



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

14. Divine Delight

Teaching others the rare delights of worship.

Mrs. Conscience, a young woman of less than thirty years of age, had two lovely children. Being a very honest-hearted woman and a Sabbath keeper too, Mrs. Conscience came to my wife and me with a problem.

"You people," began Mrs. Conscience, "have been able to train your children so that they are in the church now. I want some counsel in how to train my children so that when they grow up they will be in the church too. Will you please tell me what to do?"

I felt a quick pain in my soul as she spoke. True, our two children were both in the church. They are Christians and Sabbath keepers. But I wondered if perhaps this might have happened in spite of me, rather than because of any special thing I had done.

While I was pondering whether to apologize for our faults or to say something to satisfy this lady, my wife gave a few helpful suggestions. By this time I had regained my presence of mind, but just as I was about to speak, Mrs. Conscience came right to the point.

"Take the Sabbath, for instance," she said, "I feel that the Sabbath is a different day, sacred. Children should put away their everyday toys on that day."

It might be that Mrs. Conscience and husband had some difference of opinion on the matter, I do not know. Perhaps he felt that it would be proper for little children to continue with their toys on the Sabbath, while his wife saw things quite differently. I pondered these possibilities as I answered.

"Yes, the Sabbath is a different day," I quickly replied, "But in what way is it different?" Then answering my own question, I added, "It is delightfully different, for the Lord says, 'Call the sabbath a delight.'

Then I went on to explain; "In other words, in order for the Sabbath to have the right effect on the minds of the children, Friday afternoon about sunset you might say something like this to the children, 'Children, now that the Sabbath is coming, we are going to put away the little toys of the week, for we have some big, delightful Sabbath toys!'

"Then have all ready their special Sabbath toys—for just that one day. You might have a sandbox, for instance, with large cutouts of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the lions' den, or Peter in prison, or perhaps Jesus walking on the water. When the Sabbath is approaching, welcome it with joy and delight.

"The psychology of Sabbath keeping will have such a telling effect on the children that they will not begin to associate it with boredom. This will stop Satan dead in his tracks."

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Mrs. Conscience stood speechless. She had thought only of duty, conviction, and obedience. She had never thought of the law of association or of Sabbath psychology—God's psychology! She had never thought of how children hate a rule that is applied like a whip. Whip the child with a wrong Sabbath psychology and he will probably hate the Sabbath. Yes, he will wait—until he gets old enough. Then he will turn from it. This is a natural reaction to a negative approach to God's things.

Mrs. Conscience thanked us for the advice and assured us that she would endeavor to put it into practice.

We are not merely to obey God, but we are to obey God in God's way. We are to call the Sabbath a delight! We are to teach our children that worship is beautiful, not just a duty. We are to suggest to our children that all of God's created things are good, lovely—in their own ways and to be desired. True happiness is found in good! To combine the thought of obedience with the thought of pleasure is biblical!

No, we are not to teach people to do things just because they bring pleasure. We are commanded by our Lord, however, that we are to equate God's things with joy. "In thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

A very sad mother came to us. Her son, now married and a medical doctor, had fallen in love with another woman. His wife was in tears. His home was about to be broken.

"Pastor, will you please go over and see my Bob?" was her tearful request. "Bob is a good boy. He grew up in the Sabbath School, went to church school. and never caused me any trouble. Please see him."

I could see that Mrs. Robinson felt that some temporary difficulty had evidently discouraged Bob and set his feet to backsliding. Mrs. Robinson thought that just a visit or two from me would change the whole picture for her Bob and for his family.

I did go to see Bob. However, when I got there, I discovered that the problem was much bigger than either she or I had imagined. It might be compared to a mother's calling a doctor for her child to find out what the child's trouble is when the child has become unconscious and is already in a coma. The chances of immediate cure looked very slim. Recovery, if at all, would be exceedingly slow.

I discovered, after visiting with Bob for some time, that while he was a very fine-appearing fellow, his attitude toward religion, the Sabbath, and the church were decidedly negative—and deep-seated.

"I made my decision to leave the church when I was nine years old," Bob began frankly. "I would go to church and to Sabbath School because I had to. But I made up my mind that when I got big enough I would no longer be a member of the church."

He then went on to explain that, as far as his parents knew, he was a model child. But they could not probe his mind. They did not understand the psychology they had used.

Every time we use religion as a whip, we may be causing the one upon whom we are using it to hate religion. Every time we use the motive of duty without delight, conviction without cheer, holiness without happiness, we are doing exactly what Satan desires. He is determined to make it appear that the Christian pathway is a pilgrimage of sighs. If he can succeed in doing this, he knows the kind of reaction many individuals will have.

The brewers know this; the tobacco manufacturers understand it too; they use the law of pleasant association to sell their product. And effectively! The difficulty is that they have the right psychology but the wrong product. Mrs. Robinson had the wrong psychology but the right product—or did she? Did she have the right product when she advanced the Sabbath without a Saviour of joy? Did she have the right product when she enforced doctrine without delight? Did she properly equate our wonderful Saviour with His truth?

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There are two different ways by which a person can fail to equate religion with delight. One is to make it all duty and conviction. The other is to love the world so much that the children have equated the world with pleasure because their parents have. Permissiveness is as bad as arbitrariness. Pleasure-loving worldlings are scarcely in a position to equate Jesus with joy. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15.

The World family did this. Mr. World was careless of the Sabbath; he and Mrs. World tuned in to TV after sundown on Friday night. They listened and watched, whiling away the hours of the Sabbath. It gave them pleasure, thus equating Sabbath laxity with pleasure.

Mr. and Mrs. World also went to the movies and took their children with them. In church they heard that we are not to frequent these places, but the pictures gave a sense of pleasure. So their children equated the church standards with pain, displeasure, sadness, and a "don't" religion.

Chances are that the men who spoke against these things in the church spoke with real conviction and a face that showed pain and a voice that was rather sharp. So the children equated standards with something unpleasant and the movies and Sabbath TV watching as something pleasant. Little by little, almost imperceptibly, Mr. and Mrs. World were forming an association in their children's minds which would be most difficult to erase in coming years. The speaker in the church service unwittingly did the very same thing; one augmented the other.

Now, friend, you may have noticed Sabbath-keeping churches equating the things of Jesus with joy. In His "presence is fulness of joy." Psalm 16:11. We are beginning to learn some very vital lessons connected with God's holy things. Listen to what one minister had to teach a group of people who needed more than repentance. They needed the joy of the Saviour.

"For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry: for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:9, 10.

The people had repented that Sabbath day; this involved weeping; God did not object to this. Repentance is essential to rest in the Lord. But God's servant did not want God's people to return to their places under a cloud of condemnation or sorrow. He instructed them to think of how they could share their blessings with others, and they were to dry their tears and no longer be sorry.

God had accepted their sorrow, their tears, and their repentance. Now why be sorry any longer? The day is holy, and in keeping with its holiness, continued sorrow is out of place. Your spiritual strength. God says, lies in your happiness—in joyfulness. The same is true today.

Years ago we started a new church. We have done this often throughout our ministry. We determined that this church would foster the joyful participation of our youth. The teachers or leaders of every division of the Sabbath School seemed to be eager to present to the children a joy and a gladness which would delight their souls. And they succeeded! So interesting, so gladsome, so delightful were their Sabbath School classes, that the children seemed to look forward to them from one Sabbath to another. They wanted to be there.

My wife taught in one of these divisions where the joy of the Lord was their strength. One Sabbath morning a parent called my wife and told her she had a problem, "I don't know what to do," she said. "My little girl is crying because we thought we would attend another church this morning; but it seems that our girl will go to no other Sabbath School. What shall I do?"

The lady may have been perturbed, but we were thrilled. This positive approach of equating religion with joy does something. If the law of association works for industry, it will work for children in the Sabbath School. Sabbath can be made a delight, Sabbath School can be made a joy. When it is, the children will

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love it! A child loves candy, but hates a whip. A child rejoices in pleasant ways, and drags around in dry worship. It's obvious—the logic is simple!

For years, in keeping with God's Sabbath-keeping psychology, I have tried to equate all of God's things, including God's prophets, with joy. I have failed repeatedly. I have not sufficiently attained, but at least I see the light and I am working in that direction. Multitudes of others are too.

When Mr. Perkins tells his boy John that he is a vegetarian because Mr. Black or Mrs. White or Auntie Green says he shouldn't eat pork—I take exception. Do you know why? Because if the boy likes to eat pork, then he will think his father is whipping him with Mr. Black, Mrs. White, or Auntie Green.

We have a right to know the reasons for our actions and decisions, instead of being constantly whipped by some religious speaker or author. To use whip psychology, even with inspired writings, is not in God's plan. Let us be careful not to use religion as a whip. There is, it is true, a time to rebuke, but our philosophy of life should not be negatively oriented.

We suggest that if there is some "don't" which people want to present in dietary teaching, let them use scientific facts to back up their statements showing at the same time the better procedure. Emphasize the positive. Then people will not feel that they are being continually whipped with the Bible or a Christian teacher. They will not hate God or His prophets.

I have a favorite author who has given me much personal help, perhaps more Help than all other authors combined. I am eager for people to read this author for themselves and receive for themselves the positive blessing I have received. That's why I refuse to use these wonderful writings or those of other godly authors as whips.

It takes only good dog sense to know what reaction a whip gives. The better way to present healthful living, for example, is to place major emphasis on the articles of food that are good for us, with minor emphasis on the injurious ones. If I speak of refined white bread as being unhealthful, I should have available some scientific facts on the tremendous advantages to be gained by eating bread that has the vitamins and minerals retained. Thus, instead of people feeling that they are being whipped for eating white bread, they sense that they are being served something much better. Eating the good bread becomes a delight! So with the doctrines of the Bible. Let us not rest satisfied to play into Satan's hands by whipping people with Bible verses.

If the readers of this chapter could but go into some of the homes we visit and hear the tales of negative experiences these people have had in connection with professed Christians, our readers might ask that a whole book be written on the positives connected with the religion of Jesus Christ.

One brief account has to do with a Mrs. Whin. She described the type of religion she found in the church when she was a child. Everyone was supposed to be attired, figuratively, in funeral clothes after Jesus entered a certain room in heaven. Those who have studied the sanctuary question know where some of these sincere people received certain facts. On the Day of Atonement the people were to afflict their souls. On the antitypical day of atonement people are to be in earnest and deeply serious.

But does that mean that ever since the beginning of the antitypical day of atonement no Christian is to be happy? Is that the teaching of God's prophetic Word? Has God suddenly changed from a God of joy to a God of sadness? Has He, with amazing alacrity, become a funeral-director God just because we are in serious times? No! A thousand times, No.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the people of the last days who "know the times and season" and the dark days ahead, placed in the center of 1 Thessalonians 5, a real challenge. In fact it is more than a challenge—it is a command! What is this command to the people who are looking for the soon return of Jesus? Here it is in verse 15: "Rejoice evermore!"

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Lest we overlook the fact that this is the intent of the statement, let us read the 18th verse also: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." What is the will of God for people during earth's hectic closing days? It is "in everything give thanks."

When I get up in the morning, I come into the Presence of Jesus and ask Him to fill me with His Holy Spirit. I tell Him I adore Him, love Him, and thank Him for His mercy, grace, and every blessing. I walk out into the world with my Jesus in whose "presence is fulness of joy." He declares that at His "right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The same day that Mrs. Whin related her sad religious experience as a girl, another lady, Mrs. Brown, of the very same city, related her experience as a girl.

"I am sure the church had the 'truth,'" she said, "But it seems that it was not for me." It was one of negatives, of things, more than of Jesus; of sadness instead of gladness. I almost wept when I heard her tell of the continual atmosphere of quiet sadness she found among church people.

"It is for you," I replied kindly, "for that philosophy which your particular church had really is not the philosophy of the Bible. It is not the true psychology of the Christ, and it is not what is being practiced in most churches I now know of."

True, there are some who are sighing and mourning as they go toward heaven—or what they think is heaven. There are a few who feel we must have hell now, to be worthy of heaven by and by. It is true that a furnace-affliction type experience comes to every child of God. Yet God commands. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Why? "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

Yes, we believe the tobacco industry has the right philosophy but the wrong product. Is it possible that some of us Christians have the right product—the correct doctrine—but the wrong philosophy? A tobacco company dares to advertise, "I'd walk a mile" for a certain brand of cigarette that contains poisons that produce cancer. Surely, then, the Christian, who has a pure love of Jesus, should sing in glee and "call the Sabbath a delight," because it is delightful!

When a cigarette company can advertise that "when I changed to brand [X], I changed for good," cannot a sinner who has found Christ cry out with holy glee, "I found what I wanted when I found the Lord"?

There are 826 texts of Scripture, enjoining, commanding, and teaching us that the Christian's mission is one of rejoicing in the salvation of our Lord. Let us share a few:

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Isaiah 61:10.

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

"Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing." Psalm 100:2.

"For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." Psalm 92:4.

"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Psalm 32:11.

"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." Psalm 34:2.

"Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, Let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." Psalm 35:27.

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"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory."
Psalm 64:10.

"Receive him [a gospel messenger] therefore in the Lord with all gladness: and hold such in reputation:"
Philippians 2:29.

If a Christian reflects worry, fear, and a philosophy of sadness, he cancels out his witness for Jesus.
Therefore, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Psalm 34:3.

"O Thou in whose presence my soul takes delight,
On whom in affliction I call,
My comfort by day and my song in the night.
My hope, my salvation, my all!"

Dearest Father, I come to Thee in gladness. I declare Thy works with rejoicing. I pray that my testimony for Jesus may ever be one of a good God, a desirable Saviour, a delightful Lord. I believe that Thou art giving me this joyful Christ-centered witness as promised in John 16:24, and I thank Thee that I now receive it in Thy lovely name. Amen.

A TESTIMONY
Deep is my gratefulness,
Poor my behavior,
Joyful the blessedness
Found in my Saviour.

Reflection: As you meditate on the following seven Scriptures, may the Holy Spirit bless you whether alone, with another, or in a prayer group.

Seven Great Bible Facts:

1. Our Lord tells us that we are to "call the sabbath a delight" (Isaiah 58:13).
2. In His presence is "fulness of joy" (Psalm 16:11).
3. The whole experience of the Christian is to be one in which he will "rejoice evermore" (1 Thessalonians 5:16).
4. The Bible says we are "in everything" to "give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
5. The Holy Scriptures command us to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2).
6. This is because the response of joyfulness to temptations and trials works patience (James 1:3).
7. Of those who are ready to meet Jesus at His Second Coming, the Bible says, "Here is the patience of the saints." Revelation 14:12.