

MY FULLNESS OF JOY

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

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:

but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. (Psalm 32:10, 11)

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. (Luke 6:22, 23)

As I review the years of my life, I search for *My Fullness of Joy* along the way. Let me begin from my earliest memories.

My biological father—my daddy, was a pilot. When I was very young, I recall anticipating his return home from a day or series of days of work away from home. Each time, before actually coming home, he would fly over our house, “waving” the wings of his airplane as a greeting in the sky for those he loved and wished to see very soon. The event was a cue for my mother who would immediately begin to prepare the family meal. Oh, how I longed to see his face—my daddy. And, I recall *My Fullness of Joy*, just to see him and sit with him for a few happy moments.

Because my father was so busy with his work, I hardly ever spent time with him, but in the recesses of my mind, I recall my great joy when on Saturdays, once in a great while, he would take me to the University of Tennessee football stadium to witness a collegiate contest between two colorful teams chasing after an inflated pigskin. Finally, because my daddy was a private pilot for the University coaching staff, I was chosen as a mascot for the team. A special uniform was tailored just for me, and I spent precious moments parading the sideline decked in a proud orange and white football garb, though my eyes could hardly reach to the level of the standing players’ buttocks. Then, on one occasion, I recall receiving a gift from a star player who caught a “touchdown pass” to win the game—it was the game ball. I suppose for a very young boy without any spiritual sensitivity, it was as if God Himself had reached down to earth and recognized me. “Recognition!” Yes, that is what the flesh enjoys, for “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9)

After the parting of my mother from our home via divorce, I was taken to southern Alabama to live near Fort Rucker. There, my father worked as a civil service flight instructor for the US Army. In those days, I experienced a fair amount of autonomy, since there was no mother for my care. I joyed in the thought that someday I would play football dressed in the proud orange and white of the Tennessee Vols. I was obsessed with honing my skills of the game. I would frequent the sandlot where, after school, all the neighborhood boys would gather to play the sport. I recall being injured numerous times while falling on pieces of broken glass and the likes, but I would not “fail nor become discouraged,” because I had a goal. I was determined to be “a star” player and perform my talents on Shields-Watkins Field at Neyland Stadium in Knoxville, Tennessee. What a carnal joy it was to fantasize my future success.

Following the passing away of my father, I was merely an orphan boy of twelve years, though I had done many things that other children never dreamed of doing, such as flying an airplane and sitting at executive dinners in a full three-piece suit. In addition, I was somewhat of a “scholar,” maintaining the highest marks of the schools I attended. It was my joy to see a potentially bright future in this present world.

I remember having my first “sweet heart” about this time in my life. Oh, what a joy that was to me. I seem to recall considering marriage as a reasonable option at my young age—quite amazing how deceived

the mind of a youth really can be. Providentially, my father's brother, Uncle Bill, agreed to take me to Montana and raise me there.

God was leading me all the way, but I never realized His interventions. My ambition for a career in football was dashed by the necessity of orthodontic work, and for more than three years, I was required to wear braces on my teeth. It was not until my senior year of high school that I was allowed to play on the varsity football team. Having lost several years of practice, I was no longer the competitive and talented prospect that I once was. In fact, I had now discovered the joy of playing music and singing. My aunt—who became to me, *more than mother*, taught me the basics of musical theory. As the result, I began to excel in the art and won various accolades for my accomplishments. "Recognition!" Yes, that is what the flesh enjoys, for "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)

Even though I had been baptized by this time, I was not genuinely converted. I did not know what "death to self" consisted of, and I continued on my course of seeking *joy in the flesh*. There certainly *is* a joy to be gained in the flesh, but it cannot be a "fullness of joy in the LORD."

During high school days I met the "love of my life." Oh, what a joy! I thought nothing could exceed the joy of being "in love." This lasted for a number of years, and then came the Viet Nam War. I obtained scholarships to study at the University of Tennessee, and it was necessary to be "gainfully employed" in educational endeavors or enter military service. My first year of university study was quite successful, but I wanted to be near my sweetheart in Montana—I missed the joy of her company.

The end result of my faulty emotional decisions precipitated my forced enlistment in the US Air Force. Fortunately and providentially, I was selected for a special electronics training course which was to cost the armed services over \$25,000. Truly, I was a blessed young man and did not realize the leading of God while I lamented the separation from my "true love."

More than two years in the overseas region of the Viet Nam War served to ruin what little character and integrity I had built through the former years of training with my daddy, and then with my aunt in Montana. My fiancé in Montana was no longer committed to me, and I judged myself unworthy of any favors from God. My life had become a dreadful shipwreck of depression and alcohol consumption.

Years passed, and I settled down to a job at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. My excellent scholarship and electronics training from the military were sufficient to land me the high-paying employment. My joy began to increase again, and I enjoyed the "things of this world" to a comfortable level. But, "**A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.**" (Luke 12:15b) How many times in one's life must that truth be brought home? It seems that humans learn their lessons very slowly.

My next joy was the birth of a son in 1971. Looking back, I would say he became my cherished idol. One might even say I worshipped the ground he walked on. Certainly, I possess sweet memories of being with him during his first six years of life, until I lost custody in court. Bitterness set in once again, and it seemed to me that joy would always escape like a bird flying away from my grasp.

At a very critical point in my life, in the year 1974, I became baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Oh, what a joy! To be a member of "God's true church" was truly a joy to me. By this juncture in the essay, you may have already noticed the tendency of my past life—living on highs and lows, ups and downs. And, eventually, I was voluntarily committed to a mental hospital where my diagnosis was "bipolar disease." Another term for the affliction is "manic-depressive syndrome." So, I spent a goodly stint there being exposed to other persons suffering from their loss of joy.

While I was residing at the private mental facility in Louisville, Tennessee, I faced myself like never before. I actually desired to commit suicide, but failed to muster the fortitude. I cursed myself and God for my condition, and I finally judged myself as a "lost soul." That was frightening, but I really did not know what to do. I had always found a way to cope through my many gifts and talents, though now I was "hitting the bottom." The Master said, "**Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.**" (Luke 15:7) I think someone was praying for me.

After my release from the institution, I decided to return to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to see what might work for me there. I have told my story many times before, and obviously I am leaving out a great number of details, some of which I have included before in other writings. To make a long narrative

shorter, let me say I was re-baptized into the SDA Church. I began to study the Bible tirelessly, and as my talents were keen, I learned much in a short time. It was 1988 when I began to receive *dreams and visions* which blessed me spiritually, but I did not understand the full significance until much later.

I accepted the call of God after struggling against Him twice. Having several physical health issues, along with a history of bipolar disease, I certainly did not feel qualified or confident to enter upon a special mission for the LORD. It was the *third call* that convicted and convinced me that God was serious and that I must respond positively or lose my soul altogether. Again, I was frightened.

Within weeks, a missionary from the northwest visited my area of residence in Tennessee, and he majored in the message of “righteousness by faith”—viz., “the faith of Jesus.” Interestingly, I had been focusing on that subject in my personal studies; so this was like another divine appointment for me. My joy was increased as I heard the message that was to seal the 144,000 remnant people written of by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. Without hesitation, I accepted “the faith of Jesus” as *my own* faith, just as it was being taught to me. I saw my need of the Savior to a fuller extent. I really needed complete victory over sin—a *thorough and genuine* conversion experience in my soul. I wanted to become that “new creature” that the Apostle Paul wrote about in 2 Cor. 5:17. What a joy it was to me! “**Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.**” (John 16:24b) I asked, and I received the gift of YAH’s Holy Spirit. The promise of Christ was for *me*: “**If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**” (John 15:10, 11; emphases supplied) This was the beginning of *My Fullness of Joy* in 1988 which has never ended to this very date.

All of my “dis-eases” disappeared within three months after making various adjustments in my life-style, including dietary changes. The Spirit of the Living God communicated with me to instruct me in the way I should go.

Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:2-7)

“For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)

With my health restored, I embarked on a ministry that would take me through many hills and valleys—towns and villages of different countries. I would “see of the travail of [my] soul and be satisfied.” (Isa. 53:11) I encountered sore challenges, overwhelming perplexities, fiery persecutions, and ominous threats. And through it all, I discovered the “peace that surpasses all understanding,” maintaining *My Fullness of Joy*, as I witnessed the Almighty Hand of YAHWEH leading me through fire and flood. “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.” (Isa. 59:19b)

Other “precious promises” from the Scriptures now come to mind. “But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.” (Psalm 5:11, 12) “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:13) “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:2, 3) “For the joy of the LORD is your strength.” (Neh. 8:10b) “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” (Psalm 126:5) “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:10) “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable,

even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:6-9) “And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.” (Psalm 27:6) What security we possess in claiming the “precious promises of God” implicitly!

Marching forward with *My Fullness of Joy*, I now face new challenges, potential perplexities, a fiery persecution, and the ominous threats from my enemies—i.e., my “former brethren.” I have stood in this dark place before. I have looked Satan squarely in his face, and I have seen those eyes, full of the blood of the saints, consume away in the everlasting fire of YAHWEH. “Perfect love casts out all fear” (1 John 4:18), and my love is perfected by perpetual obedience to my Father in Heaven. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” (1 John 2:5)

A prophetic message was chronicled centuries ago. It was written to warn my “former brethren” who now stagger through the many deceptions of Babylon, and for those who have “eyes to see and ears to hear,” it shall become a priceless blessing. “Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye [unrepentant “former brethren”] shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye [unrepentant “former brethren”] shall leave your name [“Seventh Day Adventist”] for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee [unrepentant “former brethren”], and call his servants [Creation 7th Day Adventists] by another name:” (Isa. 65:14, 15; brackets supplied) This is *a* solemn warning, and it meshes perfectly with the *most* solemn warning in all of the Bible.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev. 14:9-11)

“And these things write [I] unto you, that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1:4) “Having many things to write unto you, I would not [prefer to] write with [computer]: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full [together at the next camp meeting].” (2 John 1:12; brackets supplied) “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” (3 John 1:4) “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Phil. 2:2) “Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” (Phil. 4:1) Amen.

“Looking unto [YAHshua] the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 1:24, 25)

And for those of us who are *faithful unto the end*, we shall hear the most cherished and anticipated words, “**Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.**” (Matt. 25:21)

My Fullness of Joy remains forever, Amen!

Writing from the high desert of Southern California
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