

Week 3: THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL

Can we assess our precise understanding of these studies? Has God taught us new truths or reinvigorated what we have submerged? **Colossians 1: 15 - 20 and 2: 6 - 10**; normal Christian living, **3: 1 - 11**. ** At the end of the nineteenth century a series of lectures on the nature of Christianity was given at the University of Berlin, to students from every faculty, by an elderly professor of church history. The lectures, given without notes, were a sensation. One student took them down in shorthand otherwise they would have been lost.

The memorable first words: 'The great English philosopher, John Stuart Mill, somewhere observed that mankind cannot be reminded too often that there was once a man whose name was Socrates. That is true – but it is still more important to remind mankind again and again that a man whose name was Jesus Christ once stood in their midst'.¹

John 15: 11; '*may be fulfilled*'. He looks for their joy to be filled - complete. His joy is only known when we obey His commands; to be half-hearted is to get the worst of both worlds. John Piper: 'Not to pursue our joy every day in the Word of God is an abandonment of the revealed will of God. It is sin'.² The joy of Jesus is the joy of the victory of the finished work: the cross. Dr Alfred Plummer; 'Human happiness can reach no higher than to share that joy which Christ ever felt in being loved by His Father and doing His will'. --- Context of John 15 and 14: 27!! – To know God is to know His relationship to us. John Calvin affirmed that all human wisdom could be summed up as 'knowledge of God and of ourselves', and stressed that the two were inseparable. We know Him only through His revelation of himself. His substitutionary death, physical resurrection and indwelling Holy Spirit. The significant agenda before us is not so much, 'What did He teach?'; but, 'Who is He'? **Matthew 16: 13 – 16**.

Ephesians 1: 3, every spiritual blessing in Christ. Then His fullness with Paul's prayer; **3: 19**; filled with fullness which God imparts, as also **4: 13**. We are complete in Him, we have fullness as believers in Christ alone because we have been incorporated into His body, the church. – We are reminded again of the truth of God which has become visible, audible and tangible. 'The word of God,

¹ Alister McGrath, *Understanding Jesus*, Kingsway, Eastbourne, 15

² John Piper, *Desiring God*, IVP, 125

and the narrative of its happening, discloses the truth; it does not provide the material from which the truth could be deduced. The knowledge of God's truth does not have to be enucleated from his word; this truth must be *heard* in the word in the same way that the witnesses *saw* it in "the acts of the Lord."³

Theme: 'Christ in Colossians' and Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:⁴ The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead: I believe in the Holy Ghost: I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints: The forgiveness of sins: The resurrection of the body: And the life everlasting. Amen.

Believers participate in God's salvation by declaring, 'I believe ...' for such emphatic declaration links us with His Name and His Acts and we are witnesses to Him and participators with Him. The apostle John introduces the "I am" sayings of Jesus; which constitute a bulwark against religious pluralism, post-modern confusion and situation ethics. The Words of Jesus and our words of testimony may never be abstracted from whoever speaks. Jesus Christ only speaks the Word from the Father and it is only ever the Word which proceeds from His mouth – the sword. This Word of God is the *dunamis* – power, because God is the subject of the word. The word spoken and used by God; such Word is efficacious.

'The enjoyment of [God] is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows, but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams. But God is the ocean.'⁵ Jonathan Edwards, Works, Vol. 2, 244

³ Jacob Firet, *Dynamics in Pastoring*, Eerdmans, Michigan, 1986, 28 & 29

⁴ Expressing the spiritual torment that Christ suffered for us; the severity of God's vengeance to appease His wrath and satisfy His just judgment; His redemptive agony on the cross for us before God's holiness.