

The Joy of the Lord

Part 2

Introduction

In the first part of this study, we looked at both the characteristics of joy and what hinders us from obtaining it. In this half, we want to see why God encourages us to have faith and is grieved by our grumbling and complaining.

Our Study

Complaining Indicates Self-Pity

When we fuss about a situation, we are saying in effect, "Poor little me." In other words, we're saying that God hasn't given us "a fair shake." And that's a slander of His character.

In Matthew 20, we read the parable of the workers who were all paid the same wage regardless of the number of hours they worked. In that culture, not working on a given day meant that a worker and his family wouldn't eat that night.

Along came an employer who was willing to hire them. Wouldn't you think the natural reaction would be one of gratitude? Perhaps it was at first, but by the end of the day, another reaction had set in. The eyes of the workers were now on their fellow employees. And when the landlord chose to pay everyone the same wages, the workers were indignant even though they were paid what they had been promised.

In this parable, God is represented as the owner of an estate. Pay time is Judgment Day. According to this story, Jesus says that God is going to reward everyone the same regardless of the amount of time each has worked for the Lord. Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?

Sometimes it is wise to see what our complaining is really telling us about our relationship with God.

Complaining Indicates Lack of Faith

The Scripture: Numbers 13:1, 2

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.'"

1. What were the Lord's instructions? _____

The men came back with conflicting reports. The first group reported:

The Scripture: Numbers 13:27, 28, 30

"[The land] does flow with milk and honey!... But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large."... Then Caleb silenced the people and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'"

2. What was the report? _____

3. What was Caleb's report? _____

The Scripture: Numbers 13:31

"But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.'"

All night long the two groups argued. In the end the Lord decreed:

The Scripture: Numbers 14:23, 24

"Not one of them (the dissenters) will ever see the land I promised.... But because My servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows Me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit."

4. What was the Lord's decision? _____

Because of the dissenters' lack of faith, they were sentenced to wander in the wilderness for forty years.

Complaining indicates that we lack trust in God.

The Scripture: Psalm 50:14, 15 in The Living Bible

"What I want from you is your true thanks; I want your promises fulfilled. I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you, and you can give Me glory."

5. What does the Lord want from His people? _____

The Scripture: Psalm 112:7 in The Living Bible

"[The man who delights in doing the Lord's commands] does not fear bad news, nor live in dread of what may happen. For he is settled in his mind that Jehovah will take care of him."

6. What is the reward of the man who delights in doing the Lord's commands? _____

7. Why? _____

The Scripture: Psalm 75: 6,7 in The Living Bible

"Promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another."

8. Where does promotion come from? _____

When we are not in the position we think we should be, it can be a matter of false pride, it can be God's protection over us because we're not ready for the promotion, or because God has something better for us.

Finally, Complaining Reveals What Is Really In Our Hearts

The Scripture: 2 Chronicles 32:30, 31

"[Hezekiah] succeeded in everything he undertook. But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart."

9. Why did God test Hezekiah? _____

Do you think this is the reason why God permits us to go through some hardships?

The Scripture: Matthew 12: 34-37

"Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

10. What does Jesus say about our words? _____

11. What will happen eventually? _____

12. What will be required of us concerning our words on the Day of Judgment? _____

13. What will our words do? _____

Yes, when we complain, we show our lack of trust in God. I frequently don't like what I hear coming out of my mouth, and I'm sure Jesus is grieved by it. Trying to change our words isn't really the answer, however. Yes, it's an improvement, but sooner or later on some occasion, we're going to spill out our true feelings and reveal the condition of our hearts.

What is the answer then? The only answer is a change of heart.

Changing our hearts sounds even harder. Yes, it is difficult. But when we have a heart that lacks joy, one that is full of bitterness and complaints, we need to exchange it for a heart filled with joy and pleasure in the Lord. God is willing to help us make that exchange. We need only to ask Him for a grateful heart and by faith choose to rejoice.

The Scripture: Philippians 4:4, 6

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ...Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

14. What are Paul's instructions to the Philippians and us? _____

15. How do we do this? _____

I believe that it is God's desire and purpose to create an army of Christians whose faith and trust in His character will produce a joyful witness amidst the trials of living in our world. I believe that joy will be our strength to overcome in impossible situations, great suffering, and deprivations of all kinds.

We, you and I, can be a part of the army, if we will let God have His way in our hearts and in our lives and choose to trust Him in all things.

The Answers

1. To send some men to explore the land of Canaan
2. That the land flowed with milk and honey, but the people there were powerful and the cities fortified and very large.
3. "We should go up and take possession of the land."
4. Not one of the dissenters would ever see the promised land. But Caleb and his descendants would inherit it.
5. Our true thanks, our promises fulfilled, and our trust in Him in our times of trouble so He can rescue us and we can and give Him the glory.
6. He does not fear bad news nor live in dread of what may happen.
7. Because he is settled in his mind that God will take care of him.
8. God
9. To see what was going on in his heart
10. They come from the overflow of our hearts.
11. The good man brings good things out the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.
12. We will have to give account for every careless word we speak.
13. They will either acquit or condemn us.
14. To rejoice always
15. By not being anxious about anything. In everything by prayer and petition we should present our requests to God.

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