

# Joy!

Steve Durham—July 11, 2015

We have received over the past few months an awful lot of requests for healing and problems that we're in. We're an older group, God's Body is getting older and it seems that we're receiving more and more prayer requests and situations where the Body of Christ is getting older. We need God's healing, attention and will to be done in our lives.

That's not a bad thing; that's what we need to do. As a group we certainly need to pray for one another and we want to hear about these situations and the suffering that people are going through so that we, as the Body of Christ and brothers and family members, can support and help bear the burdens through intercessory prayer. But that's not the subject I want to talk about in one respect.

James 1:2: "**Consider it all joy**, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials [temptations]." Those are the things we fall into in life and the things we encounter in life, especially as we get older.

Verse 3: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.... [it helps us hang in there] ...But let endurance have *its* perfect work..." (vs 3-4). We are to become perfect:

Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect."

James 1:4: "...so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything." That sounds great!

I've always wondered when I find myself in problems of health or people who are coming against us whether it's something we did or didn't do where we're 'persecuted for righteousness sake' or because we did something stupid, which happens. When they do come against us it's very difficult *to count it joy* and to be patient and endure and become perfect

Right after the beatitudes Christ says, Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect... [become complete] ...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect [or complete]." That's the progression. We are to become like Christ, have His mind in the midst of trouble, trial and suffering. It's sort of an oxymoron:

- How do you have joy when life is full of suffering?
- How do we continue and maintain that joy?
  - ✓ In our calling?
  - ✓ In our purpose?
  - ✓ In the goal and the rewards that are out there for us?

- ✓ In becoming part of the Family of God for eternity?
- How is that possible?

Job says, Job 14:1: "Man born of woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble." We know that living in this world today. 'Many are the troubles of the just.'

It seems like when we come into the Church and God calls us and is working with us—and we see ourselves and repent and God grants us His Holy Spirit—there's this immediate thought that our suffering is over, we can be joyful and now we have God's Holy Spirit, a son of God and in the Family of God. Then we have our first trial and we realize that that's not the situation.

This world is certainly difficult; it's Satan's world! Everything around us is affected by Satan and Satan's influence. It is a very evil, profane world—not a Holy world—and we live in it. Christ says that that's a condition that we find ourselves in as the Body of Christ. In fact, that is what He wanted; He wants us to be that way. In His prayer:

John 17:9: "I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world... [Christ's focus is not on the world but on us] ...but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and **I have been glorified in them**. And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world... [we are in the world and there's a purpose for that] ...and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as *We are one*" (vs 9-11).

Verse 21: "That they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, in order that the world may believe that You did send Me. And I have given them the glory that You gave *to* Me, in order that they may be one, in the same way *that* We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected... [or complete] ...into one..." (vs 21-23). With the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit we're in the process of becoming perfect.

"...and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am... [our future, our goal] ...so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because You did love Me before *the* foundation of *the* world. Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You

did send Me” (vs 23-25).

Verse 12: “When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished...” So, we can be confident in the fact that Christ is not going to lose anyone. It talks about that in 2-Peter that He doesn’t want any to be lost or perish.

“...except the son of perdition, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them” (vs 12-13). If we have Christ in us and we know the Father and we are one with the Father, the purpose is that we will have *Christ’s joy!*

Verse 14: “I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them... [we will be persecuted for righteousness sake] ...because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

We’re not like other people. We’re different and they don’t like that. We are their conscience. They see what they should be doing and they despise it, hate it. Satan hates the fact that we have God in us and we are the called children of God. Satan hates that with a passion. We’re going to have trouble! “...because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

Verse 15: “I do not pray that You would take them out of the world... [we are in the world and Christ wants us in the world] ...but that You would keep them from the evil one.” We are in the world, but we have a promise that God will keep Satan from us.

Satan went before God in the book of Job and asked for Job. God said, ‘Don’t take his life.’ God let Satan do different things.

We’re going to be persecuted somewhat in different degrees. I don’t think we’ve seen the total end or the degree of persecution that’s coming. The Family of God—the saints—are martyred. I believe that we’re going to see, as Paul said, ‘we’ve not been persecuted unto blood,’ yet, we will be, I do believe.

We need to get a grip on the fact that we count it all joy! That we have God and Christ in us and that creates joy within us. It is a Holy gift, a spiritual gift that comes from the Holy Spirit and we can develop that and grow in that if we know what it is. Ask God, as Christ said three or four times in the prayer, ‘If you ask in Christ’s name, the Father will give that to you. Don’t ask Me, ask the Father. Christ made it possible for us to go into the Holy of Holies and come to the Father.

Christ revealed the Father for us, so we have a perfect relationship now with the Father, and

through Jesus Christ—our Mediator and Advocate—we can go before the Father and say, ‘I have problems here, these things are happening, Christ said to keep me in the world. I’m not going to get away from these trials, but I want to know how to count it joy. How do I do that.’

One way that we see that we have Christ in us, that we have His Word in us, v 16: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your Truth; Your Word is the Truth” (vs 16-17).

This prayer is something that we read during Passover. It is an eternal Truth and is so much a part of our being and who we are. We need to understand what Christ has done and what Christ wants for us and where we will be, and the fact that Christ will protect us along the way. The evil will be kept back from us. We can count it joy as we fall into these different trials and tribulations.

An experiment, given by the National Institute of Mental Health, that describes this world. I go back to it every time I think about us being in the world and part of the world and the trials and suffering that we experience around us. I read this in 1970.

They had a nine-by-nine cage and in it were 160 mice. They put plenty of water, food and shelter in the cage. All the mortality factors were removed. They started out with eight mice, four pair of male and female, and it was to reach 160. That would be comfortable for the nine-by-nine cage.

What happened was that they ended up with 2,200 mice within this nine-by-nine cage. Again, all the food and water that they needed and things to make shelter—housing—was in the cage.

A curious thing happened. As they grew in numbers, the adults formed cliques of 12. The males withdrew from their responsibilities. They advocated from their responsibility and role as a male mouse. The females then stepped up and filled in the void. They started becoming the aggressor and became, by necessity, the ones who took the place of the male.

The young mice were pushed out because of this and they had nowhere to go, no place in their society. They became self-indulgent, they ate, drank and slept. The whole mouse society fell apart. Within five years every mouse had died, even though all the death factors had been removed.

That’s what’s happening in our world! There are so many parallels. Actually, the psychologist who did this study draws a conclusion for the real world. He said in the book at the end of the study, all the ideas, ideals, the morals, the goals, the values had been lost. They had no direction. It says in Proverbs, ‘Where there is no vision the people

perish.’ They had no goal, no direction. They weren’t doing what was God ordained. They had lost the fact that God puts eternity in us. He puts in this desire for eternal life or a relationship with a higher power. We know what that is. Man wants to disguise and cloud that and make it sound like God is in trees, rocks and all the different ‘religious’ ideas that man has.

God has put eternity in us, and that we have connection. We have *the spirit of man* that connects with the *Spirit of God*. In that we grow to become perfect as the Father is. All of those were lost. That world became upside down.

Isaiah 5:20: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil...”—right for wrong. They lost their values and perspective.

Titus 1:16 talks about the world being *reprobate*. Man being reprobate in decisions and judgments. No wonder it’s all upside down. They have lost Godly judgment, the ability to use God’s Word to discern right and wrong. That’s what God’s Word is, *the Truth!* The Law is Truth (Psa. 119:142). It is where you get right and wrong.

They say that there is no right or wrong. Pilate asked Jesus, ‘What is Truth?’ Well, man doesn’t know aside from God. Because of that, they are suffering. Jesus has decided in His prayer, ‘I’m working with this group.’

We are in the cage but we have been isolated and we are special, called out, chosen sons of God. He has taken a section and set us apart from what’s going on in that cage. In all the suffering and trials—even though we go through them—there’s something that maintains our joy. ‘*Count it all joy.*’

Christ said, ‘I want them to be joyful. John 17:13: “But now I am coming to You [the Father]; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them.” We have God’s Word, He’s laid it out. We have God’s Holy Spirit to help us in these trials that He’s given us. There is a reason for us being in this world. How are we going to help anyone in the future?’

When Israel comes to God and Christ comes to earth to setup His government and we are there with Him—we’ve been training and practicing and working on our relationship skills—how are we going to help unless we’ve gone through the same trials, tribulations and suffering that the world around us—in the mouse cage—has gone through? It’s not going to happen. God and Christ are preparing us for that goal, that job.

That’s one of our purposes that They have begun working in us ‘a good work’ and *good work* is done through the Holy Spirit. We of ourselves can do no good work. Christ said, ‘Why do you call Me

good, there is none good except the Father.’ Christ was in the flesh and in that flesh situation David called himself a *worm*. Job called himself a *worm*.

The beginning of humility starts when we come to see ourselves. We see that we’re no better than any of the other mice in the cage, but that God has specifically picked us for some reason for whatever reason. It was His desire to look down at the cage and pick a small group, a few of us out of the 2200 that were in the cage and began working with us, giving us

- insight
- understanding of His Word
- direction
- Truth

All the spiritual, heavenly gifts that come from the Holy Spirit.

We can be so joyful in that and the vision and goal that we have. The mice lost their goal, vision, ideas, ideals and values. We have those! We’re focused on the goal, the reward, the end result, that eternity that He’s put in us. The Family of God, the love of God, becoming perfect as our Father. Seeing Him, looking at Him at some point in the future on the Sea of Glass and see Him as He is. That means we’re Holy, we’ve been changed. We can’t see the Father, we can’t look into His eyes and see Him as He is if we’re not in that same stage.

Such a fantastic goal and I want you to keep that in mind. I want to develop that and the fact that we’re in the cage and how God takes us and separates us from the suffering that we see. He has a purpose!

Ecclesiastes 3:1: “To everything *there is* a season, and a time for every **purpose under the heavens.**”

Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years *of old age* draw near...” We’re all getting older and the evil days are here.

What it’s referring to is that as we get older “...when you shall say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (v 1). In other words, as we get older we have experienced things. God planned it that way.

Verse 2: “When the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, are darkened, or the clouds return after rain.” This is couched in poetic terms, but what Solomon is talking about is our state. This is why David and Job were able to say that in our state, our flesh, we are like a worm; we’re low. And these trials of life begin to work on you and wear on you.

Verse 3: “In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men are stooped

over...” Our frame sometimes shakes the older we get. Just the fact that it’s getting more difficult and we’re getting worn out and it’s hard to keep together. Some of us have shakes, some of us are getting worse with that with all the chemicals and such that we’re bombarded with in this environment don’t help us in that respect. Sometimes our bone structure gets bowed and there’s nothing we can do about that. We’re getting older.

“...and the grinders cease... [sometimes we lose our teeth and we have false teeth] ...because they are few, and *the eyes* of those who look out of the windows grow dim” (v 3)—our eyesight. I know five or six people who have gone through cataract surgery to improve their eyesight, because it gets diminished as we get older.

Verse 4: “And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low...” Sometimes the digestive system doesn’t work as well as it did when we were younger.

“...and you shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low” (v 4). Sometimes our hearing goes and we have to enhance it with hearing aids. Some of us can’t sleep and we rise up at little sounds and not able to have a solid sleep. God tells us that He ‘gives to His beloved sleep.’ As we get older we lose the ability to get a good night’s sleep and to hear.

Verse 5: “Also when they are afraid of heights, and terrors along the way, and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail...”

We’re afraid of heights as we get older and afraid of falling. Just walking down a sidewalk sometimes we’re afraid we might fall because our bones are brittle and we’re unsteady. We get gray hair and the taste goes; that’s just part of getting older.

“...because man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets” (v 5). Talking about death. David tells us that man’s life is three score and ten and anything after that is through what we can do in eating and taking care of ourselves, or maybe genetically we’re able to live longer because we have long life in our genes.

The fifth commandment tells us that our life will be long on the land if we honor our mother and father (Exo. 20; Deut. 5). God gives us a promise and we need to focus on the promises that He gives us and draw closer and closer to God. Lose the vanity and arrogance of the youth, which you feel like you can live forever.

As we get older it’s part of the process that we draw closer to God—‘poor in spirit’—we need Him! We need God! God wants it and planned it that

way.

In addition to the fact that we’re getting older, we’re in this world and things around us are going to get worse.

Verse 7: and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

Verse 13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the whole man.**”

- repentance
- conversion
- the Holy Spirit
- the Word of God
- keeping His commandments
- fearing God
- esteeming God
- loving God
- drawing close to God
- praising God
- worshiping God
- ✓ the great Creator and Sovereign of the universe
- ✓ the Benevolent Monarch and King

We don’t have benevolent kings and monarchs today, but we have One sitting on the throne that we can go to at any moment, at any time, made possible by Christ’s death. The Holy of Holies has opened up and we can go to this Benevolent Monarch, our God, the One God Whom we’re to be at one with and have Him in us, Christ’s words and the words of the Father. Christ didn’t do anything unless the Father gave Him purpose and word. It was the Father’s goals and ideas that were one with Christ. The Father and Christ were One and we have to have that in us, as we have God’s Holy Spirit. As we grow in grace in knowledge and come to this point when we return to the dust and dirt of the earth and our spirit goes back to God Who gave it.

We know that there will be a reward for us, that we will have a purpose for our life, and that we work toward that as we go through the suffering, trials and temptations of the world that happen to us on a regular basis.

The things that are happening to us are amazing. We have financial problems. This world’s economy is going down and we’re part of it, we’re in the financial system, so we have financial struggles, emotional struggles and sometimes we’ve come from an emotionally dysfunctional background and it causes emotional problems. We don’t understand that, but we ask God to help us see that and He peels back the onion and soon He gets to the core of why we are the way we are. Our upbringing and maybe our dysfunctional families that we have God helps us understand that so that we can take

those to God the Father and Jesus Christ and have them worked on and have them healed. Christ said that He came to bring healing; in Luke 4 He talks about this when He began His ministry.

Isaiah 61:1—Christ said, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me because the LORD has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted...” There’s more to a broken heart than just a broken relationship as a young man/woman.

We have broken hearts though our upbringing or our lives living in the cage where everything is dysfunctional and broken down. Some of that comes and sticks with us. But Christ said to ‘leave them in the world but don’t let them be part of the world. Don’t let the evil one come to them and work on them and destroy them, which Satan wants to do. Christ says, ‘I will protect them, guide them and lead them with the Holy Spirit. My mind will be in them. My thoughts, My character through the Holy Spirit and the gifts that God gives us. His very character will be in us as we go through this suffering, turmoil and trials.

It’s amazing the things that we go through, but if we keep our focus on God and on the goal, keep that vision on God and don’t perish: on the goal, the reward, the purpose, the love, the grace and heavenly gifts that come to us. The fact that we have a family that is ‘thicker than blood,’ a spiritual family that keeps us together, that is a bond. Our fellowship groups grow stronger and we grow bonded. God has broken up these big organizations into little groups so that we can learn to grow together and have that bond in love, joy and ‘work out our salvation with fear and trembling’ together.

It says, ‘Fear God is the whole duty of man.’ We learn that together as a family and walk together. But ultimately it is our individual requirement or responsibility to work out our own salvation. But we have those around us to bear our burdens (Gal. 6) through intercessory prayer, sharing with one another the difficulties that we go through, and asking them to help us.

To go the Father in addition. Intercessory prayer is amazing! It gets God’s ear! ‘The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.’ Fervent supplication, going to God on behalf of a brother is amazing! God sits up and hears that! It gets His attention! You’re doing it for someone else and you don’t have a vested interest in it other than that you’re pulling everyone together. God hears that and it avails much.

So, it’s very important for us as we see these lists go out and we hear about people that we do take the time to pray for them, and that we do take it seriously and earnestly go and beseech God on their

behalf. You don’t even need to know what the situation is, you just need to know the name and the fact that they’re having problems.

It’s good to be able to break down your prayers in detail, but it’s not necessary to dump the whole load and let the whole world know what your problems are in detail. Just the fact that you have them, God hears that and knows what those problems are. He knows who you’re praying about. You may not even remember their name, you might just say, ‘God, that person that So and So told me about that’s going through this...’ God knows who that is. You bring that person up to God and He will act on it.

“...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives...” (v 1). We have been captive in that nine-by-nine cage; Satan’s cage! God is *proclaiming liberty!* ‘Where there is the Spirit of the Lord there is liberty!’ There is that freedom from the sin, the chains that sin holds on us. But the Holy Spirit—through repentance and coming to God and asking for forgiveness and taking the blood of Christ, shed for the sins of the world—gives us liberty, comfort, hope and joy.

Joy to know that we’re on track. We’re not on the same track as the rest of the mouse cage. They’ll get an opportunity in the Great White Throne Judgment, and we’ll be part of that. God’s purpose and desire is to have us learn these things in the mouse cage so we can help them. The time will come when they come to us in Jerusalem when Israel comes back at the end of the Tribulation and Christ has set His feet on the earth. When get to be on the ‘ground floor’ of ushering in the Kingdom of God and caring for those people, healing and binding the brokenhearted and proclaiming liberty to the captives.

“...and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (v 1). Christ didn’t read v 2 in Luke 4, but it is in Isaiah and this is for the future, this is our part.

***Again, keep our eyes on the goal and keep our vision!***

Verse 2: “To preach the acceptable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; **to comfort all who mourn.**”

The troubles, tribulations and trials—that each and every one of us are going through—myriads of trials that I hear about, the difficulties that we encounter mentally and physically: illnesses, diseases, depression, stress. If we don’t through those, we can’t help with empathy and sympathy for the world that’s coming who are in the mouse cage, at the end of the Tribulation. Some won’t make it; some will live through it. What an unbelievable sight

of those people going through the Tribulation.

My wife works with those of domestic violence. Women who are in a horrible situation and have been all through the history of mankind. But today there is a breakdown of the family that's amazing. Men have advocated their responsibility and their role. Women have had to pick up and try to take care of the children and even though they love them and they take care of them some will 'fall through the cracks' and they can't give them the same things if they had been a unit, and one in that unit.

That's another story, but that marriage covenant is one; 'let the two be one.' In John 17 Christ said, 'You, Father, and I are one, let us all be one. I'm going to dwell in them as You dwell in Me and I in You.' We enter into a covenant at baptism with Christ and God the Father that's like a marriage covenant. That's why that marriage covenant in the world, in the mouse cage, is falling apart. It's so devastating and Satan knows that. He's tearing these families apart and some of us are in those situations. Or you have a daughter or son that's in that situation and you end up being the grandparent taking care of the situation. It's heartbreaking and heartrending.

But Christ says that He's going to "...comfort all that mourn" (v 2).

Verse 3: "To appoint to those who mourn in Zion, giving to them beauty for ashes, **the oil of joy**... [that Holy Spirit of joy] ...for mourning, the mantle of praise for the **spirit of heaviness**... [depression, stress] ...so that they might be **called trees of righteousness**..."

Psa 1 likens us to 'trees of righteousness' with God's Holy Spirit in us. There's nothing righteous about us without God's Holy Spirit, with out Jesus Christ in us. That's what it is righteous, Holy and helping us in these times of struggle and trials. Call on God and ask for His Holy Spirit and we will become '...trees of righteousness...'

"...the planting of the LORD..." It is God's desire to plant us in that cage in the world. Not to be part of the world, but protected from the evil one and be planted as "...trees of righteousness..." as salt (Matt. 5). This is our purpose. Christ gave His first sermon to His disciples and to us—those whom He's called these 'trees of righteousness' that He's taken and planted in the world.

As Christ goes through the beatitudes in Matt. 5, the things that we are to have, He says, Matthew 5:14: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid." We are the light of the world!

1-John talks about light and the light in us, and we are to show forth that light, illuminate so that

we can help and care for those who are mourning find joy. We have to have it in ourselves. We have to know that God's Holy Spirit gives us that joy, and all the heavenly gifts that God gives us, gives us that joy.

If we keep our eye on the goal and keep our mind where God is leading us, don't get despaired, depressed, stressed out; go to God on your knees and **ask Him to help you find the joy** in the calling. Study His Word. Christ said to let His Word be in us: 'Sanctify them by the Word.' Set us apart. Ask God for the vision of what this calling is.

Boy o Boy will you have the joy that God will give you in knowing that you're a very son of God, and that you are an inheritor and that you have a goal. Christ says we're a light set on hill and "...A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid."

Verse 15: "Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket..." When we get depressed we're set under a bushel. Satan would love to do that so that our light isn't shining and helping others. The Law is a 'lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.' It shows the way, this way of life that we're called to. 'Two can't walk together unless they be agreed.' We walk with Jesus Christ and God the Father in agreement. We have His Holy Spirit and it lights up that path. It helps us to know where the rocks are, and it helps us to keep walking straight in that mouse cage, this crazy world that we live in.

Verse 15: "Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand; and it shines for all who *are* in the house." That's our purpose for being in the mouse cage; to give light to all the others who are in that situation. Not to be part of it, not be affected by the evil one, but have on the helmet of salvation and all the other armor of God (Eph. 6). Put those on and think about them, meditate on it and use God's Word to help protect you, to help cleanse your heart and lead you, guide you with His Holy Spirit.

Verse 16: "In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works..." What they're seeing is God in you. We don't have any good works without Christ and His Holy Spirit and God the Father in us. Those are the good works that men see. We give credit to God. We look to God for those good works in us.

We can't have salvation on our own. It's a gift given from God. Becoming perfect and ending up with the rewards are for a purpose. They're to give back to other people; they're not a self-centered selfish thing that we acquire on our own, that we're going to get this. It's something that we're working toward so we can help serve and give back in love, with the love of God, back to the world in that

mouse cage to take care of them.

“...let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven” (v 16). Who also is *in you!*

Verse 13: “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, with what shall it be salted?...” Good for nothing! That’s what can happen to us if we give up on this. We’ve got to count all of these trials and sufferings that we’re going through—and that we pray about—*joy!* We know the end result! We know that God desires that we don’t fail and He won’t let anyone fail! We’re precious and peculiar, we’re bought/purchased with a price, and that price is the blood of Jesus Christ.

It takes away and puts our sins ‘as far as the east is from the west’ (Psa. 103:12<sub>[transcriber’s correction]</sub>). He sees us as righteous with Christ in us. He sees us as Jesus Christ. That’s where we get the glory, the fact that he is in us.

“...For it no longer has any strength... [good for nothing] ...but *is* to be thrown out and to be trampled upon by men” (v 13).

- we have to keep the faith
- we have to hang in there

As Paul said, go for the goal; he went for the prize and he was ‘content in whatever state he found himself, because he knew the joy that was there. He had the joy of God because he had Christ in him.

God would not make a creation without giving evidence of Himself, His purpose and plan for all:

Romans 1:20: “For the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead—so that they are without excuse.”

The world is without excuse. How many times has God talked about in His Word that the earth, the world, ‘bear witness of Me. I swear by that creation.’

Job 12:7: “But now ask the animals, and they shall teach you; and the birds of the air, and they shall tell you”—about Christ and about the creation and plan of man, and the purpose for man.

Verse 8: “Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you; and the fish of the sea shall declare *it* to you; Who of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In whose hand *is* the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all flesh, *even* of mankind?” (vs 8-10).

In Prov. 6 Solomon talks about going to the ant. The ant can teach us how to be industrious, how

to work hard—a good work ethic—and there are other things. One of those is a butterfly.

We talked about God the Father being the Benevolent Monarch. Have you ever seen the monarch butterfly. Years ago I remember seen flocks of monarch butterflies coming in on the milkweed. Today you don’t see that as much, but it gives us a lesson that God wants us to take heart in as we count it all joy when we fall into these struggles, temptations and trials—the difficulties that are in the mouse cage.

God gives us an example of the butterfly. I don’t know if you’ve heard this, but I want to read to you from:

*Stories for the Heart* by Alice Gray, pg. 217:

### Struggles

When he was a small boy, he had loved butterflies. Oh, not to net and mount them, but to wonder at their designs and habits. Now a grown man with his first son to be born in a few weeks, he found himself once again fascinated with a cocoon.

I remember as small boy I took home a cocoon.

He had found it at the side of the park path. Somehow the twig had been knocked from the tree and the cocoon had survived undamaged and still woven to the branch.

As he had seen his mother do, he gently protected it by wrapping it in his handkerchief and carried it home. The cocoon found a temporary home in a wide-top mason jar with holes in the lid....

A lot of us have done that with insects and have poked holes in a Mason jar and watched them.

...The jar was placed on the mantle for easy viewing and protection from their curious cat who would delight in volleying the sticky silk between her paws.

The man watched. His wife's interest lasted only a moment, but he studied the silky envelope. Almost imperceptibly at first, the cocoon moved. He watched more closely and soon the cocoon was trembling with activity. Nothing else happened. The cocoon remained tightly glued to the twig and there was no sign of wings.

Finally the shaking became so intense, the man thought the butterfly would die from the struggle. He removed the lid on the jar, took a sharp pen knife from his desk drawer, and carefully made a tiny slit in the side of the cocoon. Almost immediately,

one wing appeared and then outstretched the other. The butterfly was free!

It seemed to enjoy its freedom and walked along the edge of the Mason jar and along the edge of the mantle. But it didn't fly. At first the man thought the wings needed time to dry, but time passed and still the butterfly did not take off.

The man was worried and called up his neighbor who taught high school science. He told the neighbor how he had found the cocoon, placed it in the mason jar, and the terrible trembling as the butterfly struggled to get out. When he described how he had carefully made a small slit in the cocoon, the teacher stopped him. "Oh, that is the reason. You see, **the struggle is what gives the butterfly the strength to fly.**"

And so it is with us. Sometimes it's the struggles in life that strengthen us... [our faith] ...the most. Author Unknown

The struggles are there for a purpose, they're there for a reason. They help us to see the end result. As long as there isn't the slit made in the cocoon, the process of development to a new creature, the butterfly...

We see the goal, the end and we can count it all joy and the struggle that happens within that cocoon. God's given us that example for a reason. There are four stages in the development of the monarch butterfly.

1. **The Egg**—we're all born physically

And we're born spiritually, as well. We're begotten by the Holy Spirit and will be born.

2. **The Caterpillar**—it has a voracious appetite and eats everything in sight.

If you had caterpillars in your garden, your leaves have probably been destroyed.

3. **The Cocoon**—that what we just read the story about.

That's where all the struggle takes place. It gets pretty hot in there and there's a lot of violent shaking, movement and activity, but it's all within that cocoon. A lot of times you can't see into that cocoon. It's not until the end, when the butterfly almost is ready to come out that it begins to be transparent.

That's what the world sees. They see this transparent butterfly and they see that there's something different about you, but they don't know what it is.

The monarch butterfly is being developed through all the struggles and trials in that pupa and chrysalis stage. It teaches us about Christian growth about the trials and struggles that we go through and how important that it is in dealing properly with our struggles, **knowing that at the end that there is eternal life**, an Elohim Family that we will be part of! God desires and will not let any of us hurt ourselves or not make it. That's a struggle that helps us see joy at the end! We're to give thanks always for everything:

Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks at all times for all things to God and the Father in *the* name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1-Thessalonians 5:16: "Rejoice always!... [v 18]: Give thanks in everything" Paul can say that because he was focused on the last stage:

4. **Adult stage**—where the monarch butterfly comes out and the entire process is complete.

1-Cor.15 talks about us being the 'corruptible made incorruptible.

We will see part of the goal and process that happens in the cocoon and the joy that we can look to in the end, the adult stage, that God has given us the creation to encourage us. This process of going from egg to butterfly is an amazing process.

Romans 8:13: "...if you are living according to *the* flesh, you shall die..." What happens in the process is that sometimes we make a slit in the cocoon and we come out too soon. **We get out of the environment of protection** where the process is being formulated and we're becoming this new creature:

- we get out of that and we make a slit too soon
- we allow someone with a false doctrine to make a slit
- we allow the cares of the world make a slit and we go out
- we get depressed
- we get down
- we get stressed out
- we get worried

Fear is sin and God wants us to have a positive attitude and not fear. Fear is profane and it causes the wrong juices to happen. But counting it all joy and keeping focused and allowing God's Holy Spirit and seeing the end result, the goal. 'Fight the good fight' as Paul said, and hang in there. Stay in the cocoon. As Christ said, 'Keep them in the world but don't let the evil one...' Reject him, resist Satan.

“...but if by *the* Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live” (v 13). That’s what that process in the cocoon is doing. It’s “...putting to death the deeds of the body...”

Verse 14: “For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons... [the tekna’] ...of God.” It’s not adopted sons. You’re not adopted. You’re the very sons with the characteristics of the Father and the mind of Christ in you, developing in that cocoon.

That is the goal that keeps us on track and helps us to have joy, to know that God the Father would do that and would give us everything—place everything under our feet along—with Christ. We’re co-heirs.

Verse 15: “Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father’”—a close relationship with our Father Who has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ.

Verse 16: “The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed **we suffer together with Him**, so that we may also be glorified together with Him” (vs 16-17). Amazing!

We will have everything put under our feet with Jesus Christ. We will be God *with God the Father* and Jesus Christ as our ‘big brother.’ We’re to be joint heirs to everything.

We need to take time to stop and think about that and really process that. We will have everything that you see on earth and under the heavens, the planets and galaxies. They’re out there for a reason. God is a *God* of purpose. He is not going to allow that purpose to be thwarted by a mere Satan and his demons in the mouse cage. He’s going to take us out of that at some point and help us to go back and help them see the same thing and grow in grace and knowledge and become glorified together with us and we’ll all be one.

Verse 18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time...”—the things that we go through today.

- What is your trial?
- What are you suffering with?
- What is happening right now to you?

“...*are not worthy to be compared with the glory*... [the joy] ...**that shall be revealed in us**. For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God; because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in

hope” (vs 18-20). We’re not there, yet. If we were then *hope* would not be *hope*. If you have the end result or the goal, the reward, then it’s not hope. But we don’t have it, yet.

Heb. 11 talks about all those who went before us not being given that end result, the eternal life, the family position, heir of all things with Christ. But they will at the resurrection!

Revelation 5:10: “And did make us unto our God **kings and priests**; and we shall reign on the earth.” We’re going to be kings! We’re going to monarch butterflies under the Great Monarch and His Son. We’ll be in that migratory flock of monarch butterflies, which are almost non-existent today. It kind of equals the parallel that we are a small flock.

There aren’t many of us, but we will be able to go back to that mouse cage in the Great White Throne Judgment and talk to them and tell them and help lead them to that goal. What a wonderful time, what a joy that will be. Keep that in mind as we go through these different things.

Romans 8:21: “In order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” We’re going to take pain and sorrow and do away with it. There will be no more tears, no more hurt in His Holy Mountain. It will be an amazing time!

If we can’t have joy in that, we need to focus on that and have joy, and ask God to help us see that as we go through these tribulations. Christ asks us to stay in the mouse cage and He said, ‘Don’t let Satan get to them totally.’

The Bible says to not let ‘anyone take your crown.’ Don’t let them take the fact that you’re in the process of becoming monarch; don’t let anyone do that.

Verse 22: “For we know that all the creation is groaning... [plants, animals, people—everything in the mouse cage] ...together and travailing together until now. And not only *that*... [those in the mouse cage, the unconverted world] ...but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves, awaiting the sonship—the redemption of our bodies” (vs 22-23). The transformation of this corruptible body into an incorruptible member of the God Family.

Verse 24: “For by hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is not hope...” Hope is the “...anchor of our soul...” (Heb. 6:19) It is what anchors us and keeps us in that cocoon.

“...for why would anyone still be hoping for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see,

we ourselves wait for it with patience” (vs 24-25).

Matthew 24:13: “But the one who **endures to the end**, that one shall be saved.” All that endure to the end will kings and priests.

Romans 8:26: “Now, in the same way also, the Spirit is conjointly helping our weaknesses...” Inside that cocoon God’s Spirit helps our weaknesses. It helps us to pray effectively: for ourselves and others. It helps us to meditate on His Word, which Christ said that it helps them to have joy; the Word helps us have joy.

Christ is the Word, the Logos, and we are to have joy in Christ. We’re to have joy in the fact that He suffered and that we suffer along with Him.

“...because we do not fully understand what we should pray for, according as it is necessary, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groaning that cannot be expressed *by us*. And the one Who searches the hearts comprehends what the strivings of the Spirit *are* because it makes intercession for *the* saints according to *the will of God*” (vs 26-27).

In other words the Spirit helps us to communicate with God in His language and through our heart where His commandments reside and His mind resides.

Verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” Keep our eyes on the purpose and the goal and we can have joy. We know that God is with us, and He’s going to work out things for us. As we go through these trials and troubles, He’s working it out.

Know that the rest of those cocoons, the rest of the small flock, are praying for you, help and supporting you through prayers to the Father, and any other way that they can.

Verse 29: “Because those whom He did foreknow He also predestinated *to be* conformed to the image... [the adult stage of that process] ...of His own Son, that He might be *the* Firstborn among many brethren.” Christ was the First out of the cocoon. He went to the Father and He sits on His throne at the right hand of God the Father. He is a monarch, as well, and He is our example. We are called ‘the Church of the Firstborn’; that is our hope of the resurrection, to be in the firstborn group.

Verse 30: “Now, whom He predestinated, these He also called... [the beginning of the process] ...and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified... [staying in that cocoon, not allowing a slit to happen until it’s time] ...these He also glorified.” That is our purpose and goal.

Verse 31: “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He Who did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also grant us all things together with Him?” (vs 31-32). That’s something to be joyful in, to be like God the Father and be given all things!

Verse 33: “Who shall bring an accusation against *the* elect of God? God *is the One* Who justifies. Who *is* the one that condemns? *It is* Christ Who died, but rather, Who is raised again, Who is even *now* at *the* right hand of God, *and* Who is also making intercession for us. What shall separate us from the love of Christ?...” (vs 33-35). Keeping this in mind helps us have joy during our troubles, struggles, trials and tribulations.

“...*Shall* tribulation, or distress... [I tell you we get *stressed out*; we get depressed] ...or persecution... [because we believe and live the way we do] ...the or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” If a sword comes down on your neck, that won’t separate you from the love of Christ; ***nothing shall!***

Verse 36: “Accordingly, it is written, ‘For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for *the* slaughter.’” I live by the *faith of Jesus Christ in me!* At baptism we give up our lives and become a new man, a new creature. The old man is dead. We are counted as sheep to the slaughter.

Verse 37: “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.” We are more than butterflies, we are *monarch butterflies* at the end through Christ Who loves us.

Verse 38: “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (vs 38-39).

WOW! We are to be a new creature in God and Jesus Christ. This is amazing! It’s so important that we keep our mind on the goal, to help us through these trials and sufferings. God the Father and Jesus Christ were in covenant to allow this plan to begin. From the foundation of the world Christ was slain, and He has fulfilled that and come to a point that now He and the Father are eagerly looking for the metamorphous and the time when the butterfly will come out into the stage and they can change that creature into *a god in Their family!* What a wonderful time that we look for!

One of things Paul said was to be content in whatever state he found himself.

Philippians 3:14: “I press toward *the* goal

for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 21: “Who will transform our vile bodies, that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able* to subdue all things to Himself.”

We, too, need to strive for that goal, that we end up as kings and priests along with Christ, our big Brother, King of kings, and God the Father. We have seen that Christ wants us to be the world and to fulfill His joy through having the Holy Spirit in us, the Word in us, actually have Jesus Christ and God the Father living in us as one.

As we work and struggle and go through the trials that we have and are confronted with, we know that God loves us and that He wants everything to work out for the good of those whom He loves.

***Hang in there and count it all joy!***

All Scriptures from The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version by Fred R. Coulter

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- 6) John 17:9-11, 21-25, 12-17
- 7) Isaiah 5:20
- 8) John 17:13
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- 10) Ecclesiastes 12:1-5, 7, 13
- 11) Isaiah 6:1-3
- 12) Matthew 5:14-16, 13
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- 14) Job 12:7-10
- 15) Ephesians 5:20
- 16) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
- 17) Romans 8:13-20
- 18) Revelation 5:10
- 19) Romans 3:21-24-25
- 20) Matthew 24:13
- 21) Romans 8:26-39
- 22) Philippians 3:14, 21

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- Exodus 20
- Deuteronomy 5
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- Galatians 6
- Psalm 1
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- Psalm 103:12
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