

# ENJOYMENT AND RISK IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

## Psalm 67

*God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us- Selah. that Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.*

- 1) **We were created by God to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.**
- 2) **We have been commissioned by God to spend our lives making others eternally glad in God.**
- 3) **We are called by God to cultivate a lifestyle that reflects our everlasting enjoyment in God by risking temporal loss for eternal gain.**

## Created by God to glorify God by enjoying Him forever

*"Your unfailing love is better to me than life itself; how I praise You. I will honor you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy." Psalm 63:3-5*

**The purpose of salvation is this – glorify God by enjoying Him forever.** We exist to make much of God throughout eternity. Christ did not come ultimately to make bad men better men – He did not suffer the pain and humiliation of the cross simply to make our lives here on earth safe and prosperous and comfortable – but to remove the eternal barrier of sin that would keep us from glorifying God and making much of Him eternally. That great man of faith, George Mueller, made it his primary goal to get his soul happy in God. And he wrote:

**'According to my judgment the most important point to be attended to is this: above all things see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you, the Lord's work may even have urgent claims upon your attention, but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all things to have your souls truly happy in God Himself! Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm and settled condition for the last five and thirty years. For the first four years after my conversion I knew not its vast importance, but now after much experience I specially commend this point to the notice of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ: the secret of all true effectual service is joy in God, having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself.'**

**Our joy in God is of utmost importance because it is the spring of sacrificial love that glorifies God.** If we are not happy in God – why would we tell anyone else about Him – or for that matter, why would anyone want what we have? Peter tells us to *'...sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you give an account for the hope that is in you...'* 1 Peter 3:15 If people are not asking you about your hope in God it may be that they do not see you hoping in God – it may be that you have not made Him the supreme object of your affection – it may be that you are not enjoying Him yourself. People are attracted to what they see making others happy. Elton Trueblood, the Quaker scholar, once compared evangelism to fire. **Evangelism occurs, he said, when Christians are so ignited by their contact with Christ that they in turn set other fires.** It is easy to determine when something is aflame. It ignites other material. Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out. A church without evangelism is a contradiction in terms, just as a fire that does not burn is a contradiction.

In 1991 a Gallup poll showed that 78 percent of American expect to go to heaven when they die. However, many of them hardly ever pray, read the Bible, or attend church. They admit that they live to please themselves instead of God. I wonder why these people would want to go to heaven. In fact heaven would be more of a shock than a joy for them. If we are not intent on making ourselves happy in Jesus – then what would be the point of being with Him forever, or for than matter, calling others to follow Him? If happiness in God is "of supreme and paramount importance" because it is the spring of sacrificial love that honors God, then the crucial question becomes how do we get it and keep it? Mueller wrote: **But in what way shall we attain to this settled happiness of soul? How shall we learn to enjoy God? How obtain such an all-sufficient soul-satisfying portion in him as shall enable us to let go the things of this world as vain and worthless in comparison? I answer, This happiness is to be obtained through the study of the Holy Scriptures. God has therein revealed Himself unto us in the face of Jesus Christ.'**

Happiness in God comes from seeing God revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures. *"In them . . . we become acquainted with the character of God."* Mueller wrote. *'Our eyes are divinely opened to see what a lovely Being God is! And this good, gracious, loving, heavenly Father is ours, our portion for time and for eternity.'* *Knowing God is the key to being happy in God. 'The more we know of God, the happier we are. . . . When we became a little acquainted with God . . . our true happiness . . . commenced; and the more we become acquainted with him, the more truly happy we become. What will make us so exceedingly happy in heaven? It will be the fuller knowledge of God.'*

### **Commissioned by God to spend our lives making others eternally glad in God.**

*'And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you always, even to the end of the age.'*  
Matthew 28:18-20

### ***We have no greater mission than to spend our lives in the pursuit of making others glad in God.***

We have no greater mission - we should have no higher ambition. This was Paul's great ambition: *"Now I want you to know, brethren that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,"* Philippians 1:12 When Paul wrote this letter he was in jail – his temporal prospects were dim – but he never counted gains in this life worth talking about. In jail he was not primarily interested in his freedom but in the gospel – this was the centerpiece of his ambition. He could have said a lot of things – he could have asked the saints to pray for his release – or talked about ways to get out of this jam – but his heart had been captured by Christ and the spreading of the Good News was more important than his circumstances. ***The mission that Christ has given every follower of Him is this – spend your life to make others glad in God.***

*A few years ago on the Live Out Loud tour of Steven Curtis Chapman, he was joined onstage by Steve Saint and Mincaye, his father's killer. Steve Saint spoke to the crowd telling them of God's love and of His grace and how the gospel can transform their lives and then invited Mincaye to speak. Mincaye squinted at the spotlight and dodged the microphone, but his small face was resolute. Mincaye shared a personal testimony of God's grace in his life, and, with Steve Saint translating, exhorted the crowd of "foreigners" to be God-followers as well. "God has scrubbed me with soap and cleaned my heart. It is not enough to have the grace of God for ourselves," he pled, "but we must take God's writings to everybody on this big dirt so that, when we go live in God's heaven, we will take many other God-followers with us!"*

The gospel is Good News! It is the proclamation of the goodness and greatness of God, of the utter depravity of men and the absolute holiness of God, of the wonderful plan of redemption by a God who sent His Son in love to rescue and redeem a people lost in sin and rebellion and hostility toward God and turn their hearts instead to everlasting praise and worship. John Piper wrote in *Let the Nations be Glad: 'Missions exists because worship doesn't. God's passion is to be known and honored and worshipped among all the peoples. To worship him is to share that passion for his supremacy among the nations.'* The gospel is the means through which God's purpose is made known. ***The worship of God is the goal of the gospel.*** If you say that you love God and that you worship Him, that He is your center and your ultimate joy – then the real test of your authenticity is whether or not your life is spent making His purpose known through the gospel wherever you find yourself.

### **Called by God to cultivate a lifestyle that reflects our everlasting enjoyment in God by risking temporal loss for eternal gain.**

Finally, we need to cultivate a lifestyle that reflects our everlasting enjoyment in God by risking temporal loss for eternal gain. *'But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death ...'* Philippians 3:7-10

We need to begin living lives that reflect our eternal hope and enjoyment in God and live lives that are not focused on the things of this world – and risk our comfort, our security, our bank accounts, our retirement dreams, our prosperity and pleasure in this life in view of the surpassing value and joy of knowing Christ Jesus ourselves and making Him known to others in turn. It is only by risking what we treasure in temporal things for the cause of Christ that we will prove the glory of His grace in everything – and will ultimately live lives that prove to be triumphant and not tragic in the end. Paul wrote: *'...according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.'* Philippians 1:20-21

Our living and our dying is only worth anything if it reflects the glory of God. If we delight in Him more than things; if His love is better than life; if we do not share the same values as the world; if nothing can ever separate us from the love of Christ; if everything works together for good for us; if every hardship is working for us an eternal weight of glory; then – we will count everything as rubbish in comparison with Christ; we will joyfully accept everything taken from us; we will choose to be mistreated with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin; and count the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt; and those things we sacrifice will be no sacrifice at all.

Festo Kivengere, a leading evangelical minister in Uganda, wrote a book called I Love Idi Amin. In this book, he described the history of the church in Uganda, and in the following excerpt he told of the first Christian martyrs in the nation's history: "Earlier that same year, 1885, three Christian boys had shed their blood for Christ in Uganda. The king had ordered the arrest of these page boys in an effort to stamp out Christianity. The eldest was fifteen and the youngest was eleven-year-old Yusufu. They held fast their faith and staked their lives on it, though people were weeping and their parents were pleading with them. At the place of execution they sent a message to the king: 'Tell his majesty that he has put our bodies in the fire, but we won't be long in the fire. Soon we shall be with Jesus, which is much better. But ask him to repent and change his mind, or he will land in a place of eternal fire and desolation.' They sang a song which is now well loved in Uganda as the 'martyr's song.' One verse says, 'O that I had wings like the angels. I would fly away and be with Jesus!' Little Yusufu said, 'Please don't cut off my arms. I will not struggle in the fire that takes me to Jesus!' Forty adults came to Jesus the day the boys died. This was a new kind of life, which fire and torture could not control. We have a memorial near Kampala where these youngsters are remembered as the first Christian martyrs of Uganda. By 1887, the end of the first decade of the church, hundreds had died. There were martyrs out of every village that had believers. They were only beginners, they knew little theology, and some could barely read, but they had fallen in love with Jesus Christ. Life had taken on a completely new meaning. The value of living and of living eternally had been discovered. They were not hugging their lives, but ready to give them for Jesus. During these dangerous days, there was an immediate and steady increase in the number of those embracing Christ."

Our lives are meant to prove the glory of the grace of God in all things. It is the way we prove that Jesus is the supreme object of our affections – that He is the goal of all our aspirations – that the invincible purpose of God in this world and our joyful participation in that purpose is our only ambition. It is living in such a way that we prove to a skeptical world that God is indeed who He says He is – that He does have the power to transform ruined sinners to the praise of the glory of His grace. **I pray that our hearts together would be ignited with a passion** for the triumph of God in the world – I pray that everything in our lives would testify that Jesus is more precious than life – I pray that my life and yours would not be wasted in trivial pursuits and prove to be a tragedy and not a triumph – I pray that we would be those who cultivate a lifestyle that risks temporal loss for eternal gain.

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*Our gracious Father and Great Redeemer,*

*May we be those who make it our aim in life to demonstrate through our lives that You are the chief object of our affections and more precious than life itself. Forgive us O Lord for spending our days in the futile pursuit of temporary happiness and self-seeking pleasures. We have not seen and savored You as we ought, nor worshiped You with the white-hot affections that You deserve. We confess that we have been lukewarm and half-hearted in carrying out Your Great Commission. Forgive us O Lord, and lead us into everlasting joy in You. Enthrall us with Yourself and break the power of all lesser affections. Be gracious to us and bless us and cause Your face to shine upon us so that Your name would be praised and known, honored and worshiped in all the tribes and tongues and peoples and nations of the world. What infinite cost, what great expense by which You made Yourself the treasure of our lives and our glory and our boast. You sent Your Son, so that we might waken to the joy of making much of You through all eternity. Grant Lord, that we might embrace any risk, endure any suffering, and forsake any comfort to make others glad in You as well. May we say with our lives and with our lips, **'May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of His suffering!'** we pray in the precious, life-giving name of Jesus, Amen.*