side; they always say the same things for all eternity, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty", and they don't get bored or frustrated, they have the fullness of divine joy via virtue of the Throne (see Eze. 1:5, Rev. 4:6-8). If we are truly abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, living in His presence everyday, we will be content continually, fully satisfied in Him. We won't need carnal or fleshly things to bring us joy, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). If we are truly living the Kingdom-life and walking with a renewed Kingdom-mind, we won't need to turn to wicked TV programs to seek satisfaction in the things of this world (which in principle are radically opposed to everything of the Kingdom of God); we won't need to turn to petty pleasures and entertainments in order to be content. As a man of God once said, "Entertainment is the Devil's substitute for joy".

Why don't many professing Christians take supreme pleasure in God? Why don't they find joy in His presence? Ultimately, because most are false converts who still love the world in their hearts (if we love the world or the things of the world then the love of the Father is not in us -1 Jo. 2:15). But another reason is because so many Christians walk to a great degree in the flesh and not in the Spirit. This is why they can scarcely pray for more than ten minutes at a time. This is why they don't delight in studying deeply the Word of God. This is why they never spend time in solitude meditating on and delighting in the things of God or in worshipping the Father. Their flesh is dictating their actions and pleasures. The flesh hates to be crucified, it hates spending serious time in prayer seeking God, it hates the discipline of diligently studying an ancient Book, it hates everything spiritual. And because so many Christians still have a great degree of "flesh" alive and well in them, it is a great struggle for them to truly press in and seek the face of God, it's a struggle for them to really delight themselves in the things of the Spirit.

But when the flesh is crucified and the inner man, quickened by the Spirit of God, is alive and well, and leading and empowering the believer, it becomes a true delight to really press through in prayer, it becomes a delight to find vital nourishment in the deep truths of God's Word, it becomes a cry of the heart to experience God's presence as an everyday reality. This is why the more you pray the more you want to pray. The more you study the more you want to study. When the spirit-man is built up and becomes strong, then he begins to dictate the desires of the heart, and you begin to take pleasure in the things of God. As you take pleasure in God, and Him alone, He begins to manifest more and more of His presence in your life, and it is only in His presence that the fullness of joy is found.

The Spirit takes pleasure in the things of God while the flesh takes pleasure in the things of this world. So which one are you walking in? Which one do you take pleasure in? Dear Christian, the

truth is clear. If you sow to the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. Most Christians spend so much time feeding the flesh, eating, drinking, entertaining, fulfilling it, even in “lawful” things, and only a miniscule amount of time sowing to the Spirit, so which one is going to be the strongest? Yet, if you habitually, continually sow to the Spirit, your spiritual man will be strong, and you will of the Spirit reap life everlasting. In fact, don’t expect to reap such eternal life in the blessed Kingdom of God unless you are sowing to the Spirit and walking in the Spirit regularly (see Rom. 8). A true Christian is nothing less than one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, which is the greatest commandment, and what one loves, one inevitably takes pleasure in. Do you take pleasure in God? Or do you prostitute yourself and play the harlot, committing adultery on God by seeking contentment or happiness in the things of the world? (Jam. 4:4)

So some may be thinking, “I confess! I don’t take pleasure in the things of God like I should! How do I? How can I take more pleasure in God? Where do I start?” Dear reader, it all starts at the cross. Get back to the cross! The flesh that is still dictating your desires needs to mount up on that bloody cross and be staked through with the nails of mortification. It’ll kick and scream all the way, no doubt, but it needs to be put down and silenced. Keep pounding on those nails till the flesh is thoroughly subdued and held captive to the cross. Everything in your life you know to be compromised, that you know God does not delight in, should be put away. No self-justifications allowed. If it’s against the principles of Scripture, or you know in your heart it does not glorify God, get rid of it! If it’s questionable, get rid of it! Anything that hinders you from having an absolutely pure conscience needs to be dealt with and crucified. Let the cross have its thorough work because it’s only at the cross where you can begin to fellowship with Christ.

Then call on the name of the Lord! Cry out for God’s presence in your life. Start spending serious time in fervent prayer before the Throne, beseeching the mercies of God to not only pardon your carnality, but to bless you with His presence and His fellowship; to quicken you by His Spirit with might in the inner man. Let the cry of your heart be simply to know Him more. Increase your quiet time or devotional time. Pray more frequently throughout the day whenever you can. Don’t dare say you don’t have time – you’ll find time for what you really want to do. And spend time in the Word. Read the Bible not as a chore, but to know Him more. Study to understand who God is, what He delights in, and plead before His presence that He would empower you to be conformed to the image of His Son. Lay hold of the promises of God in the Bible and pray them into fulfillment in your life. Study to show thyself approved unto God.

Another way to break through the barrier of carnality into the realm of the Spirit is by setting aside a determined amount of time to seek God through fasting and prayer. Take a day, two days, three days, or a week, and abstain from solid food, spend the bulk of the day in the Word, in prayer, in praising and worshipping God. You can even use the money that you would have spent on food to donate to poor brethren or to missions. This is always beneficial and edifying to the Spirit. But be alert that whatever level of fellowship you experience when in such a season of seeking, to walk in it continually afterwards and not to fall back into your old pattern of living. When done with pure motives, this is a tremendous way to experience major breakthroughs in the Spirit, and could very well revolutionize your whole Christian walk.

As you continually crucify the flesh and sow to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit with a pure conscience, your inner spirit-man will be built up and made strong, and your heart will be continually purified by faith and the desires thereof will become holy desires, indeed, longings

after the fellowship of God's presence. Your heart will hunger and thirst for righteousness, and as you are filled with the blessed fruits of the Spirit, you will find true inward delight in God, and even be able to testify with the Psalmist, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures" (Psa. 36:8).

When we really come into an experiential reality of enjoying God's presence in our lives, and taking delight in Him, and not in the things of this world, loving the things that He loves and truly delighting in the things that bring Him delight, being filled with the Spirit continually, longing for deeper holiness, taking pleasure in the riches of His grace, then we will be living the normal Christian life -the life that God intended all His people to experience. I believe it is the greatest desire of God that His people should find supreme delight and pleasure solely in Him. Let us no longer take pleasure in fulfilling the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life, in the things of this world, but let us take pleasure in simply knowing Him, and being perfectly fulfilled and content in that alone. "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23-24).

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