

PP Proverbs: The Feast of a Cheerful Heart

Proverbs 15:13-17

March 22-23, 2014

Illus When Tamer Lee Owens celebrated her 104th birthday, she credited *"laughter, the Lord, and the little things"* for keeping her going. She still finds enjoyment each day in talking with people, taking a walk, and reading the Bible as she has done since childhood. *"I don't know how long He'll let me stay here,"* she said. *"I just thank the Lord for what He's given me already."*

Do you have a glad heart?

Not everyone does!

Wisdom would offer us the ability to have hearts that continually enjoy a happy feast in life

There are people who have a sense of happiness and joy regardless of their circumstance

What determines the difference between how we will live?

And how do we live life in a fallen world as if there was a continual feast?

Wisdom would teach us how to live skillfully in a fallen world, with such happiness that

PP 1-The Life of a Person with a glad heart

Our faces often reveal our hearts

***"A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed."* 15:13**

The first thing we should take notice of is again, the repeated focus on our hearts

PP Solomon has already taught us to ***"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."*** **Proverbs 4:23**

The condition of our hearts affects the quality of our lives

A cheerful face springs from, is the result of a ***'glad heart'***

PP Or, as the Hebrew word for ***'glad'*** means, *a heart full of joy that makes us exceedingly glad*

Then we see the word ***'but'***, and again are reminded that a proverb often sets two things side by side in either a contrast or a comparison

Here we see a contrast

A heart full of joy will produce a cheerful face, but a heart full of sorrow crushes the spirit, or breaks the spirit

So here is the lesson that Solomon will be teaching: How can we have hearts of joy, regardless of our circumstances?

Or, in the spirit of Solomon's teaching: *Wisdom would teach us to live skillfully, joyfully, in the best of times and the worst of times*

So how can we have hearts of joy???

PP First, let's see **The evidences of a glad heart**

PP a) A glad heart is evident to all

A glad heart is written on our faces...it makes a ***'cheerful face'*** **13**

So now we have the words ***'glad'*** and the word ***'cheerful'***

A heart full of joy will spring forth a face where the eyes are bright and the smile is there

Not the fake, quick smile that evaporates when the other person is gone, but the enduring smile on a face that is made beautiful because of it

We have two precious people in our church who have Down Syndrome, and you know what, I have almost never seen them not smiling, and when they hug me, which they nearly always do, their smile spreads to my face!

A glad heart produces a cheerful face, and it bears witness to the joy of the Lord

It is very difficult for a Christian whose face is perpetually glum to demonstrate the joy of Christ

And it is unhealthy for a Christian whose heart is full of sorrow to act like everything is alright

If you have ever suffered depression, or loved someone who has, you understand what Solomon meant by ***“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”***

17:22

Bone dry, no moisture, brittle, lifeless, joyless

There is a proven connection between joy and laughter and healing, and there is one between depression and sickness or being slow to heal

A joy-filled, glad heart, will be evident to others, and witness to the joy of our salvation

PP b) A glad heart endures in any circumstances

Sometimes a very long shadow of suffering can cast over the path of a person

Whether it is the grind of physical illness, continually straying children, or a difficult marriage, sometimes suffering seems there to stay

Pain added to pain

This life is full of suffering, and how we endure it depends on the state of our hearts

“All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.” 15

The word ***‘afflicted’*** refers a troubled and downcast spirit who sees anything negative as proof that they have a miserable life

It is the perspective of an Eeyore, where everything is bleak, nothing good happens to you

PP ***“Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.”***

Ecclesiastes 5:17

The one whose heart is full of joy, will not allow life’s difficulties to rob him or her of joy

It is with our hearts, our perspectives, our outlooks that we deal with life

If our hearts are downcast and negative, we will complain and see life as unfair and bleak

If our hearts are cheerful, seeing all of life under the control of our God Who loves us, then it will provide the continual joy of a feast

This word ***‘cheerful’*** is the same word God used in Genesis 1, when He pronounced His creation ***‘good’***

The ***‘cheerful of heart’*** are those who have a recreated heart, a heart changed by God Himself

PP ***“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”*** Ezekiel 36:26

How will God do this?

When a person trusts that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will take away their sins and give them eternal life, in that moment of faith, God recreates the heart as a home for the Holy Spirit to dwell

He gives a new heart, with a new disposition, to begin to hate sin and love what is right

To see life through new eyes, and experience joy to new heights

A new heart that is to pump joy, peace, and hope through our spiritual veins so that we will say with James:

PP *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* James 1:2-4

The cheerful of heart sees life as under the control of God, as purposeful for our good, and that disposition creates the kind of joy that an Israelite had in one of their feasts

PP c) A Glad heart has learned contentment

One of the most impactful quotes I’ve ever read was included in a letter that the missionary Hudson Taylor sent to his wife: *‘We have twenty five cents, and all the promises of God’* That is a man who lived verse 16, ***“Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.”*** 16

When the heart is consumed with knowing and loving God, there is a fullness and satisfaction that doesn’t hunger for lesser things

Discontent is strengthened when our hearts are consumed with the world’s goods, which is like eating Chinese food: You get full quickly, but soon you’re hungry again

A discontented person looks at the gifts that God has given and says, *‘Not enough’*

PP *“The leech has two daughters: Give and Give.”* Proverbs 30:15

It was discontentment that moved Eve to eat the fruit and betray God

It was discontentment that moved Cain to murder his brother Abel

Discontent weaves through anger, envy and jealousy, coveting, selfish ambition, critical tongue, and a complaining spirit

PP *‘Contentment makes a poor man rich, discontent makes a rich man poor.’* Benjamin Franklin

Discontentment finds its antidote in the ***‘fear of the LORD’***, that mixture of awe and adoration of the God Who loves us so completely and unendingly that we trust him with hearts filled with peace

Contentment fills the hearts of those who are satisfied with God

Discontentment slips in through the cracks of a distrusting heart: *God doesn’t know what I really need to make me happy; I know better than He does*

Think of the word content, and add the prefix dis, which means a negative, or reversal

The contents of our lives, are simply considered to be in the negative, not enough

Friends, discontentment is a cancer of our souls, eating away at the joy that could be ours

And this cancer’s treatment is the fear of the LORD, Yahweh

PP *“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places”* Habakkuk 3:17-19

To fear God is ultimately to ***‘rejoice in the LORD’***, to trust Him so deeply that your heart is filled by Him, and it produces an incredible mixture of peace and joy

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” 1 Timothy 6:6-7

If there is something we need for our true happiness, God would supply it!

It is crucial that you understand and believe that!

Solomon is teaching his son, what makes a person happy cannot be found outside of a person in the things of this world, but inside, from a heart that fears, worships, and adores God

Those things, ***‘great treasure’***, almost always brings ***‘trouble with it’***

So many people want to get rich, thinking that money is the root of all sorts of happiness

But money cannot make anyone happy, and cannot make the heart cheerful

But when instant riches are gained, nearly always the result is ruin, and despair

Time after time, lottery winners wish they had never won, for it ruined their lives

The desire for more, the daughter of the leech, is evidence that the cancer is in your soul

Apply the only treatment, ***the fear of the Lord***, and we’ll learn how in a moment

But first, the final evidence in our passage

PP d) *The glad heart will enjoy a life of love and peace*

“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.” 17

A ***‘fattened ox’*** was a stall-fed animal kept for the purposes of a celebration meal

PP *“And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.” Luke 15:23*

It was a luxury, even among the wealthy, perhaps something like a rare vintage wine

What the world cannot provide, though we clamor after it, is peace

In Biblical days, there really was not a middle class

There were the wealthy and the poor, and the poor did not often eat meat, but lived mostly on grains and vegetables and fruits

A ***‘dinner of herbs’*** was the norm for the poor, and a meal of the ***‘fattened ox’*** was only for the rich, but what good would that sumptuous feast be without love and peace?

These are true riches in life, and these are what we should pursue

Solomon is teaching those who lack contentment, worship and trust that God will give you all you need so stop pursuing the world’s goods, and pursue hard after love and peace

But how can we have a glad heart, which springs forth contentment, peace and joy regardless of our circumstances?

PP 2-The way to gain a glad heart

“The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.” 14

Friends, the danger for some of us in hearing this, is to think: *That’s it? This is the key to a glad heart? This is too simple!*

God’s ways are not complicated, rather they are clear and possible for those who are His children

The one with ***‘understanding’*** is the one whose eyes are continuously being opened by God

PP *“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.” Proverbs 9:9*

The wise seek to increase in learning and as we perceive and understand more and more of God's greatness our desire to know Him more grows

PP This word '**knowledge**' is not meaning information, but the ability to distinguish, to understand a matter; sanctified common sense
Understanding brings with it the discernment to see that what the world is offering me cannot satisfy my soul, but will instead leave me trapped and empty and desolate

Yet repeatedly the Bible equates knowledge with relationship, so that as we know God more clearly, we love Him more dearly

If you want a glad heart that pulses joy and peace and contentment regardless of your circumstances, then seek knowledge, which means to pursue God with abandon!

When I met my wife Denise, and I became serious about pursuing her, I began to want to know everything I could about her

Seeking knowledge is a core way we pursue people in a relationship

Those who are married, are you still learning about each other?

Denise and I usually go out on a date each Thursday evening and this past one, we spent dinner just asking questions of each other...some fun, and some serious

If our hearts are to be filled with gladness and joy that reaches our eyes, then seek God by learning more of Him through His Word

PP Jeremiah wrote that *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts."* **Jeremiah 15:16**

PP David wrote that *"the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart..."* **Psalm 19:8**

In contrast to the knowledge-seeking wise, '**fools feed on folly**' meaning they graze like a cow, eating from the table of the world

PP The Hebrew word for '**folly**' refers to a person who rebelliously rejects God's law
Fools reject God, not desiring to know Who He is, or what pleases and displeases Him
They will not satisfy themselves from His table, content in what He gives

The world constantly sends its advertisements to our hearts, to come feast at its table

You deserve this new car, and we have creditors, jailors to help you get it

We can help you get the house of your dreams, and all your friends will be jealous

Indulge in that illicit pleasure, there's nothing wrong with it

Turn back with me to chapter 9 and let Solomon show you this invitation: *"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense she says, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.* **Proverbs 9:16-18**

Friends, the world invites us to a *banquet in the grave!*

Yet the wise have before them the key to a heart of joy and peace and love

Amen?!

Pray