

upon circumstances.

We are so often told that the Christian should not be long-faced and gloomy. But this statement needs to be taken with a grain of salt, to say the least. If it means the Christian should not be concerned for the state of Zion and of heavy heart because of the sad estate of the lost, then the statement is not the axiom many take it to be. Is it not written in Holy Writ: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion?" What prophet of old was not a weeping man? Who had a heavier heart than Paul? Hear him as he says, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen after the flesh." We read in the Bible that Jesus wept, but I have never found where it says, Jesus laughed.

The Christian life is a paradox: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." The believer can rejoice in Jesus Christ, and at the same time have a heavy heart for others. The believer can rejoice in his salvation without forgetting the sad state of Christendom and the fearful danger of the lost.

But worldly mirth shuts its eyes to the real facts. It forgets the coming day of judgment. It **stops** its ears to the cry of warning. It stifles the cry of the soul for safety. Worldly mirth is associated with the pleasure of sin for a season.

Where do you find hilarity and loud laughing? Is it not in the world's pleasure parlors? Visit the amusement centers of this world and you will find an abundance of worldly mirth. The deceiver of this world has built a kingdom of deception where everything is confused. He has changed the price tags on everything. Things of lasting and eternal value are labeled, "Not worth the taking," while trifles and poisons are marked high. Satan has turned this world into a sort of fool's paradise where his dupes are satiated--but never satisfied. It is God who satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with gladness.

The biggest enterprise in this world is the entertainment business. The highest wages are paid men and women whose sole business is to make people laugh. This entertainment business is made to appeal to every type of personality and culture. It reaches from comedy to tragedy; from low class to high class drama. This entertainment business leaves nobody out. It caters to the high and the low; to the rich and the poor; to the intellectuals and to the ignoramuses, to the socially elite and to the social outcasts.

Worldly mirth comes pretty high. Satan charges for his entertainment, and he has no bargain counter, either. Everything you get in Satan's world comes high. It costs in money and in tears and broken hearts, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Gambling joints, drinking dives, amusement centers of all kinds and variety, are Satan's bid for your soul.

Solomon was wiser in the things of this world than any man of his day. He set his heart on things that would produce mirth and laughter. He pursued the ways of pleasure and reached this conclusion: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.....Sorrow is better than laughter for by sad-

ness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is **better** to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."

Let me draw still another contrast between Christian joy and worldly mirth. The believer's sorrows will soon be over and the world's mirth will also soon cease. The believer is passing through his night here and now, but joy cometh in the morning. When worldly mirth has died away in the distance, Christian joy will have only begun.

We will now give you some of the occasions for Christian joy:

1. The joy of salvation. When the 70 returned to Christ and exaltingly told him that the demons were subject to them through His name, He said, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). When Sir James Simpson was asked what was his greatest discovery, he instantly replied, "It is that I have found a Saviour."

2. The believer has a person in whom he can rejoice. From a prison cell, Paul called upon the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always. Christ is dependable. He will never let you down. **You** can depend on His blood to make you safe. You can depend on His word to make **you** sure. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

3. The believer has a hope in which he can rejoice. The believer has a future. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Some of the sweetest joys we have are by way of anticipation. Rejoicing in hope of a better place will make us patient in present tribulation. There is the hope of our Lord's return; the hope of personal perfection when we are made like Him, the hope of heaven where there will be nothing but delights.

4. When the believer is persecuted for loyalty to Christ, this is an occasion for joy. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:12). "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Peter 4:13).

Let us accept God's verdict about things. He knows their value and He is honest with us. The father of lies puts great value on the things that produce worldly mirth. To hope for things this side of the grave is tragic and most pathetic. And yet this describes the hope of multitudes. A young man was being interviewed by an old preacher. He was asked what his plans and hopes were after he had finished high school. He replied that he would go on to college, work hard, and graduate with honors. "What then?" queried the minister. The young man said he would take a post-graduate work in his chosen field, in the hope of being one of the most

capable and successful. "What then?" continued the old minister. The young man then told of his plans to marry, settle down in some good town, work at his profession, make a lot of money, and move into the best society. "What then?" persisted the old man. The young man was not so glib by this time, but he went on to say that he would finally become old and have to retire, but that he hoped to have competency for his old age. "And then what?" continued the old man. The young man dropped his head and said, that of course, he would have to die. "And then what?" the old man asked. And to this he had no answer, for all his plans and hopes were this side of the grave and eternity. The poor worldling--the man without Christ--has his hopes, but they are dying hopes.

The Christian hope is the well-founded expectation of future good. The Christian hope is a living hope. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:2-4).

—By the late C. D. Cole