



Dr. Robert A. Cook

The Healing Power of Joy



“The Healing Power of Joy”

By Dr. Robert A. Cook



© All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever without permission of Walk With The King, Inc.

Some three thousand years ago the wise man, Solomon, said it: *"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"* (Prov. 17:22).

Modern doctors echo this sentiment. They tell us that a patient's positive outlook and cheerful spirit - if he has these ingredients - may actually increase the effectiveness of the medication that is prescribed.

Popular writers like Norman Cousins, who was devastated by life-threatening illness and survived it, are loud in their praise of what laughter can do as a part of the body's restorative process.

Yes, the healing power of joy is stressed by a variety of enthusiasts.

The Bible is full of references to joy. There is:

...The joy of obeying Christ's commands: "Happy are ye if ye do these things" (John 13: 17)

...The joy of helping others: "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Prov. 14:21).

...The joy of partaking of God's wisdom: "Happy is the one that findeth wisdom, and he that getteth understanding" (Prov. 3:13).

...The joy of suffering for Jesus' sake: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you .. for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad" (Matt. 5:11, 12).

Note this: The joy portrayed in the Word of God is of a very special quality. It far surpasses happiness, which is dependent on what "happens." Joy, as the Bible shows it, involves a believer's deep delight in the knowledge of God's goodness and plan - delight that accepts as "good" whatever comes, because God is the gracious giver.

Let us look at a few of the aspects of this kind of joy, paying attention to its healing powers.

The Joy Of God's Presence

"Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is FULLNESS OF JOY; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa. 16: 11).

The presence of the Lord is real, or can be ... all the time ... under all circumstances. And the joy that accompanies that nearness is a reality, too, for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who wishes to appropriate it.

In making a pastoral call many years ago I came to a certain house, rang the bell, and waited. Presently the lady of the house opened the door, her little three-year-old beside her. Both of them were ecstatic.

The lady invited me in. "We were a little slow in coming to the door," she explained, "because (calling her daughter by name) we were practicing the presence of Jesus - just enjoying Him."

The face of the little one was beaming.

I watched that child grow into a beautiful Christian woman, because her childish sincerity and her mother's spiritual maturity had been fused as they spent time in the presence of the living Lord.

Do you know anything about this experience? If you don't, maybe today would be a good time to start. Find a quiet corner somewhere. Say, "Lord Jesus, I want to be in Your presence for a little while. I want my heart to be filled with the joy of Your nearness. Please reveal Yourself to me."

(You know, there are some people whom you know so well that just being with them is a delight. Conversation is not really needed. You don't have to prove anything to each other. Multiply that sense of acceptance a million-fold and you have a slight inkling of what it is to know the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in fullness of joy.)

How To Draw Near

Now how do you achieve this nearness that leads to joy?

First, have a place and a time for this fellowship.

Second, make a deliberate effort to concentrate upon the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in distinction from the usual preoccupation with yourself and the million and one things that crowd into your consciousness.

Third, let the Word of God speak to your heart. Open your Bible and meditate upon some precious passages until your heart is warm and tender with the blessing of God.

Fourth, speak to your Lord of your love for Him. Worship Him.

This is not a time for the presenting of a laundry list of things you want Him to work on. It is time for praise for what He has done: praise for salvation, for His everlasting love, for His perfect forgiveness.

An unknown writer has made this profound observation:
Lord, of all being, throned afar, Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Center and soul of every sphere, Yet to each loving heart-HOW NEAR!

This nearness to the Lord - this stillness that issues in the joy that heals, must be related to the Word of God. Speaking to His followers (and we are among them), Jesus said:

“These things have I SPOKEN unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

Real joy, a merry heart in the biblical sense, comes from listening to what God has to say in His Word. I can't tell you how this procedure works, but I can assure you that it does work. When I spend time meditating on the Word of God, listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to my own heart, carefully writing down those impressions and then one by one praying them back to God, my heart becomes warm and tender and truth-filled and I experience a joy beyond words to describe.

O beloved, if you are hurting today, I urge you to avail yourself of the healing balm that the presence of the Lord can give.

The Joy Of Giving The Word

“Therefore shall ye lay up my words in your heart ... and ye shall TEACH THEM to your children” (Deut. 11:18, 19)

My good friend, Harold Hill, writes about the fact that when he became a Christian he used to shrink at first from talking to other people about his Saviour, for fear that he would be rebuffed or that his hearers might be offended. Then at some point in his Christian life he yielded himself wholly to the blessed Spirit of God, and the change that came was remarkable. He was delighted now to represent his Saviour, to speak of Him with enthusiasm and ease and authority and joy. Why? Because joy is a result of the control of the Spirit of God. Because this kind of joy takes the place of painful self-effort.

We are talking about giving the Word of God as that relates to our experience of heavenly joy.

We ought to remind ourselves that this “giving” is not confined to any formal exercise such as preaching or singing or testifying. It can - and should - relate to the most practical aspects of daily life.

I met Cyril Thompson in Calcutta, a man who literally lived in the Word of God. He was broke at the time, although I didn't know that. I asked him how things were with him and his face lit up as he replied, “Brother, I am full of the joy of the Lord.”

What better commentary could there be on Paul's declaration:
“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:10).

As a pastor I have called on people who were in great psychological suffering, but whose lives were absolutely radiant with the joy of the Lord.

Dawson Trotman was the founder of the Navigators, a great and ongoing organization specializing in discipling believers, producing “Timothys,” so to speak, one convert reaching out to another.

Dawson was taken from us in a tragic drowning accident. With many other Christian leaders I went to Colorado for his memorial service. It was a beautiful time, full of the confidence that believers hold in the blessed hope of resurrection and everlasting life.

Lila Trotman, the widow, greeted everyone graciously, though all of us who knew the couple well realized that her heart was breaking. Throughout the service she was calm and evidently aware of the blessed comforting presence of her Lord.

It was my duty to answer questions posed by representatives of the press of whom there was a large number present.

One reporter, evidently an unbeliever with little or no knowledge of the good news of the gospel asked in a spirit of innocent plaintiveness, “Mr. Cook, does your group always have happy funerals?”

No, I told him, these occasions are never “happy.” But Joyful, yes-full of the joy of the Lord that is greater than tragedy, greater than heartbreak, greater than the intense sorrow of the bereaved heart.

Are you hurting today because a dear one is no longer with you?

Oh, let the *“God of all comfort”* make His Word real and precious to you so that you *“may be able to comfort them who are in [similar] trouble”* (II Cor: 1 :4)

The Joy Of Being Delivered

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, THEN was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing” (Psa. 126:1,2). When God delivers you from something, that freedom brings great joy.

When we speak of being delivered we ordinarily think in terms of profound need: drug addiction, alcoholism, infidelity. But there are ever so many other barriers, equally as hindering to spiritual life, from which God is ready to deliver us.

Freedom From Fear

God wants to free us from fear. Do you sometimes find yourself afraid to go out on the street-afraid you might be robbed or mugged? Afraid an accident might befall you? (I faced that numbing feeling the first time I drove my car after having been struck head-on by another motorist and sent to a hospital as a result.) Have you ever asked your Father to deliver you from the specific fear that plagues you? He wants to.

Jesus said: *“Be of good cheer ... Be not afraid”* (Matt. 14:27). The injunction is clear: Don't BE afraid.

But what if you already are fearful? The psalmist has a good answer. *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee”* (Psa. 56:3).

There is an honest admission: *“I am afraid.”* There is a definite time involved, that is, now. And there is the cure for fear: *“I will trust.”*

Though fear is looked upon as a common and even excusable trait, it can weaken and shackle and defeat you - and God wants you to be rid of it.

Freedom From Worry

God also wants to deliver you from worry. The Word of God is full of reminders that we, His children, are to be free of all *“anxious care.”*

Even so, we often suffer from the “what if” syndrome. What if Dad should lose his job?... What if I should get cancer? .. What if our son should fail academically (his grades are not all that good) and be suspended from college... Or worse still, what if he should get into some other kind of trouble and be thrown out!... What if our daughter should fall into bad company and begin experimenting with drugs?... What if inflation should get out of hand and interest rates skyrocket?.. What if someone should push the button and bring on a nuclear holocaust? What if ... ?

You can worry yourself sick over such things-and many people do. God wants you to be delivered from all this bondage.

Freedom From Apprehension

If you would rather be afraid than delivered, God will let you He said to Jeremiah: *“Be not afraid of their faces [his accusers] lest I confound thee before them” (Jer. 1: 17) .*

What God actually was saying was this: “If you want to be scared, I’ll let you. What is more, I’ll give you something to be scared about!”

Honestly, now, do you want deliverance, or secretly do you enjoy weakness and defeat?

There are, of course, many areas of our lives that call for divine treatment: resentment, procrastination, pride, greed, ambition, desire for vindication, and the like. If we want the “medicine” of divine joy, we must turn these areas over to our blessed Lord, one by one. He will undertake for us - and we’ll be glad.

The Joy Of Divine Reaction

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa. 126:5) Here is a profound concept, one that I think is neglected oftentimes among believers. It is the harvest principle. It is found, in many places throughout Scripture. “Sow” is the beginning action; “reap” is the result. Sow what? Sow tears and reap joy.

I urge you to begin to recognize this truth today in a special way. For every sorrow, every testing, every hurt, every heartache, every reversal, every disappointment that you as a redeemed child of God are called to bear, there is the divine reaction that issues in JOY. And you can have it if you will.

Not all our trials are the same, but the principle is unaffected. If you, by conscious act of faith and commitment, allow God to take charge of that difficulty you are facing - if you commit this to God as seed is committed to the ground - then ultimately and without question you will rejoice in the divine harvest of joy.

But remember this: The word "sow" does not indicate a one-time action, necessarily. It involves a process. In the area of agriculture, if you want a crop of corn, what do you do? You get out the plow and the disc harrow. You de-, posit the seeds with the planter drill. Later you cultivate between the rows. When the, corn is high enough so the weeds can't choke it, you say, "It is going to be a good crop," and you wait for the day when harvesting is indicated.

Likewise, beloved, though the process may be long and the waiting period difficult to accept, if you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ you can be assured that harvest is in view, not only in eternity, but also now blessedly! - in the joy God gives.

If you and I adopt as a working principle the truth that Jesus is LORD of our lives, then as surely as day follows night we shall see Him making all things work together for our good and for our joyous acceptance.

The Joy Of Fellowship With Other Christians

"Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). All of us who have drunk, in a spiritual sense, from the "wells of salvation" are bound together in blessed comraderie.

A couple of passages come to mind immediately, emphasizing this fellow feeling.
"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Phil. 4:1)

Another passage is this:
"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye ... ?" (1 Thes. 2:19).

It is evident that one great source of joy for Paul was other believers. He had this joy in the "now" of his experience and he projected it to the day of the second coming of Christ when his rejoicing over those whom he had led to Christ would find its fullest expression.

Learn To Love Deeply

Paul spoke of his “dearly beloved, (ones) longed for, my joy and crown.” How he must have loved those people!

If you and I are to know the healing touch that can come from fellowship with other Christians, I think we must first settle in our own hearts and minds just how much we truly love other Christians.

Loving is not always easy. Some people, Christians, I mean - seem actually to put thought into being careless and sharp and bent on hurting others’ feelings. Some wag has said:

To live above with the saints we love, Oh, that will sure be glory. But to live below with saints we know is quite a different story.

Well, I suppose that conclusion may be true.

But let’s look at the matter from the standpoint of God’s Word. We read that:

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”
(Rom. 5:5)

In other words, this love that we are to show to others is a gift to us from God Himself! It is not something that we create, or even maintain. It is GOD’S love imparted to us and manifested through us.

Think of that person who is “impossible,” so difficult to deal with. Yield yourself to God for the bestowal of His love to that individual. Find yourself loving that one more deeply than you ever did before. As all this takes place you will feel healing and strength and joy coming to your own heart in a way you never thought possible.

Learn To Pray Meaningfully

Did you notice that Paul used the words “dearly beloved, longed for”? He wanted something special for those who were bound to him in Christian faith.

Have you ever decided what it is that you “longed for” for the fellow Christians who are a part of your life? What blessing, what growth, what achievement by the grace of God? Have you ever prayed specifically along these lines for other people?

I do an inventory of my own praying now and then. Much of my petitioning, I must confess, has to do with Bob Cook, my needs, my character, my failures, my burdens, my ministry. There is need for this kind of praying, of course. But when I get through with all that, there seems to be little time left for the problems of others, to be thought of in any specific way.

Yet the Word of God tells us plainly, "PRAY for one another."

We have the example, first of all, of our Lord Himself. *"He ever liveth to make intercession for them who come unto God by him"* (Heb. 7:25). Praying for us, His people, is the Savior's occupation in Glory! His is no blanket plea, such as, "God bless everybody." No, He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He knows everything about us, our down sitting and uprising. He can discern even the thoughts and intents of our heart. What exactness! What compassion!

Remember also the remarkable intercession of Moses for his sinning countrymen. The golden calf had been erected. The people had launched upon a terrible orgy of idol worship. Moses was shocked and heartbroken. But he took his place with his people, being willing to forfeit his own life if in so doing he could obtain pardon for the culprits and the restoration of divine favor. Listen to the pathos in his prayer:

"Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Ex. 32:31, 32).

Stand with Paul as he pleads for his "kinsmen according to the flesh." He longs that his fellow Jews shall know and accept Christ as he has done. Like Moses, Paul was ready to make any sacrifice to that end. Hear his words:

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were a cursed from Christ for my brethren" (Rom. 9:2,3).

Oh, to care that much about people! We must not forget that in this kind of praying there is a strong restorative element at work in the one who prays. Job proves the point. We read that "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). In other words, God changed and improved Job's circumstances when he not only accepted but actually interceded. for those problem people who had harassed him.

When you and I pray for others in the same selfless and concerted way, we too shall

find - blessedly! - that there will be changes in our relationships, in our attitudes and even in the circumstances themselves.

Learn To Enjoy People Increasingly

Paul addressed believers at Philippi as *“my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown”* (Phil. 4:1). What did he mean?

My joy - that means I like to have you near me; I enjoy you.

My crown-that means I am proud of you.

Enjoyment Involves Helping

How shall we work out this matter of our relationship with other believers so that they become to us actually a joy to have near us?

The next verses in the Philippian passage give an answer: We must help people get together. In the church at Philippi there were two ladies who evidently were not getting along well. Paul beseeched them (Euodias and Syntyche) to *“be of the same mind in the Lord,”* and he exhorted fellow Christians in that place to work at this matter of maintaining unity and love. He said:

“HELP those women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other fellow workers whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3).

One way to increase your enjoyment of people is to spend time helping them get together on the planes of common interest. The common denominator for the believers referred to in the Philippi an letter was that they all were redeemed by Christ, their names were *“in the book of life.”*

Differences of opinion will always exist and that is not a bad thing. But one’s reaction to them can either help or wound.

I remember the gentle voice of old Brother Charlton at Messiah Baptist Church in Chicago half a century ago. In a deacons’ meeting, as arguments would be heating up over some point being discussed, you would hear that dear man’s clipped British accent: *“Brethren, brethren, great people do disagree.”*

Yes, they do. They always will. What are you going to do about it? Will you let resentment

fester until it is a spreading infection, so to speak, -in the body of Christ? Oh, no. Healing will begin with helping, with drawing together instead of pulling apart.

Start helping, and as you do so you will find a new and tender bond forming, uniting you in a spirit of love and acceptance.

I was in a meeting not long ago where there were delegates from many countries of the world. On the platform, among others, there was a Jew and there was an Arab. Historically these two would have grounds for strong disagreement. But here they were, both believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, standing with arms around each other's shoulders, singing the praises of the One who is the Savior of both.

Enjoyment Involves Encouragement

Paul said of the believers at Philippi, "you are my crown" - my special source of delight.

How often do we give genuine commendation to someone who has done a good job? Yet something happens within our own souls when we express - honestly and spontaneously - our pride in the efforts of other Christians.

Enjoyment Calls For "Sweet Reasonableness"

"Let your moderation ["sweet reasonableness," Dr. H. A. Ironside used to say] be known unto all men" (Phil. 4:5).

You'd be surprised how much easier people are to get along with if you don't insist on everything being done your way. I had to learn that lesson when I began to travel around the world in the interests of youth and evangelism. I found that people in other countries had ideas about ministry quite different from my own. There were differences in the matter of observing the Lord's Supper, or of administering baptism, or of praying in public, or of witnessing.

Once I was told in post-war Germany, "Brother Cook, don't ask our people to raise their hands in response to an invitation. Adolf Hitler required hand raising. We just don't do that here."

"Sweet reasonableness" adjusts to situations like that.

There are some things about which we should stand rock firm, such as the immutability of the Word of God and the salvation provided through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. But there are other matters on which we can well afford to yield a little, all the time recognizing that ours is the God of infinite variety and that He will do His work in His own way.

Ours is a day of mounting confusion, uncertainty and violence. No one needs to be told that these verities prey upon our strength both physical and spiritual- and render us weak and exhausted.

The only "medicine" effective for our ills is the joy God gives- the joy of His presence, the joy of deliverance, the joy of fellowship. Here is something that really works!

My dear Christian friend, I urge you to avail yourself of this healing potion. Do this - and become STRONG.

Nehemiah said it so well, long ago: *"The joy of the Lord is your strength!"*

