

A Feast of Fat Things

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of joy, humility, and peace, trusting in God's goodness and sovereignty.

Scripture: Psalm 34:14, Proverbs 15:1, Isaiah 26:3, Romans 8:28, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 4:4, Colossians 3:12, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Christian Joy", "Peace Of God"

Description

John Hames preaches on the profound joy and peace found in the book of Philippians. He emphasizes the command to 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' highlighting that true joy springs from a pure heart and is independent of outward circumstances. Hames delves into the importance of yielding, gentleness, humility, and sweetness as traits that reflect Christlikeness and attract others to the Church. He also explores the detrimental effects of worry and the transformative power of prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving in bringing about the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

Transcript

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." -- Philippians 4:4-7

Some of the deepest, richest and sweetest things in the Christian experience are found in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. "Rejoice in the Lord always" is one of the highest commands ever given to a child of God. This means more than a camp-meeting blessing, bodily demonstration, or mere ecstasy, which soon passes away. The peculiar joy of which we are writing is an inward artesian well, springing up out of a pure heart! This kind of joy does not depend on outward circumstances, but whether we be popular or persecuted, it holds good! Some people seem to think a life of this kind is an impossibility, but if we live in Romans 8:28, it is easy to rejoice always, since we know that God is working everything in Heaven and earth for our good. What does it matter whether "flowers" or "mud" are flung at us if we are God's children and in the center of His will, for He will overrule all that men or devils may bring against us, and cause the wrath of man to praise Him! Joy, the joy of the Lord, arouses and quickens every dormant faculty of the soul, and brings to the surface the hidden gifts of the Spirit, until one stands transfigured before his own eyes. It acts like a heavenly wine to the soul and the tired body, and under its influence one goes forth

thrilled and enthused to carry burdens and lift loads under which others go down. Again, joy is attractive! There is nothing that will attract and arrest this pleasure-loving, hell-going age, empty the worldly resorts, and fill the empty churches, like Pentecostal joy. Let the Church obtain it, and the multitudes will flock to her doors.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." The best Greek scholars say the word "moderation in the above Scripture does not bring out the full meaning expressed in the original word; it has been translated "yieldingness". What a beautiful trait of character! It is Christlike to "yield" where there is no principle involved, and where we do not have to compromise to do so. Oh, the divisions that would have been avoided in the Church and the home if some had only learned to yield! It is the sign of a magnanimous soul to yield in order to keep the unity of the Spirit. Another rendering of the word "moderation" is "gentleness," which is not a bad word by any means. Gentleness is a refined, cultured spirit, where all roughness, rudeness and coarseness has been burned out. It is a trait of Godlikeness to be gentle. He never does anything in a rough, uncouth way, but often breaks the hardest hearts of sinners by a "touch of gentleness!"

The spirit of gentleness comes through crucifixion and suffering, and if we desire to possess this spirit, we must have the "Adamic flint" crushed out of us by the mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost, and submit to the refining fire through which every soul must go! "Let it be known to all men."

It should be known in the voice. When one is angry it will show itself in an excited, uncontrollable voice, whereas a soft answer disarms prejudice and turneth away wrath. It is impossible to make men believe we have the spirit of Christ, so long as we scold and rant. A gentle spirit is one that has been conquered, melted and subdued. One possessing a gentle spirit is easy to approach and live with, and is too great to do a little, mean, underhanded trick.

Another beautiful rendering is: "Let your humility be known unto all men."

Humility is a lovely, but rare, grace. It is one of the most beautiful graces implanted in the human heart. Out of the soil of humility will spring all the other graces of the Spirit. It is the very woof of the soul, and causes one to be little in his own eyes, and saves from getting sore or taking offense when overlooked and slighted. You can trace nearly all the splits in the Holiness Movement to the lack of humility and to an intense desire for leadership. A meek spirit in the Church or home is as refreshing as an oasis with waving palm trees and cool springs is to a weary traveler.

Still another translation for "moderation" is sweetness -- "Let your sweetness be known to all men." Let your Christlike spirit be shown in your life by a sweet disposition, amiable temper and a long-suffering that is kind. The soul is made sweet, not by human struggling and doing penance, but by the removal of the acid spirit, and the inter-penetrating of the spirit of Christ into ours, sweetening and transforming.

The very nature of the Holy Ghost is that of "Divine sweetness;" and if we yield ourselves up to Him entirely, He will sweeten us and dissolve our whole being in the ecstatic fire of Divine love. The sainted Watson said: "What is the sweetness of love? It is love made perfect, and filling, enlarging and overflowing the breast; love pushing its tidal wave up into the intellect and will, deluging all the mental faculties with its delicious current; love filling the tongue, selecting the fittest words, sweetening the voice."

There are two little words in the English language, if put in practice, as one has said, that will transform any life; they are, "keep sweet." Keep sweet when the pressure is on! Keep sweet when slanderous

tongues are wagging! Keep sweet when being misunderstood; for a religion that does not keep sweet soon grows sour and cantankerous. Keep sweet!

"Be careful (anxious) for nothing;" which is just another way of saying "trouble over nothing." We can not be at our best for God with a heavy, sorrowful, burdened heart. Trouble and sorrow -- that is, brooding over it -- seem to benumb the religious powers of the soul. If the preacher enters the pulpit brooding over some wrong done him, the mind becomes dull, the spirit droops, and the sermon drags. It is astonishing how many of God's children are worrying over some imaginary trouble. Satan whispers, "Your friends will go back on you; health will fail," and at once they see the poorhouse in sight and commence worrying and fretting. The devil has told many a preacher that if he preached Holiness he would starve. (Some are honest enough to confess this.) God is great and good. He is our Heavenly Father, and He will see the soul through that trusts Him if He has to rob Heaven to do so. Worry is a mental disease that sends millions to an untimely grave. It hardens the arteries, brings on high-blood pressure; it beclouds the vision, and often causes a nervous breakdown. God's remedy for worry and fret is found in the remainder of verse 6: "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known unto God." Not only pray over the big things of life, but in everything; the little things, the little trials, the little everyday burdens. This is not so much the petition of prayer, as it is the spirit of prayer. We are to live where we can get our prayers through to God.

But the secret of all this is found in verse 7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Not merely the peace of reconciliation, which is the result of pardon, but something far deeper -- an unfathomable ocean which nothing can disturb. There is a contrast between the peace we receive in "justification" (which is peace with God) and that deep, settled peace we receive in "sanctification," which is the peace of God. While the first is sweet and wonderful, it does not always abide. There are times when this peace is broken, because of the inward foe. But the peace of God abides through all the trying hours of the day. We still have the same devil to contend with, but something has happened on the inside that keeps the soul calm and sweet. The Psalmist had this in mind when he said, "Great peace have they which love the law: and nothing shall offend them." Whether noticed or set aside, appreciated or misunderstood, the soul refuses to be offended. It has caught a vision of the man of Calvary with a thorn crowned brow -- a vision which has been burned so deeply in his soul that he is not looking for slights and hurts.

The Apostle mentions three things about this peace:

I. It passeth all understanding. No brain is large enough to reason it out. The cold intellect can not grasp it. Some refuse to believe anything they can not understand, but there are enough mysteries all around us to swallow us! Rev. Bud Robinson says, "The Gospel train don't stop at the station called 'Understanding.' Brother, you will flag it down at the heart station."

II. It keeps the heart. The heart is a little world itself, with its affections, conscience and will power. Take the affections. They need to be kept in the right channel, or they will stray on forbidden objects. Numbers of God's people have shed scalding tears over failure to keep the heart and affections. This deep, settled peace keeps the emotions regulated, pure and heavenly. All pure emotions are constructive, and are health builders. It harmonizes all the powers and faculties of the soul until the dove of peace takes up its permanent abode, brooding, nestling and abiding.

III. It keeps the mind. How essential this is, as the mind largely controls the body. If it is given to fret and worry, it affects the whole nervous system. If we think kind, wholesome, encouraging thoughts, it has a soothing, restful effect through every part of the being. Gloomy, morbid thinking burns up more energy than hard study. This peace keeps the mind from worry, since we know that all things work together for good to them who love the Lord! It brings the imagination under subjection until it ceases building air castles and running off in foolish and hurtful things. Why worry? Thank God for the restful, tranquil, deep, settled peace that nothing can disturb!

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