

Bringing joy to the heart

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I would like to continue on the pathway that our brothers have been leading us. Ezra had directed his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel, we were reminded, statutes and judgments. He wanted to share it with others, and how important that we take root downward if we ever expect to bear fruit upward.

I'd like to take us to another verse, first of all, that is related to Hezekiah, where our brother Arthur was starting us, but in Isaiah chapter 38, remember this man had a number of things hit him all at once, the Assyrian invasion, and very severe sickness, [00:01:01] and the Lord gives him recovery from the sickness, gives him 15 more years of life, and in verse 9 of Isaiah 38, we have the writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness, and I don't want to read the whole of it, but particularly verse 19, the living, the living, he shall praise thee as I this day.

The father to the children shall make known thy truth. I'm reading from the Darby translation, if it reads different, but the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

Ezra wanted to make known the truth of God, and in the book of Nehemiah in chapter 8, he has a wonderful opportunity, it's probably about 13 to 15 years after he had returned, [00:02:06] and after he himself had been walking in the truth, and then he is asked by the people to bring the law of the Lord, and to read it, and to expound it to them. I'm sure this was sweet to his own heart.

He was one established in the truth of God, and he could share it with others. I think of the aged apostle John.

Turn to his third epistle, please. Well, we'll read a verse out of the second epistle first.

He says in the second epistle, in verse 4, I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received commandment from the Father. He's writing to the elect lady and her children, whom he says, I love in truth, and not I only, [00:03:06] but also all who have known the truth. The thing that brought joy to the aged apostle's heart, he's the last of the apostles left, perhaps in his, at least in his 80s I would say, probably in his 90s at this point, and he says, I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth. I believe every older brother and sister can identify very much with this, and in one sense we all should be able to identify with it. But notice the third epistle, in verse 4. Well, I'll read just before that. He says in verse 2, or verse 1, the elder to the beloved guy assumed my love in truth. Beloved, I desire that in all things thou shouldst prosper and be in health,

even as thy soul prospers, for I rejoiced exceedingly when the brethren came and bore testimony [00:04:06] to thy holding fast the truth, even as thou walkest in truth. I have no greater joy than these things, that I hear of my children walking in the truth. That's quite a statement.

Quite a statement by this aged apostle.

He had no greater joy than to hear of his children walking in the truth.

Gaius was one who was walking in the truth. There was a problem wherever Gaius lived. The place is not identified, but the problem is identified for us. There was a man, Diocrates, who wanted the preeminence, and Colossians tells us of our Lord Jesus that in all things he must have the preeminence. [00:05:01] When a man wants a place of preeminence in an assembly, he is usurping the place of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that caused a problem.

We're not made clear here whether Gaius had already been pushed out or whether he was still in that assembly, but Diocrates was not receiving the apostle's communications, and the apostle said he was going to come and deal with the situation, and he commends another man, Demetrius, as one to be followed.

Now Gaius, that is John, commends Demetrius to Gaius as a man to be followed, but John makes this wonderful statement, I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth.

[00:06:03] Now I'd like to go to the apostle Paul, and we'll go to 2 Timothy for a moment.

And Timothy, chapter 1, verse 2, he's writing to Timotheus, my beloved child, grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

And he's been praying for him, he says, I'm thankful to God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience how unceasingly I have the remembrance of thee in my supplications night and day, earnestly desiring to see thee, remembering thy tears.

Timothy too was not ashamed to shed tears, was he?

Remembering thy tears that I may be filled with joy. [00:07:01] I don't think Timothy's tears were lightly shed. We find in this chapter that Paul has to say to Timothy, this thou knowest that all those in Asia have forsaken me.

And we understand that to mean not simply the apostle personally, but that which he stood for and that which he taught. I'm sure that this brought tears to Timothy. It would seem from the ensuing verses that it brought discouragement to him. Paul has to write to him to stir up the gift that is in him and, you know, we need this kind of exhortation too.

But then in chapter 2, the chapter begins, thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. A wonderful exhortation for us today too.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. But notice the next verse. And the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust [00:08:05] to faithful men such as shall

be competent to instruct others also.

The importance of the word, where Brother Arthur has been bringing before us the importance of the word if we want to be rooted.

And the whole of the New Testament had not yet been written.

The apostle says there were those that were rejecting much teaching. And he says, the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses. A long time when I heard this verse, I really didn't notice in the presence of many witnesses. The things thou hast heard of me, commit to faithful men. And it's often been pointed out there for generations here, yes, but what things? [00:09:03] The things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses. Don't say, I think I heard, I think I remember Paul said thus and so. When we were here, Paul said thus and so.

The things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, those were to be taught to faithful men.

Not just the things that he thought he remembered Paul having said, but those things that could be established. In fact, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every matter shall be established. And Paul didn't want all his remarks in the course of the years. Timothy had traveled with him, traveled with him over several years. He didn't want all this repeated and taught. You know, it's interesting when one travels among the saints of God. [00:10:03] And the older one grows, the more interesting it can get, because one can hear all kinds of stories about older brethren and the things that they did, the things that they taught and so on.

And many of these things are said with a great deal of respect for older brethren. Some of them are quite humorous. And one hears many stories, heard some today too, and it's always interesting to pick up new things.

But what he was told here is that the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men.

You know, when Ezra led a group across the desert to come back to Judah, our brother Bill pointed out, it was by comparison with the first group some 60 years earlier, a much, [00:11:04] much smaller group.

And yet they were going to that place where the Lord had set his name. When they came to that place, they had every reason to be disappointed in those who were already there.

And yet we don't find that Ezra said, well, let's turn around and go home. Nehemiah, in chapter 5 of his book, has to call the nobles to account.

They had been charging ruinous interest, usury of the people, and people had to sell their children into slavery to pay the taxes and the usury on the loans that they had gotten from their own nobles. And Nehemiah says, back where I come from, back in Babylon, we have been redeeming these people and you're selling them into slavery. You're causing them to be sold into slavery. [00:12:02] So the condition among God's people back there was perhaps better than in Judah. But Jerusalem was the place where the Lord had set his name and matters had to be faced there.

The apostle is concerned here that Timothy teach those things that he had heard of him in the presence of many witnesses. These entrust to faithful men.

You know, there's not much point in trying to entrust these kind of things to those who will not be faithful with them, to those who will misuse them. You know, they say that a half-truth is the worst kind of a lie.

It's that kind of thing that Satan came along with at the very beginning. [00:13:05] As God said, and then you shall not surely die. No, they didn't physically die that day, but from that point on, they were dead in trespasses and sins.

So half-truths. You know, he says, and these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to entrust or to instruct others also.

The apostle is looking down the road. Back in Psalm 78, I believe, we have five generations mentioned. Here there are four, the apostle, Timothy, faithful men, and those whom they would be instructing in due time.

One other portion, 1 Corinthians chapter 4.

We're going backward in time a bit here in the New Testament, but we see a little more [00:14:02] of the attitude that is involved in these things. 1 Corinthians chapter 4, the apostle is speaking as a servant of Christ in verse 1, and a steward of the mysteries of God, and he really didn't have to give account to his fellow believers account would be given to the Lord one day, but he opens up his heart to the Corinthians, even though they were in very sad condition, spiritually speaking, and he has to speak with a certain amount of irony to them, and I believe it's a sad irony when he says in verse 8, already ye are filled, already ye have been enriched, ye have reigned without us, and I would that ye reign that we might also reign with you. [00:15:03] The day of our reigning hasn't come yet, and he says, for I think that God has set us the apostles for the last, as appointed to death, for we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye prudent in Christ, we weak, but ye strong, ye glorious, but we in dishonor.

To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are in nakedness and buffeted and wander without a home, and labor, working with our own hands, railed at we bless, persecuted we suffer it, insulted we entreat.

We are become as the off-scouring of the world, the refuse of all until now. I've read this for the background.

Now, not as chiding do I write these things to you, but as my beloved children I admonish [00:16:07] you. When we think of all the things he has to set right in the Corinthian epistle, as my beloved children I admonish you.

He comes in this way, as a loving father, and he goes on to say, for if ye should have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the glad tidings.

Paul was the first one to bring the glad tidings, the gospel, to Corinth. He says, I have begotten you,

you are my children, my children in the faith. He says, I entreat you therefore, be my imitators. Now not every father would say to his children, be my imitator, follow me.

[00:17:03] But if the father is walking with the Lord, then it would be in order to say that, wouldn't it? The Lord says it, and beloved, we sometimes say that we need shepherds, and I'm in full agreement with that.

Shepherd is a gift from our risen head, and I believe it's in order for us to pray that he would give more shepherds.

But here is something else. We're not told that fathers are a gift from the risen head, but we need fathers, and real fathers would have the hearts of shepherds.

I read once, and this goes back 30 or 40 years, that in Korea, where there was a real blossoming [00:18:08] out of the gospel, when someone would ask to be baptized because they had been saved, their fellow Christians were asking for proof that they had been saved.

I'm not saying this is a scriptural thing to do, but they were asking that one who wanted to be baptized give evidence that he had been saved by bringing someone whom he had led or she had led to the Lord since they were saved.

Our brother Bill pointed out before that Scripture views us all as priests. In Leviticus 21, we have a list of defects, blemishes that can disqualify priests, and [00:19:02] one of the defects that would disqualify a priest in Israel from his service was if he was unable to procreate children.

Beloved, that ought to speak to us in the gospel too, shouldn't it? We have a responsibility to be usable for the Lord in that way. The apostle, when he says that I'm your father in Christ, he says, I've begotten you. In Christ Jesus, I've begotten you through the glad tidings. But now he goes on to say, after saying, be my imitators, for this reason I have sent to you Timotheus, who was my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly.

Later on he has to tell them to be very careful not to frighten Timothy away, and to be very [00:20:07] careful how they treat him.

He refers to Timothy in the end of the epistle in a very lovely way.

He says, now if Timotheus comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he works the work of the Lord even as I.

That's quite a thing for an old, experienced apostle to say of a young brother who's been helping him.

See that he may be with you without fear, for he works the work of the Lord even as I. And now here he tells the Corinthians that Timothy is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord.

He will put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ. I'm sure Timothy could have recounted many stories about what happened on the road with [00:21:02] the apostle Paul.

That wasn't what Paul was interested in having the Corinthians taught. He was not interested in having them entertained. Now we can enjoy reminiscences of our brethren, and I say absolutely nothing against that, but what he wanted Timothy to do, what would be helpful to the Corinthians, was that Timothy would put them in mind of Paul's ways as they are in Christ.

And notice that according as I teach everywhere in every assembly, Paul didn't adjust his teaching to the thinking of those to whom he came. He taught the truth of God, and he taught everywhere. This is one of the things that is emphasized in 1 Corinthians, that what he taught in one place, he would teach in another too. The truth of God is not adjustable according to our whims and fancies. [00:22:01] He says, but some have been popped up as if I were not coming to you, but I will come quickly to you if the Lord will.

And it so happened, when we read 2 Corinthians, the Lord kept him from going quickly, and they were accusing him of having broken his word, but he points out that that was not the case.

It wasn't a matter of yay, yay, and nay, nay.

Here he says, I will come quickly to you if the Lord will, and I will know not the word of those that are popped up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye, that I come to you with a rod, or in love and in the spirit of meekness? I think of what he has to say about Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord.

And dear brethren, as we get older, how important that we have beloved and faithful children [00:23:10] in the Lord.

That doesn't necessarily mean natural children. How wonderful if natural children go on in the ways of the Lord, having received him and become spiritual children as well. But if the Lord doesn't give us the natural children to go on in this way, we need to look out for young brethren, young brothers, young sisters, who can be beloved and faithful children in the Lord.

So that the Apostle John's joy is fulfilled, we see when Paul refers to Timothy, writing to the Philippians, he says, I have no one like him, who will naturally, genuinely care [00:24:03] for your state.

So you know him. He served with me as a child with the Father, he served with me in the Gospel, and so on. One sees a relationship on part of the Apostle and Timothy that we need to cultivate.

Those of us who are older need to try to help younger brethren along in the ways of the Lord.

Ezra gave leadership, and he had an exercise, and some seventeen or eighteen hundred souls were led in that way.

Daniel purposed in his heart, we were told, not to defile himself with the king's meat. And when Daniel spoke up, there were three friends who said, me too, me too, me too. And God honored that.

[00:25:02] God still looks for this kind of taking root downward, and bearing fruit upward, encouraging one another in the ways of the Lord.