

## A Letter to a Bereaved Brother

J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend 1897 p. 207.

(The date of this letter is not known — probably it was 1865: it was found among the papers of the brother who received it, after his departure to be with Christ. The annexed lines were written by the bereaved parent.)

My dear John,

How much I charge myself for want of joy in God; and I have just come from looking at a scripture that may be able to fix this charge still more home upon the spirit; I mean the opening of Luke. What joy among the angels there; what joy on earth in the vessels filled by the Spirit there! The same illustration, indeed the one feature of the kingdom of God, "joy in the Holy Ghost." The angels appear together, or alone, as in the person of Gabriel. Witness that fervency of heart and openness of mouth which speaks eloquently the liberty and gladness of the soul. And the style of the filled vessels, whether it be Mary or Elizabeth, Zacharias or Simeon, or the company of shepherds who had been called into the fellowship of angels, equally tells us that all were satisfied; that if in heaven, so on earth, the presence of the power of "the kingdom of God" was expressing itself in "joy."

But let us come on to the fifth chapter, and there we shall find that not only angelic heavenly hosts and filled human vessels enter into this joy, but believing sinners likewise. They show it, and in their way they express it.

Look in this chapter at Peter and his companions, at the healed palsied man, at Levi, and then at all the children of the bride-chamber. Peter and his companions are at once able to rise up, leave all, and follow Jesus. The palsied man takes up his bed, and rising up before them all who stood around him goes home glorifying God. Levi at the word of power abandons what is everything to him in this world, and makes a feast, and such a feast as was exposing him to the rebuke of others; but though roughly, after the mind of his divine Master.

The children of the bride-chamber could not fast; they were afresh introduced to the Person in whom the fulness of joy dwells and reigns, and they could not fast; and the Bridegroom approves their joy.

Thus were poor believing sinners, as in Acts 13, "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." They take their place with angels and with filled vessels just to prove (it may be each in his different way) that the one feature of the kingdom of heaven is "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The poor cripple, carrying his bed with praises, is as sure and seasonable an expression of this as the angelic chorus over the fields of Bethlehem. Levi's feast tells this as distinctly as Mary's song or Simeon's oracle. All is joy after its own order and in its own way.

And this is the crowning, eternal thing: there is peace, there is entrance into grace or favour, there is hope, but the crowning experience in the praises of the soul is joy — "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5: 11.)

It is joy that must account for Peter leaving his nets and Levi his receipt of custom. It is joy in the Bridegroom's presence that will give the feast in His absence. "The joy of the Lord is our strength."

You may have to watch against the tendency to mere sentiment in your soul. I have to do this

very specially. Some others have a strong doctrinal tendency, if I may so speak; a rigid literal way of learning Christ. You and I and many others have to watch against the uneasiness and morbidness of mere feeling or sentiment. It may be a little of your human way or natural mind that may have expressed itself in the teaching to which you allude, and which in its measure was challenged. But surely we are entitled by the Word to speak of "delighting the divine mind." I have no doubt of it. Scripture is very bold in this way; for the apostle says, "Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." And again, "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of man."

The Father is revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians as presenting the children to Himself, just as Christ, the Bridegroom, is revealed as presenting the Church to Himself (see Eph. 1 and Eph. 5), language which tells us the personal delight that the one takes in His family, and the other in His bride.

Surely I know the prevalency of sensible, creature influences, and how much the heart surrenders itself to their authority. But the sense of incapacity and the force of attraction will do much for the heart in binding it to Christ and detaching it from what would naturally be a great hindrance. How Bartimeus by reason of the first, and Zaccheus by reason of the second, clung to Jesus, though the multitudes were tempting them to yield. In the exercises of your spirit, dear brother, and in the anxieties and cares of your heart and hand, may His comforts refresh your soul. It is a struggling scene. "Who shall roll us away the stone?" But the resurrection will anticipate or close all the trial and the difficulty, as it did in Mark 16.

My love in the Lord to the dear brethren and to your dear wife, if returned.

Ever, dear John, Your affectionate Brother, J. G. Bellett.

2, Upper Pembroke Street, August 27th.

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"Our precious child, Lord Jesus,  
We know is now with Thee;  
Nor would we wish him present,  
E'en though that wish could be.  
There in Thine arms enfolded,  
His happiness entire  
For one we loved so dearly,  
What more could we desire?  
"There in Thy blissful presence,  
Waiting with thousands more  
The time by God appointed,  
When time shall be no more,  
When Thou shalt come to gather,  
Thy chosen ones to Thee  
That glorious time of meeting

We long, O Lord, to see."