

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

"LET HIM SING"

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART SIXTY ONE OF SIXTY FOUR*

It is certain that life has varied circumstances which produce different results in our lives. James gave the response we should have to suffering when he said, "Let him pray" (James 5:13). The rest of the verse gives the proper response to times of joy, "Is any cheerful? let him sing praise." Obviously he means to praise God. Many people pray when they suffer, but do they sing praise to God when they are happy? It should be just as natural to praise God for those things which cheer us as it is to pray when things sadden us. James is not saying we cannot sing when things are troublesome for Paul and Silas sang while in stocks in a dungeon (Acts 16:25). Cheerfulness in adversity can be uplifting to others. Neither is James teaching that we cannot pray when we are happy for we are exhorted repeatedly to "give thanks" (I Thess. 5:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7). Too often when circumstances make us happy, we forget to thank Him from Whom all blessings flow.

Earlier James had said, "Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (James 4:9). There must be some forms of joy that are sinful, and some that are righteousness. Any joy produced by sin cannot issue praise to God.

Too much of the joy present in this world is a giddy response to sensuous pleasures that are an abomination to God. Joy is false when the heart is alienated from God. The word "cheerful" literally means "well mind". It was what Paul was seeking to bring to the men caught in the terrible Mediterranean storm (Acts 27:22,25). A "sick" mind can find joy in the most heinous activities. It is distressing to hear worldly minds seeking to celebrate some event, even so-called religious holidays, with revellings and drunkenness. True praise to God comes from the right mind.

We were made to sing. God is not commanding something foreign to our nature. Had God not authorized our singing of praise it would have been all but impossible to feel we were worshiping without song. Instead, He took our natural response and turned it into the proper channel. "Let him sing praise." "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" (Psm. 149:2). "Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds" (Psm. 149:5).

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