

# REJOICE EVERMORE.

NO. 1900

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Rejoice evermore.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:16.*

THIS is a sunny precept. When we read it we feel that the time of the singing of birds has come. That joy should be made a duty is a sure token of the blessedness of the New Covenant. Because Jesus has suffered, we are encouraged, commanded, and enabled to rejoice. Only the Man of Sorrows and his chosen apostles can teach for a precept such a word as this — “Rejoice evermore.” Happy people who can be thus exhorted! We ought to rejoice that there is a command to rejoice. Glory be unto the God of happiness who bids his children be happy. While musing on this text, I seem carried in spirit to the green woods, and their bowers. As in a dell all blue with hare-bells, where the sun smiles down upon me through the half-born oak leaves, I sit me down, and hear the blessed birds of the air piping out their love-notes: their music saith only this — “Rejoice evermore.” All that I see, and hear, and feel, surrounds me with garlands of delight; while the fairest of all the shepherds of Sharon sings to me this delicious pastoral — “Rejoice evermore.” The very words have breathed spring into my soul, and set my heart a blossoming. Thus am I also made to be as a daffodil which long has hidden away among the clods, but now at last ventures to uplift her yellow lily, and ring out her golden bell. Who can be sad, or silent, when the voice of the Beloved saith “Rejoice evermore?”

Our apostle speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, permanent duty to be always carried out by the people of God. The Lord has not left it to our own option whether we will sorrow or rejoice; but he has pinned us down to it by positive injunction — “Rejoice evermore.” He will have this cloth

of gold spread over the whole field of life. He has laid down as first and last, beginning, middle and end — “Rejoice evermore.” Some things are to be done at one time, some at another; but rejoicing is for all times, for ever, and for evermore, which, I suppose, is more than ever, if more can be. Fill life’s sea with joy up to highwater mark. Spare not, stint not, when rejoicing is the order of the day. Run out to your fall tether; sweep your largest circle when you use the golden compasses of joy.

Some things being once done are done with, and you need not further meddle with them; but you have never done with rejoicing. “Rejoice evermore.”

Our text is set in the midst of many precepts. Notice how from the fourteenth verse the apostle packs together a number of duties of Christian ministers and church members one towards another. “We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” All these things are to be done in turn, according as occasion requires; but “rejoice evermore.” You have plenty to do; but this thing you have always to do. You shall never be able to fold your hands for want of some holy task or other; but be not worried; be not fretted by what you have to do; on the contrary, take up the sacred duties with alacrity, welcoming each one of them, and entering upon them with delight. Rejoice in each one, because you “rejoice evermore.” You will have to warn the unruly, and their rebellious tempers will, perhaps, irritate you; or, if in patience you possess your soul, yet you may grow sad at having so melancholy a duty to perform; but be not overmuch troubled, even by the grief of injured love. Warn the unruly, but “rejoice evermore.” Do not pause in the blessed service of rejoicing when you are called upon to comfort the feeble-minded. There is a danger that the feeble-minded may rob you of your comfort, but let it not be so. In attempting to lift them out of the waters you may, perhaps, be almost drowned yourself; your deliverance will lie in the sweet word, “Rejoice evermore.” You will lose your power both to warn the unruly and to comfort the feeble-minded, if you lose your joy. The joy of the Lord will be your strength in all these matters; therefore, “rejoice evermore.” Close at your hand will lie the weak who want supporting, and you may be half saying to yourselves, “We wish that all God’s people were strong, that we might unitedly spend all our strength against the foe, instead of having to use it at home for supporting our own weak soldiery.” But be not dejected on that account: while you are supporting the weak, still “rejoice evermore.” Your rejoicing will be a

great support to the faint; your ceasing to rejoice will be a terrible confirmation of their sorrow. Lend the feeble a hand, but do not stop your own singing. Does not a mother carry her babe, and sing at the same time?

As you turn about, you find all men gathering to hinder you, to grieve you, to slander you, or to make use of you for their base purposes. But be not grieved: put up with your poor fellow-creatures since the Lord puts up with you, but do not leave off rejoicing. As you are patient towards all men, let your patience have a flavour of joy in it: however great the provocations that you endure, still “rejoice evermore.” As it is written, “With all thy sacrifices thou shalt offer salt,” so let it be thy settled purpose with every other duty to offer rejoicing. I am sure, brethren, that we make a very great mistake if we get like Martha — cumbered with much serving; for that cumbering prevents our serving the Master well. He loves to see those who serve in his house of a cheerful countenance. He wants not slaves to grace his throne. He would have his children wait upon him with a light in their faces which is the reflection of his own. He would have his joy fulfilled in them, that their joy may be full: it is his royal pleasure that his service should be delight, his worship heaven, his presence glory. Let your hearts be sanctified, but let not your hearts be troubled. Amidst a thousand duties give not way to a single anxiety. While you are desirous to honor God in everything, yet be not overburdened even with the cares of his cause and service, lest you put forth the hand of Uzza to stay the ark of the Lord. The Lord forbade his priests to wear garments that caused sweat, and he will not have any one of us fret and worry about his cause so as to lose our rest in his own self. Wrestle for a blessing, but still “rejoice evermore.”

The command to rejoice is set in the midst of duties; it is put there to teach us how to perform them all.

Also notice that our text comes after just a flavoring of trouble and bitterness. Read verse fifteen: “See that none render evil for evil unto any man.” Children of God are apt to have evil rendered to them. They may have slanderous reports spread about them: they may be accused of things they never dreamed of: they may be cut to the heart by the ingratitude of those who ought to have been their friends; but still they are bidden, “rejoice evermore.” Even rejoice in the persecution and in the slander. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be

exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” So says our Lord. “Rejoice ye,” he says, “and be exceeding glad.” There is an expression in the Greek that never has been rendered into English, and never will be — *agalliasithe*. Old Trapp half puns upon the *agalliasithe* as he says, “dance a galliard.” I do not know what a “galliard” was, but I suppose that it was some very joyous kind of dance. Certainly we know of no better way of translating our Lord’s word than by — exult, or leap for joy. Even when your good name shall be tarnished by the malice of the wicked, then you are to leap. When are you to be wretched? Surely despondency is excluded. If slander is to make us dance, when are we to fret? Suppose some other kind of trial should come upon you, you are still to rejoice in the Lord always. The dearest friend is dead: “rejoice evermore.” The sweet babe is sickening, the darling of your household will be taken away: “rejoice evermore.” Trade is ebbing out, prosperity is disappearing from you, you may even be brought to poverty; but, “rejoice evermore.” Your health is affected, your lungs are weak, your heart does not beat with regularity, very soon you may be sick unto death; but, “rejoice evermore.” Shortly you must put off this tabernacle altogether! Tokens warn you that you must soon close your eyes in death; but, “rejoice evermore.” There is no limit to the exhortation. It is ever in season. Through fire and through water, through life and through death, “rejoice evermore.”

Now and then a commentator says that the command of our text must mean that we are to be in the habit of rejoicing, for there must necessarily be intervals in which we do not rejoice. It is to be “constant but intermittent”: so one good man says. I do not know how that can be, though I know what he means. He means that it ought to be the general tenor of our life that we rejoice: yet he evidently feels that there must be black clouds now and then to vary the abiding sunshine. He warns us that there will be broken bits of road where as yet the steam roller has not forced in the granite. But that will not do as an interpretation of the text; for the apostle expressly says, “Rejoice evermore”: that is, rejoice straight on, and never leave off rejoicing. Whatever happens, rejoice. Come what may, rejoice. If the worst darkens to the worst — if the night lowers into a sevenfold midnight, yet “rejoice evermore.” This carillon of celestial bells is to keep on ringing through the night as well as through the day. “Rejoice, rejoice, ye saints of God at every time, in every place, and under every circumstance. Joy, joy, for ever. Rejoice evermore. In the midst of a

thousand duties, amid the surges of ten thousand trials, still rejoice.” There is to be about the Christian a constancy of joy.

I am bound to mention among the curiosities of the churches, that I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice. Much genuine religion has been “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought!” Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy. They believe in the holiness of discontent, the sanctity of repining; but they recoil from grateful joy as if it were the devil in the form of an angel of light. One of the commandments of the saints of misery is, “Draw down the blinds on a Sunday.” Another is, “Never smile during a sermon: it is wicked.” A third precept is, “Never rest yourself, and be sure that you never let anybody else rest for an instant. Why should anybody be allowed a moment’s quiet in a world so full of sin? Go through the world and impress people with the idea that it is an awful thing to live.” I have known some very good people spoiled for practical usefulness, and spoiled as to being like the Lord Jesus Christ, by their deeply laid conviction that it was wicked to be glad. Well do I remember an earnest Christian woman who saw me when I was first converted, full of the joy of the Lord, and joyfully assured of my salvation in Christ Jesus. She seemed distressed at the sight of so much joy. She shook her head. She looked at me with that heavenly-minded pity which these good people usually lay by in store. It seemed to her a dreadful thing that so young a Christian should dare to know whom he had believed. If you had been a Christian a hundred years you might perhaps begin to think it possible that you were saved; but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ right straight away like a little child, and at once to rejoice in his salvation, seemed to this dear old Christian woman to be an act of such shocking temerity that she could only shake her dear head and prognosticate all sorts of horrible things. Since then I have found a great many like her; and when I have seen them shake their heads they have not shaken me half so much as she shook my heart on that first occasion; because I know them now, and I know that there is nothing in that shake of the head after all. The fact is that they ought to shake their heads about themselves for getting into so sad a state while this text stands on the sacred page, “Rejoice evermore.” It cannot be a wise and prudent thing to neglect this plain precept of the word. It cannot be an unsafe thing to do what we are commanded to do. It cannot be a wrong thing for a believer to abide in that state of mind which is recommended by the Holy Spirit in words so plain, and so unguarded, “Rejoice evermore.”

Oh, dear friends, you may rejoice. God has laid no embargo upon rejoicing; he puts no restriction upon happiness. Do believe it that you are permitted to be happy. Do believe that there is no ordinance of God commanding you to be miserable. Turn this book over and see if there be any precept that the Lord has given you in which he has said, "Groan in the Lord always, and again I say groan." You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that; but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you. He bids you rejoice, and yet again he says "rejoice." Some of God's sheep dare not go into the Lord's own pasture. It is dark and thick with rich and luscious food; and into that field their Shepherd has already led them. Yet they dream that there is a gate, and that gate is shut, and across it is written this word, "Presumption." They are afraid to feed where God has made the best grass to grow for them because they are afraid of being presumptuous. The fear is groundless, but painfully common. Oh that I could deliver the true believer from this evil influence! If you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, everything that there is in Christ is yours. If you are resting in Jesus Christ, though you have only lately begun to trust in him, the whole covenant of grace with all its infinite supplies belongs to you, and you have the right to partake of that which grace has provided. Jesus invites you to eat and drink abundantly. Beloved in the Lord, the only sin that you can commit at the banquet of love will be to stint yourselves. The feast is spread by a royal hand, and royal bounty bids you come. Hold not back through shame or fear. Come and satiate your souls with goodness. "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," for so God permits you to do.

But I go a step farther, and that is, that it is a sin not to rejoice. I will not say it harshly; I should like to say it as softly and tenderly as it could be put: but it must be said, and I must not take away from the force of it by my tenderness. If it be a command, "Rejoice evermore," then it is a breach of the command not to rejoice evermore. And what is a breach of a command? What is a neglect to obey a precept? Is it not a sin — a sin of shortcoming, though not of transgression? Beloved, why do your faces wear those gloomy colors? Why do you distrust? Why do you mourn? Why are you continually suspicious of the faithfulness of God? Why are you not rejoicing when there is God's word for it, first permitting, and then commanding you? Come, ye unhappy and dolorous professors, question yourselves rather than others. O thou forlorn one, cease to judge those

whose eyes flash with exultation. Next time that you meet with a rejoicing Christian, do not begin to chide him, but quietly chide yourself because you do not rejoice. As for you who are swift of foot, I hope that you will not say an unkind word of poor Mephibosheth, who is lame in both his feet, for he is dear to David, and he shall sit at David's table. But, on the other hand, Mephibosheth in his lameness must not grow bitter and censorious, and find fault with Asahel, who is fleet of foot as a young roe, or otherwise it may seem almost too ridiculous. No, no, Heavy-heart, chide not the glad. Glad-heart, deal not roughly with the sorrowful. Bear ye one another's burdens, and share ye one another's joys. If there be any chiding, let it be the chiding of Little-Faith, sorrowfully bemoaning his own weakness of grace. Oh that God would help us to be faithful to our own experiences: then we shall not criticize others, but judge ourselves.

All this by way of introduction.

And now, just for a minute or two, I desire to speak upon THE QUALITY OF THIS REJOICING which is commanded in our text. May the Holy Spirit enable me to set before you the select taste and special quality of a believer's life-long joy! "Rejoice evermore."

Brethren, this is not a carnal rejoicing. If it were, it would be impossible to keep it up evermore. There is a joy of harvest; but where shall we find it in winter? There is a joy of wealth; but where is this joy when riches take to themselves wings, and fly away? There is a joy of health; but that is not with us evermore, for the evil days come and the years of weakness and sorrow. There is a joy in having your children round about you; sweet are domestic joys, but these last not for ever. At the house of the happiest knocks the hand of death. No: if your joys spring from earthly fountains, those fountains may be dried up, and then your joys are gone. If the foundation of a man's joy be anywhere on earth it will be shaken; for there is a day coming when the whole earth shall shake, and even now it is far from being a stable thing. Build not on the Hoods; and what are outward circumstances but as waves of the changeful sea? No, beloved, it cannot be carnal joy which is here commanded, since carnal joy in the nature of things cannot be for evermore. I know not that carnal joy is commanded anywhere. Men are permitted to rejoice in the things of this life, but that is the most that we can say. They are forbidden to rejoice too much in these things, for they are as honey, of which a man may soon eat till he is sickened. The joy which God commands is a joy in which it is impossible to

go too far. It is a heavenly joy, based upon things which will last for evermore; or else we could not be bidden to “rejoice evermore.”

Again, as this joy is not carnal, so I feel quite sure that it is not presumptuous. Some persons ought not to rejoice. Did not the prophet Hosea say, “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast departed from thy God?” There are some persons who rejoice, and it would be well if a faithful hand were to dash the cup from their lips. They have never fled to Christ for refuge — they have never been born again — they have never submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, and yet they are at ease in Zion. Ah, wretched ease! Many are ignorant of their ruin, strangers to the remedy of grace, strangers to the blood that bought redemption; and yet they rejoice in their own righteousness. They have a joy that has been accumulated through years of false profession, hypocritical formality, and vain presence. Such as these are not told to “rejoice evermore.” There must be sound reasons for rejoicing now, or there can be no reason for rejoicing evermore. If your joy will not bear looking at, have done with it. If, when you run with the footmen of common self-examinations in time of health, they weary you, what will you do when you contend with the black horsemen of dark thought in the hour of death? The joy that will abide for ever is the joy to be sought after; but joy which a man cannot justify never ought to be thought of as enduring for “evermore.” Is your hope fixed on what Jesus did for sinners on the tree? Are you really a partaker of the life that is in him? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, it is safe for you to rejoice at once; and it will be equally safe for you to “rejoice evermore.” Is it not clear that the rejoicing commanded in our text is not a presumptuous joy, or a carnal joy?

Again, dear friends, I feel bound to add that it must not be a fanatical joy. Certain religious people are of a restless, excitable turn, and never feel good till they are half out of their minds. You would not wonder if their hair should stand bolt upright, like the quills of the fretful porcupine. They are in such a state of mind that they cry “hallelujah” at anything or nothing, for they feel ready to cry, or shout, or jump, or dance. I do not condemn their delirium, but I am anxious to know what goes with it. Come hither, friend; let us have a talk. What do you know? What? Is it possible that I offend you the moment I seek a reason for the hope that is in you? Is it so, that you do not know anything of the doctrines of grace? You were never taught anything; the object of the institution which enlisted you is not to

teach you, but only to excite you. It pours boiling water into you, but it does not feed you with milk. That is a miserable business. We like excitement of a proper kind, and we covet earnestly a high and holy joy, but if our rejoicing does not come out of a clear understanding of the things of God, and if there is no truth at the bottom of it, what does it profit us? Those who rejoice without knowing why can be driven to despair without knowing why; and such persons are likely to be found in a lunatic asylum ere long. The religion of Jesus Christ acts upon truthful, reasonable, logical principles: it is sanctified common sense. A Christian man should only exhibit a joy which he can justify, and of which he can say, "There is reason for it." I pray you, take care that you have joy which you may expect to endure for ever, because there is a good solid reason at the back of it. The excitement of animal enthusiasm will die out like the crackling of thorns under a pot; we desire to have a flame burning on the hearth of our souls which is fed with the fuel of eternal truth, and will therefore burn on for evermore.

I go a little farther, and I say that I believe that this joy which is commanded here, "Rejoice evermore," is not even that high and divine exhilaration which Christians feel upon special occasions. We could tell of rapturous ecstasies and sublime joys which, if they be not heaven itself, are so near akin to it, that we would not change them for the place that Gabriel fills when nearest to his Master's throne. Oh, there are times when God's Elijah, having brought down the fire from heaven, girds up his loins and runs before Ahab's chariot with a divine enthusiasm which onlookers cannot understand. There are moments on the top of the mount when Peter is no fool for saying, "Let us build three tabernacles." It is so good to be there that we would willingly stay in that mount and never come down again to the bustle, and turmoil, and sin of a guilty world. Now, you are not commanded in the text to be always in such a high, exalted, rapturous state of mind as that. "Rejoice evermore," but you cannot always rejoice at that rate. I have said that you cannot, and I mean it literally. There is a physical impossibility in it. The strain upon the mind would be much too great. We could not live in such a condition of excitement and tension. Sometimes we can swim in the deep waters; but who can always swim? We can take to ourselves the wings of eagles, and soar beyond the stars; but we are not condors, and cannot always fly: we are more like the sparrows which find a house near the altar of God. When we cannot mount as on wings, we think it quite sufficient if we can run without weariness, and

walk without fainting. The ordinary joy of the Christian is that which is commanded here: it is not the joy of Jubilee but of every year; not the joy of harvest but of all the months. "Rejoice evermore." No, Miriam, no, not always the timbre! Not every day, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." There is other work for you. No, Moses, not every day, "Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." No, you have other work to do amongst those rebels, quite as honoring to your God and quite as useful as writing Israel's triumphal hymn. No, James and John and Peter, not always on the top of Tabor. Sometimes in the house of death with your Master where the young girl is raised, and sometimes in Gethsemane to keep watch, if you can, while he sweats great drops of blood. You are to "rejoice evermore," but you are not always to be clashing the high-sounding cymbals; sometimes the softer psaltery must satisfy your hand. All days are not holidays: there was a day when Job lost his cattle and his children, and yet blessed the name of the Lord. All days are not wedding days: there was a day wherein Jacob cried, "All these things are against me." All days are not as the days of heaven upon earth; and until the day break and the shadows flee away we shall have to bear about a joy that is rather a lamp in the night than a sun in the day — a joy that gladdens us when we are cast down, rather than lifts us up to ecstasy.

I hope that you catch my thought, though I am afraid that I do but dimly put it. This shows you what kind of joy could not be with us always. The joy that can be with us evermore is a part of ourselves a power of the new nature which God works in us by his own Spirit. It consists in the great cheerfulness of the new-born disposition; a full conviction that whatever God does is right; a sweet agreement with the providence of God, let it ordain what it will, an intense delight in God himself and in the person of his dear Son; and consequently a quietness, a calm, a stillness of soul, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." This holy rejoicing is a drop of the essence of heaven. You have heard of "songs without words;" such is the joy of the Lord in the soul: a sort of silent song for ever sung within the spirit; a quiet making of music with every pulse of the heart; a living psalmody before God with every heaving of the lungs. I hope that you know what it means, or that if you do not, you may soon learn. This is a joy that has no wear and tear about it. You can keep from year to year the even tenor of this way; for this is the pace for which men's minds were made. "Rejoice evermore." You can live to be as old as Methuselah in this

frame; for this rejoicing will never tear you to pieces. It will conserve you, and act as the salt of your physical, mental, and spiritual man.

Thus much upon the quality of this joy.

Suffer a few words upon THE OBJECT OF THE REJOICING, in order to help you, dear friends, to indulge it. "Rejoice evermore." Wherewith can we keep this feast? What are the objects of such a joy as this?

God helping us, we can always rejoice in God. What a God we have! "God my exceeding joy," said the Psalmist. "Delight thyself also in the Lord." Every attribute of God, every characteristic of God, is an inexhaustible gold mine of precious joy to every man who is reconciled to God. Delight thyself in God the Father, and his electing love, and his unchanging grace, and his illimitable power, and his transcending glory; and in thy being his child, and in that providence with which he orders all things for thee. Delight thyself in thy Father God. Delight thyself also in the Son, who is "God with us." God with us or ever the earth was, in the covenant council when he became our surety and our representative. God with us when his delights were with the sons of men. Delight in him as man suffering, sympathizing with you. Delight in him as God putting forth infinite wisdom and power for you. I should need a month in which to give a bare outline of the various points of our Lord's divine and human character which furnish us with objects of joy. Do but think of him. Do but for a moment consider his love, and if you are at all right in heart it must bring unspeakable pleasure to you.

*"Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills my breast."*

Then think of the Holy Ghost, and rejoice in him as dwelling in you, quickening you, comforting you, illuminating you, and abiding with you for ever. Think of the triune God, and be blest.

Then muse upon the covenant of grace; think of redemption by blood; think of divine sovereignty and all that has come of it in the form of grace to men. Think of thy effectual calling, thy justification, thy acceptance in the Beloved. Think of thy final perseverance. Think of thy union with the glorious person of the Well-beloved, and of all the life and all the glory that is wrapped up in that surpassing truth. "Rejoice evermore." With such a God you have always a source of joy.

I believe, dear friends, that if we are right-minded every doctrine of the gospel will make us glad, every promise of the gospel will make us glad, every precept of the gospel will make us glad. If you were to go over a list of all the privileges that belong to the people of God, you might pause over each one, and say, "I could rejoice evermore in this if I had nothing else." If ever you fail to rejoice, permit me to exhort you to arouse each one of the graces of the Spirit to its most active exercise. Begin with the first of them — faith. Believe, and as you believe this and that out of the ten thousand blessings which God has promised, joy will spring up in your soul. Have you exercised faith? then lead out the sister grace of hope. Begin hoping for the resurrection, hoping for the second coming, hoping for the glory which is then to be revealed. What sources of joy are these! When you have indulged hope, then go on to love, and let this fairest of the heavenly sisters point you to the way of joy. Go on to love God more and more, and to love his people, and to love poor sinners; and, as you love, you will not fail to rejoice, for joy is born of love! Love has on her left hand sorrow for the griefs of those she loves, but at her right hand a holy joy in the very fact of loving her fellows; for he that loves doeth a joyful thing. If you cannot get joy either out of hope, or faith, or love, then go on to patience. I believe that one of the sweetest joys under heaven comes out of the severest suffering when patience is brought into play. "Sweet," says Toplady, "to lie passive in thy hand, and know no will but thine." And it is so sweet, so inexpressibly sweet, that to my experience the joy that comes of perfect patience is, under certain aspects, the divinest of all the joys that Christians know this side of heaven. The abyss of agony has a pearl in it which is not to be found upon the mountain of delight. Put patience to her perfect work, and she will bring you the power to rejoice evermore.

I will suppose that you have gone through all this, and that you still say, "I cannot rejoice as I would." Then arise, dear brother, and gird yourself for holy exercise. Begin with prayer. Prayer will make the darkening cloud remove; and then you will rejoice. If supplication is over, and you are not rejoicing, then sing a psalm. "Bring hither the minstrel." Often does holy music set the prophet going. Let us sing a song unto the Lord; and if we have no joy in our hearts already, we shall not have sung very many verses before rejoicing will drop on us like the dew which soaks the dry and dusky tents of the Arabians. If neither prayer nor praise will do it, then read the Word. Sit still and meditate on what the Lord has spoken. Go up to the Communion table; gather with the people of God in sweet mutual

converse; or go out and preach to sinners. Go to the Sunday-school class, and tell the dear children about Christ. In Christian labor you will joy in the Lord as you would not have rejoiced in him if you had been idle at home.

At any rate, when you do not rejoice, say to yourself, "Come, heart, this will not do. Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" I have heard of a mother that whenever her children began to cry, and grow fretty, she said, "They must have medicine." She was sure that they were not well. Whenever you begin to fret and worry, say to yourself, "I must take heavenly medicine, for I am not right. The leaves of the Scriptures are for my healing: I will use them for my soul's good. If my heart were right I should rejoice in the Lord, and as I am not rejoicing I must resort to the great Physician."

Brethren, we must rejoice. Why should we not rejoice, since all things are ours? Heaven is ours in the future, and earth is ours in the present. With the past and all its sins blotted out, the future and all its wants provided for by the bounty of an unchanging God, wherefore should we be disquieted? If we are not glad, the stars may rebuke us as they twinkle amid the darkness: the sun may rebuke us for refusing to shine in the light of God. Come, brethren, let us obey the Word that says, "Rejoice evermore."

Lastly, somebody will say, "But why should we rejoice?" What are THE REASONS FOR THIS REJOICING? We ought not to want arguments to persuade us to be happy. The worldling says that "he counts it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away." The child of God may count it the wisest thing to cast his care upon his God. You do not want an argument for rejoicing; but if you did, it is found in the command of your Lord, who says to you, "Rejoice evermore."

Rejoicing wards off temptation. The Christian may be tempted; but little impression is made upon him by the pleasurable bait if he is happy in the Lord. There is a passage in Paul — I forget just now where it is — where he speaks of putting on the armor of light. It is fine poetry as well as solid fact that we wear the armor of light; and part of the meaning is, that we are so surrounded with seraphic joy that nothing can tempt us. The joy which we wear is far superior to any which the evil one can offer us; and so his temptation has lost its power. What can the devil offer the joyous Christian? Why, if he were to say to him, "I will give thee all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," the believer would reply to him, "Fiend, I have more than that. I have perfect contentment; I have absolute delight in God. My soul swims in a

deep sea of bliss as I think of God.” The devil will speedily quit such a man as that, for the joy of the Lord is an armor through which he cannot send the dagger of his temptation.

This joy of the Lord will shut out worldly mirth from the heart. The rejoicing Christian is not the kind of man that wants to spend his evenings in a theater. “Pooh!” he says, “what can I do there?” You say to the man who has once eaten bread, “I will take you to such a grand feast. I will show you a company of swine all feeding upon husks. Look upon them, see how they enjoy themselves! You shall have as much as you like, and be as happy as they are.” He says, “But you do not know me: you do not understand me. I have none of the qualities that link me with swine. I cannot enjoy the things which they enjoy.” He that is once happy in God pours contempt upon the sublimest happiness that a worldling can know. It is altogether out of his line. He does not know their mirth, even as they do not know his rejoicing. I suppose that the fish of the sea have joys suitable to their natures. I do not envy them: I am not inclined to dive into their element. It is so with the children of God; they are not inclined to go after worldly things when they are happy in the Lord. But your miserable professors who simply go to a place of worship because they ought to go, and who are very good because they dare not be anything else, they have no joy in the Lord. They go to the devil for their joy: they openly confess that they must have a bit of pleasure sometimes, and therefore they go to questionable amusements. No wonder that they are found in Satan’s courts, looking up to him for delights, since they find no rejoicing in the ways of the Lord.

He that rejoices in the Lord always will be a great encouragement to his fellow Christians. He comes into the room: you like the very look of his face. It is a half-holiday to look at him; and as soon as ever he speaks he drops a sweet word of encouragement for the weak and afflicted. We have some brethren round about us whose faces always refresh me before preaching. Their words are cheering and strengthening. Those who rejoice in the Lord evermore cannot help perfuming the room where they are with the aroma of their joy. Others catch the blessed contagion of their contentment, and become happy too.

This is the kind of thing that attracts sinners. They used in the old times to catch pigeons and send them out with sweet unguents on their wings, other pigeons followed them into the dovecote for the sake of their perfume, and

so were captured. I would that every one of us had the heavenly anointing on our wings, the divine perfumes of peace, and joy, and rest; for then others would be fascinated to Jesus, allured to heaven.

God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.