

The True Pleasantness of being...

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The true pleasantness of being a child of God is found in the forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal joy that comes from knowing Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 16:6, Ecclesiastes 2:1, Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 9:2, Luke 10:21, Luke 10:42, John 4:13, Romans 15:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Peter 1:4

Topics: "True Joy in Christ", "The Folly of Worldly Pleasures"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the true pleasantness of being a child of God, contrasting the fleeting and false pleasures of the unconverted with the enduring joy found in Christ. He illustrates how, despite Christ's sorrows, He maintained a holy joy, and similarly, believers can experience profound joy amidst their struggles. M'Cheyne argues that true happiness comes from forgiveness, sanctification, and the eternal nature of God's promises, encouraging believers to live joyfully and to recognize the folly of seeking pleasure apart from Christ. He warns the unconverted of the temporary nature of their joys and the impending judgment they face without Christ.

Transcript

THE WORDS WHICH I HAVE read to you, dear friends, from the sixteenth Psalm, are properly and originally the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." You will see this, if you look at the tenth verse of the Psalm: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This verse, as you know, is over and over again applied to Christ in the New Testament.

You know, dear brethren, that Christ, when on earth, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from him. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). And yet, brethren, it is quite evident that all the time of his life there was a holy joy remaining through him. Though we are never told that Christ laughed, yet it is said "he rejoiced" (Luke 10:21). You will find evident marks of this running through the Gospels, and more through the Psalms. So that, although Christ was the surety of a guilty world - though from the womb to the cross there was a crown of thorns bound around his brow, yet he had a holy joy; yea, even in his death he could say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage".

As it was with Christ, so it is with his followers. You have your peculiar sorrows, believer, that the world does not know of; yet you have got a calm, upspringing well of joy, so that like our Lord, you can say - "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Christ's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." I take those of you to witness who are believers and afflicted, is it not true, that for all your peculiar sorrows you have got a peculiar joy? Christ one day said to his disciples, "I have bread to eat that the world knows not of" So we have a joy that the world cannot ruffle. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage."

I would show you from these words the true pleasantness of being a child of God. I would show you: (1) That the pleasures of the unconverted are false pleasures; (2) That the pleasures of God's children are true pleasures.

I. The pleasures of the unconverted are false pleasures.

1. They are not satisfying.

They pretend to satisfy, but they are not satisfying. When the devil leads you into the worldly pleasure, he says, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:17). But when you come to taste the stolen waters, tell me, is there not something awaiting? Look at Proverbs 14:13: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." Ah! brethren, is it not so? You that have enjoyed most of the world's pleasures - most of its gaiety, is it not true, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness"? Is it not true that your lips and your heart are often contrary? Is it not often true that there is a cloud of sorrow in your heart, when there is a smile on your countenance? When you are in the midst of your gaiety is it not true, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness"? "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13). "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2: 1). "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Ecclesiastes 2:2). Ah! brethren, as long as you are unconverted, with an eternal hell below your feet, it must, and it ever will be the case that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness."

2. They are short.

I told you last Sabbath, that your being was to be eternal your history is to be for eternity. Your history on this little piece of ground is nothing compared with your history throughout eternity: it is like the tick of a clock. All the joy that an unconverted man will see is here - beyond is hell.

This is what made Moses forsake the pleasures of Egypt. He was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he had all the pleasures he could desire. The pipe and the tabret were in their feasts; he had all the company that the world delight in; but ah! Moses found out, by the teaching of God, that the pleasures of sin are only for a season. He "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11: 25).

O sinner, you have pleasure, but it is only for a season! O Christless man, you have pleasure, but it is only for a season! Look at Ecclesiastes 7:6: "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." You know, brethren, when you put thorns under a pot, if you did not know to the contrary, you would think they would last for a long time; but it is a bright blaze, and soon over. So is the laughter of the fool. Laugh on if you will; live on with your wicked companions if you will; live on without knowing Christ, and

without knowing the Father, if you will; but remember I have told you your pleasure is short; your candle will soon be out.

3. They are suddenly interrupted.

It is fearful to think how suddenly they are interrupted. If my heart were not made of stone, I could weep before you for things that are passing around us. Look at Psalm 73:18, 19: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: how are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." Those of you that are unconverted are standing on slippery places. You know when a man is walking on ice, his foot may slide, and he fall, without any warning. So it is with those of you who are unconverted. Your feet will slide suddenly.

One young man who is lying this night cold and dead, was once as lively as you in the world, he sat where you sit, until the world became too sharp for him, and he forsook us and went into the world, but his feet were set in slippery places. He could hardly speak to me when I went to see him, but he shewed from his gesture that he was consumed with terror; and then he said: "Will you pray for me in the closet, and in the family, and in the church?"

"Thou castedst them down into destruction, how are they brought into desolation, as in a moment." I tell you, if you are a Christless man, your pleasures will be suddenly interrupted. You remember the rich fool in the Gospel: "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:19-20). O unconverted man, where would you be, if God were this night to require your soul? "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20).

4. God will judge you on account of them.

It is true that every pleasure you get apart from Christ, God will judge you on account of it. Look at Ecclesiastes 11:9: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." God will bring you into judgment for every godless word, for every idle word, for every enjoyment and pleasure you get apart from Christ.

O brethren! is it true that you are living unpardoned? Is it true that you are happy - that you can enjoy social company that you can enjoy your games -that you can enjoy your dance? Is it true, sinner, that you are happy away from God, and thinkest thou that God will not bring you into judgment? Can you throw so much contempt on Christ, on his blood, on his righteousness, on his free offer of mercy, and think that God will not bring you into judgment?

You say very often, "What is the harm? It is a social company - an innocent pleasure: what is the harm?" I will tell you the harm, you are despising Christ, you are despising the blood shed on Calvary, and finding your pleasures away from him, and is it not contempt of Christ to find your pleasures away from him, even supposing your pleasures had no sin in them? I do not now stop to enquire whether they are right or wrong; it is such infinite contempt of Christ, that I wonder God does not open the ground where you dance - when you have your mirth, and let you fall through into hell.

I have dwelt too long on this part of the subject, longer than I intended.

II. The true happiness of the children of God

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

(1) I observe, dear brethren, in the first place, that the joys of a believer are true because he is forgiven. Look at Matthew 9:2: "They brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." The first reasonable joy that a sinner ever has is when his sins are forgiven him. You will not know true joy till then. You will not know solid happiness till the voice of Jesus says, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matthew 9:22). There is no joy like that of being forgiven - brought out of darkness into marvellous light. There is something very heavenly in these words. "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Those of you who have believed on Christ, you are forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Your sins have been already forgiven, as many of you as have believed on Christ. If you really lay hold on Christ, sinner, tonight your sins will be forgiven thee. Oh, brethren, this is happiness - this is the first sip of the cup of eternal bliss - this is peace: "Now the God of hope fill you will all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13). Oh it is sweet, happy, pleasant peace! "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

(2) The joys of a believer are solid because he is sanctified. Every one that comes to Christ receives the Holy Spirit to dwell in their heart. It is a question, whether it be sweetest to be forgiven, or to be sanctified. I would say it was sweetest to be sanctified. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." When a fresh burden of sin comes upon the conscience, the believer feels that he cannot be made happy unless he is made holy. I have often seen a young believer sunk on the brink of hell by the discovery of his sin. Who can comfort such a soul? I will tell you. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Oh these are sweet words to a soul who has begun to see the plague of his own sin. If there is such a soul here tonight, I would say, "My grace is sufficient for thee". Though there is a fountain of iniquity within that will never stop till you arrive among the blessed, never mind. "My grace is sufficient for thee." That is enough to comfort any soul. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

(3) Again, the joys of a believer are solid, because Christ will come to us in storms. Look at Matthew 14:24-27:

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

Brethren, this is just a type of the way Christ cheers his disciples through the world still. If you are Christ's, you will meet with storms. But, ah! at the very time when the storm is greatest, Christ comes near the tempest-tossed ship, at the fourth watch of the night, and says, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid". Ah, brethren, there is peace again. "Therefore are the lines fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Then again, we have true and solid peace. I can't say you will have no persecution. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But I can assure you of this, that Christ will be present; he is a "very present help in time of trouble" (Psalm 46: 1). Ah! brethren, I know it is so, that if troubles are in store for the Church of Scotland, that Christ's little flock will be safe. He will come at the fourth watch of the night and say, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." If the storm dashes us on the rock - the Rock of Ages, it will do us no harm. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

(4) But, again, the joys of a believer are solid, because they are eternal. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). The happiness of those of you who are unconverted is but for a moment. Your games, your dances, your social parties will soon be over. There are no games in hell. But brethren, the joy of those of you who are Christ's is for ever. Your peace will be eternal. It is like a river that widens in its course, until it is lost in the ocean. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Ah! brethren, surely that joy is true that shall never end. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). Every thing else can be taken away from you, your money, your friends, etc., but if you have once embraced the Lamb of God, you have that good part which shall never be taken away from you. You are chosen to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1:4). Then we can say without any fear, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I would have you to learn from this subject, two lessons.

(1) Those of you who are Christ's should live a pleasant life in the world. If it is true that you are pardoned - if it is true that his grace is sufficient for you, then you have good reason to live a pleasant life.

Remember how you are commanded in the Bible to do everything with joy. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). God does not love the service of slaves: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). God commands you over and over again, that what you do, do it heartily. If you sing praise, do it heartily. If you give to the cause of Christ, do it heartily; whatever you do, do it as one who has the Spirit of God. O it is a happy thing to labour in God's service! Do not do it with that downward look that the world have on a Sabbath day.

Remember that you are to suffer cheerfully. The apostles suffered with joy. You remember they had their clothes torn and their backs lacerated, yet they sang praises to God in the prison at midnight (Acts 16:25). Brethren, let us even die cheerfully. It is said of Stephen, when they stoned him, that "he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). O happy Stephen, it is more like a child falling asleep in its mother's arms, for it is said, "He fell asleep". And oh! how would his face shine five minutes after. He would forget all their anger; he would forget all their hard words; he would forget his suffering.

If we are really to sit on the throne with Christ, why should we be like chained slaves here? Why should we not rather long to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better?

(2) Last of all, learn the utter folly and madness of those of you who are Christless. I know that those of you who are out of Christ, think that it is we who are out of our mind; but if there is such a thing as truth in the world, I beseech you to consider whether it you or us who are mad. I believe that you have peace -

that you have joy - that you have pleasure - that you have comfort; but is it not true that you are an unpardoned, sinner on the road to hell? Your peace will soon be at an end; but ours is a remarkable joy, and yet you despise it.

Do you know the reasonableness of joy? We are happy because the louder the storm, the nearer is Christ. We are happy because we have got a happiness which God has. It is God who has made us happy. If this is madness, I would that you all had this madness. I would that this town had this madness. I would that the whole human race had this madness - then would the world be happy. Do not, then, despise this happiness.

Many of you who are sitting here tonight, know that you were never brought to Christ, never washed in his blood.. Yet how is it that you can live happy? Look around you, how many are dying Christless? Brethren, if you live as they did, you too will die Christless, and where he is you will never come. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-murray-m'cheyne/the-true-pleasantness-of-being/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net