

## *The Joy of Believing*

Nobody has strength to live if there is no joy in life. Everybody seeks to have joy in their life: children do, young do, elders do. Believers also seek joy. A main question in seeking joy is, where from and what kind of joy does one seek.

In the following story we will listen to what happened to two girls who were seeking joy.

. . . (Story read by young person. "As Two Blossoms on the Slopes of Mount Zion") – from *At Daybreak* book.

What happened in this story? We often hear news how someone has given up his or her faith. Why does this happen? What is the sin that separates the young from God's kingdom? We will look at the story one more time from the point of view of joy. The girls had the desire for joy. The story told us that the girls rejoiced in their hearts that they could be children of God. They also made many new believing friends in their new location where they started their schooling. They were happy to greet Maria's uncle, a speaker brother, a confessor father. Then a short while later, they found joy in different places, in functioning in the student government, in an unbelieving friend, and in having loud parties in the evening. What made the reason for joy change? Was it something similar to the reasons to the first fall in Paradise? The serpent told the first couple: Did God really say so? Did the enemy of souls in the girls' case make them doubt that there is no joy or less joy in the kingdom of God than in the world? Did the girls error in listening to this sermon which made them start wondering about it in their thoughts?

The second main question is: What do we do when the enemy teases us and makes us doubt about the joy of believing? It happens during the many trials that we have to go through. How do we get from the trials and doubts into free and joyous believing?

I will briefly relate a story about a boy whose name was Allen. He had failed his final exam at school. Questions whirled in his mind: Why does it have to go like this for me? Why must I be so unsuccessful? It seemed like all the others had fun, but he had no reason for joy. His parents tried to comfort him but it didn't help. Then his believing friends contacted him.

. . . (Story read by young person. "Why Does it Always Go Like This for Me?") – from *At Daybreak*.

Here we can see that the enemy of the souls took away the joy of believing by thoughts of hopelessness and depression. Notice how important it is to keep in touch with believing friends, even and especially during hard times. Remember in trials to be steady, humble yourself under the guidance of God, and rejoice even when you don't succeed.

The third main question is: What are the joys of believers and how do we rejoice in everyday life? In everyday life we live in the world and continuously see unbelievers looking for joy in the joys of the world. It certainly affects our flesh so that we might become puzzled as to how we as Christians are to be joyous.

We will begin by mentioning that believing itself is and brings righteousness, peace, and joy to one's heart. In this righteousness we are happy and rejoice of all the gifts which God grants us according to His will. There certainly are a lot of them: There is the home and parents, brothers and sisters, love and care of the home, unity and fellowship of the family members – don't let the strive for money destroy this source of joy in our Christian homes – There is the possibility of learning and going back to school, there is the beautiful nature, free and independent fatherland – we may pray for the good of our country. We may rejoice for being able to work for our country– there is daily bread–there is enough money even to give some of it to those who are in need. There is the fellowship of the Christians – I have seen many of you joyously meeting each other here in these days –There is the treasure of righteousness in Jesus in the kingdom of God. There is the joy of a good conscience. There is the joy of the hope of a better future. The Bible exhorts us to rejoice even in trials, in sorrow, and under ridicule. There is the work of the kingdom of God – we may do it willingly and with joy like the disciples of Jesus did–There will be the fulfillment of joy in Heaven.

In order to have joy, you do not need to have all of these joys listed above. Only one of them is absolutely necessary – it is faith, the foundation of all joy. Being in faith, you may have joy even if you have only one gift of God.

Matti Kontkanen  
1994.