

Living the Resurrected Life

Ephesians 1:15-23

Pastor Ron Prorise

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Shepherd's Community Church

Power

(1 Corinthians 15:17; Romans 4:25; 8:29; Ephesians 1:3-14)

Joy

(Luke 10:21; John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; Acts 2:46; 5:40-41; 1 Peter 1:8; Psalm 51:12; 42:4; 1 John 1:4)

Love

(Mark 9:34-38; Luke 9:46; 22:15, 24; Acts 1:13-14; 2:42, 44; 4:32; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 1 John 3:18)

Courage

(John 16:33; Acts 2:13-41; 4:8-31; 12:22; 2 Timothy 1:7)

Cultivating Joy

We have a constant tendency to stop remembering the cross, and to start depending on legalism and self-effort. The danger is relentless. So I urge you every day to “preach the gospel to yourself,” as Jerry Bridges calls it in his book *The Discipline of Grace*. Doing so, he says, means “you continually face up to your own sinfulness and then flee to Jesus through faith in His shed blood and righteous life.”

And the inevitable result of preaching the gospel to yourself will be a pronounced joy, an infectious joy, a consistent joy. Like nothing else, the gospel creates joy; it's both the source and object of our joy. The gospel alone allow us to obey the biblical directive to “serve the LORD with gladness” (Psalm 100:2). Joy is a command. You may be working hard and serving the Lord faithfully, but if you aren't serving with gladness, you aren't serving Him appropriately or representing Him accurately.

Are you someone who's consistently joyful and continually aware that ‘the joy of the LORD is your strength?’ (Nehemiah 8:10). Or do you normally appear to others to be someone who's burdened, busy, and easily bothered?

When the disciples returned to Jesus after a successful ministry trip and reported excitedly, “Lord even the demons are subject to us in your name!” Jesus responded, “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17-20). Jesus isn't minimizing the joy from ministry success. But He was drawing their attention away from that to a primary joy—a joy that takes precedence over the experience of spiritual power. This is the joy that comes from the gospel, the gospel that writes our names in heaven.

If you're centering your life on the gospel and the cross, if you're abiding hard by the cross, as Spurgeon says, and searching the mystery of Christ's wounds—then you will be captured by joy. And in these days or years you have left on earth, what could be better?

So cultivate this joy... be continually meditating on the gospel. Let the cross always be the treasure of your heart, our best and highest thought... and your passionate preoccupation.