

# Cheerfulness as an Aid to Overcoming

***“A merry heart  
doeth good like a  
medicine: but a  
broken spirit  
drieth the bones.”  
—Proverbs 17:22***

## **ROGET'S THESAURUS**

describes cheerfulness as “a condition of supreme well-being and good spirits, beatitude, blessedness, bliss, cheer, felicity, gladness, happiness, joy and joyfulness.” Cheerfulness embodies an attitude of mind that should accompany a true Christian regardless of circumstances. The Scriptures even support a connection between cheerfulness and health: “A cheerful look brings joy to your heart. And good news gives health to your body.”—Prov. 15:30, *New International Reader's Version*

There is broad consensus among the medical community that cheerfulness has a beneficial effect upon the physical and emotional well-being of the human species. One example of such reasoning relates to the heart, which supplies blood to all parts of the body. If the heart is not healthy, then

the body may suffer various maladies, aches and pains owing to an irregular supply of blood. Many people so afflicted attempt to regulate their diet and have an exercise regimen to improve their circulation. However, these alone are often not sufficient to make a significant impact upon the diseased condition. It has been suggested that a major cause of heart problems is stress and an accompanying overall lack of cheerfulness.

## **PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

When Norman Cousins, a noted former writer and editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, was diagnosed with heart disease, he reasoned that if stress exacerbated the disease, perhaps laughter would ease the pain he so often experienced. Although told he had only a short time to live, he decided to take his treatment into his own hands. He took massive doses of Vitamin C and watched old comedic films.

He later wrote: "I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep. When the pain-killing effect of the laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again and not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free interval." His book, *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient*, became a best seller. It also stimulated research on the link between laughter and healing within the medical community.

## **SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE**

When someone laughs, an oxygenated blood supply flows through the body and improves the

strength and quality of the blood. Those who are suffering from an illness can often improve their condition by developing a cheerful attitude. Those not so afflicted may help to prevent disease by bringing external sources of cheer into their lives, if they are not cheerful by nature. The power of positive suggestion is also advocated as an aid to good health and effective parenting.

Consider these insightful comments from the pen of a noted Biblical author. "If, instead of sunshine, there is rain and a gloomy outlook, it will only make matters worse to think of the day gloomily and to suggest gloomy thoughts to others. Rainy days have their blessings for us as well as for others, and our minds should be quick to note these and to pass them along by suggestion to companions. The mother should anticipate the child's disappointment by calling its attention to the beautiful rain which God has provided for giving the flowers and trees and grass a drink and a bath to refresh them, that they may be bright and cheerful to us and yield their increase; and provided also for the cattle and for us to drink and bathe and be clean and happy, and praise him and love him and serve him."

## **CHRIST'S EXAMPLE**

From a higher standpoint, cheerfulness has a direct bearing upon the spiritual health of dedicated Christians. During his earthly sojourn Christ was the epitome of cheerfulness despite the extremely difficult experiences he endured as he carried out his consecration vows. The Master commenced his sacrificial course after presenting himself in baptism in fulfillment of prophecy: "Then said I, Lo, I

come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”—Ps. 40:7,8

The secret of Jesus’ success in overcoming adversity was that he cheerfully accepted God’s will as the course to follow, and in every particular, he proved faithful. He ignored the scorn and dishonor heaped upon him by the scribes and Pharisees who opposed him. Cheerfulness does not exist in a vacuum. There needs to be a basis for it and, in Jesus’ case, as prophesied by the psalmist, it was because he had God’s law, plan, and purposes within his heart. These brought him joy as he did his part to fulfill them. He was enthusiastic about rendering service that would be pleasing to God, undoubtedly recalling his pre-human condition of which we are told he was daily his Father’s delight.—Prov. 8:30

Through perfect heart communion with God while in the flesh, Jesus knew his prayers were always heard. What an assurance that must have given him that all was well! What joy must have been his to realize the promised high exaltation to the divine nature as a reward for cheerfully and successfully carrying out his mission to redeem the human family. While still in the flesh, he said: “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”—John 5:26

## **THE DIVINE PERSPECTIVE**

The return of Christ, eradication of sin as well as suffering, and the establishment of his kingdom is God’s method for bringing about permanent peace and happiness throughout the world. The lengthy reign of sin and death is referred to in Psalm 30:5

as a period of darkness, with the explanation that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Enlightened, consecrated Christians appreciate that the purpose of the Lord’s return is to establish Messiah’s kingdom. Yet, the kingdom awaits God’s due time, and this becomes a genuine test of their cheerful endurance as they look to the Lord to help them during the present season of distress and chaos. Furthermore, this test of maintaining a cheerful attitude seemingly becomes very personal. The follower of the Master, in order to demonstrate obedience under adversity, is subjected to more than the ordinary hardships common to those not in covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Many such saints are confined to beds of sickness and pain throughout periods of several years. It is a great test of their endurance to patiently wait on the Lord as they go through such difficult experiences. It is always true, of course, that God gives strength for every time of need, but this does not mean that such individuals are necessarily released from suffering. It simply means that he helps them to bear it. (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) In proportion to their faith, they can and do bear it, while they look ahead to the establishment of the kingdom. Then their own hope of glory, honor, and immortality will be realized, and eventually throughout the whole earth there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more death, when these former things are passed away.—Rom. 2:7; Rev. 21:3-5

There are also those who are called upon to care for the sick and the afflicted. This, too, is a severe

test of cheerful endurance. However, many of the Lord's people have endured these tests, and successfully, because the grace of the Lord was with them. It is a hard test, although not so difficult as is the case with the ailing ones. As a rule, those who care for the ill do not undergo the same degree of physical suffering. Yet there is often much emotional and mental stress upon those who have the responsibility of caring for another person. God is not unrighteous to forget the many labors of love of these dear ones, in that they faithfully minister to his saints, gladly laying down their lives in this way, as he has indicated to be his will.—Heb. 6:10

## **SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OF THE CONSECRATED**

Believers receive so many favors from God that a failure to maintain an attitude of cheerfulness even during severe trials would be evidence of living below our privileges. Such a condition would prove detrimental to our spiritual health. A few of these special favors include justification, spirit begetting, a knowledge of God's plan, discipleship, a transformed mind, prayer access to God, forgiveness, service opportunities, fellowship, and guardian angels. These evidences of the Father's grace and love should promote cheerfulness and sustain our spiritual health. Let us examine briefly each of these special blessings from our Heavenly Father.

- Justification enables us to have a standing with God as sons at this time in advance of the world of mankind because we have been covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that

condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom 8:33,34) How precious is the exhilaration stemming from the knowledge that we have been accepted in the Beloved.—Eph. 1:6

- Spirit begetteth is an earnest or down payment that, if faithful unto death, we will receive the divine nature and ultimately be in the presence of God beyond the veil. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Cor. 2:12,14) Through the Holy Spirit’s influence, we can appreciate the realities that are hidden from the human family at large. Surely that is cause for rejoicing.—Rom. 8:14-17

- A knowledge of God’s plan assures us that we are able to see and comprehend what marvelous things are in reservation not only for the church but for all mankind. “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ... Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Matt. 13:10,11,16,17) When

we contrast this understanding with the sense of despair that engulfs those who are blinded by the adversary, how grateful we should be.—John 8:32

- The privilege of discipleship to follow in the Master's footsteps and ultimately live and reign with him as priests and kings was not offered prior to the present Gospel Age. This offer will soon cease forever. How ecstatic we should be for the high calling and the opportunity to be a part of the little flock.—Matt. 16:24; Luke 12:32; II Tim. 1:9

- A transformed mind changes us from serving sin and self to comprehending and doing the will of God in our lives. (Rom. 12:2) With an increasing appetite for the Scriptures and the application of their principles, we produce fruitage, the character of our Lord Jesus. We also observe it in our brethren, thereby enriching our Christian sojourn and crystallizing our characters. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."—Gal. 5:22,23

- Prayer, or communion with God, is a source of comfort that is indescribable. We experience trials and sorrows, but these are eased as we are strengthened through God's Spirit and his providential overruling, resulting in an inner sense of calm. (John 15:7) In prayer, we appropriately may ask for strength to overcome the propensities of the flesh. In this regard, the Apostle Paul reminds us: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations,



and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:3-5) Satan is an ever watchful, wily opponent who uses our flesh to war against the New Creature. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Eph. 6:12

- The assurance of God’s forgiveness extended towards us removes the discouragement that would otherwise make us downcast, because we know that we fail repeatedly. “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Prov. 24:16) The blessing of forgiveness is an occasion for continued gratitude for the Father’s mercy, which enhances our sense of spiritual well-being.—I John 1:9

- Service opportunities in the Lord’s vineyard provide us with a sense of fulfillment. The measure of our love for God can be gauged by our joy in helping to assist, bless, and comfort others in various ways. The pleasure we attain helping our brethren along with the Father’s approval of our actions is yet another evidence of our spiritual health. Not all of the Lord’s people have the same abilities to serve, but each should be faithful in the use of whatever talents and privileges may be his. Some who seek to be public servants of the Master may fail to recognize the great joy which is experienced by those who serve faithfully in obscurity, known only by our Heavenly Father. Paul wrote, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another,” and also,

“By love serve one another.” (Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13)  
The service of the Lord is oftentimes difficult. Nevertheless, we are to be patient in tribulation, submitting cheerfully to all the adversities which the Lord, in his love, may permit to come upon us.—I John 3:16; 4:12

- Fellowship implies our close association with the Father, his Son Christ Jesus, and other members of the brotherhood. As we meditate upon the word of God and converse upon holy things, we can sense the divine presence in our lives and realize that we are never alone in our Christian sojourn. This reality is a source of perpetual encouragement and joy.—I John 1:3,7; Acts 2:42,46,47

- Guardian angels are the unseen agents that protect us from the evil that surrounds us. This provision, rightly appreciated, minimizes the spirit of fear that might otherwise overcome us as we walk by faith, seeking to do God’s will. How can we not worship and extol our Heavenly Father, who is concerned for our every interest?—Ps. 34:7; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:13,14

## **MANIFESTING CHEERFULNESS IN PHILIPPI**

Undoubtedly, all of the foregoing privileges were enjoyed by Paul and Silas as they traveled together in the ministry of the Gospel. The strength derived from their divine relationship helped them be cheerful in Philippi, even though they had been beaten and imprisoned. This occurred after Paul commanded an evil spirit to depart from a young woman who pretended to forecast the future. As a result, her masters were no longer able to profit from her supposed ability.

The account reads, “When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” (Acts 16:23-25). Surely their cheerful demeanor under such hardship spoke volumes concerning the high degree of their spiritual health and thus fulfilled the spirit of the admonition, “Rejoice in the Lord always.”—Phil.4:4

### **ADDITIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM JAMES**

James wrote: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:2-4) We can understand why this quality of cheerfulness is so essential to develop as we prepare now for our role in the Messianic kingdom to help reconcile mankind back to God. When fallen humanity is awakened from the tomb, each will return with the same state of mind that they possessed prior to their death. The assurance to the faithful members of the church, however, is that they will be fully equipped to assist mankind up the highway of holiness and back to perfection. (Isa. 35:8-10) This will be a great source of joy for us beyond the veil as we share with Christ in carrying out the work of fulfilling God’s eternal purpose for his earthly children.

During the period of judgment in the Messianic kingdom, the human family will gradually return

from the tomb. There will be a great work of education needed to assist them up the highway of holiness in preparation for their test of loyalty to righteousness during the “little season” at the end of the kingdom. (Rev. 20:3) This judgment day period will feature an unyielding rule of righteousness, but it will also be a time when justice is tempered with mercy to assist whosoever is willing, to drink of the “water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

## **FAITH AND CHEERFULNESS**

The Scriptures lay a great deal of stress upon the subject of faith. Hebrews 11:6 states, “Without faith it is impossible to please [God].” Peter tells us that by adding certain qualities of character to our faith we shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and that we shall never fall. (II Pet. 1:5-11) How could one develop meekness, which means cheerful submission to the divine will, without a strong faith? During Old Testament times, for example, God asked Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice, which he obediently prepared to do, thus attesting to his faith and confidence in God. The Heavenly Father did not permit Abraham to actually slay Isaac. Instead, God substituted a male lamb to take his place on the altar. (Gen. 22:1-13) It is in keeping with this that Jesus is later identified in the Bible as “the Lamb of God.” He gave his life, that Adam and his progeny—all mankind—might be released from “the sin of the world,” and have an opportunity to believe and live forever.—John 1:29

The true followers of Jesus who, with him, comprise the faith seed of Abraham, likewise lay down

their lives in sacrifice. (Gal. 3:16,26-29) This is the condition upon which they are counted worthy to share with Jesus in the future work of blessing “all the kindreds of the earth.” (Rev. 14:1,4; Acts 3:25,26) In living a life of sacrifice, how could patience and cheerful endurance be cultivated under such circumstances without a strong mental conviction that these are qualities that the Lord is looking for in us? How true it is then that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”—Heb. 11:1

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Maintaining cheerfulness is an aid to good spiritual health. It is an important aspect of our Christian sojourn if we are to remain faithful to our calling. As we attempt to overcome any tendency towards discouragement, let us be vigilant with regard to our prayer life, maintain faithfulness in assembling together with our brethren, and fulfill our vows of consecration. Let us also claim for ourselves and repeat to all who have a hearing ear the many wonderful promises of God found in the Scriptures. This will not only help us maintain cheerfulness now, but if we are faithful in doing all these things, we will have the joy of participating in the work of helping to restore mankind to the perfection lost in Eden.

May we be encouraged by the words of the Master who assured us that we can be more than conquerors: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”—John 16:33 ■