

The Remedy for Complaining



Jim Cymbala April 4, 2020

When Christians experience joy today, it has a much more powerful impact on the world than it did decades ago. Why? Because the entitlement mentality so prevalent in our society leads many to feel justified in their anger. We may think, “The government, my employer, my family — someone for sure! — owes me big-time. I’m entitled because my life has been hard. You have no idea what I’ve been through.” There is often a deep resentment in that kind of complaint.

If you carefully analyze international affairs, national politics, call-in radio shows, blogs, labor disputes, and race relations, you find a worldwide epidemic of venom and bitterness. It’s everywhere and, sadly, it has also invaded the Body of Christ. It is the exact opposite of the joyous living that Jesus intended for all of us. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

Centuries before Jesus said those words, joy was already understood as an important facet in the life of God’s chosen people. Moses instructed them that the blessings of God were granted so that “your joy will be complete” (Deuteronomy 16:15). Enjoying God’s presence produced an even deeper joy than any material blessing (Psalm 21:6), and God’s people were to continually celebrate his goodness with “songs of joy” (Psalm 107:22).

When singing a song of joy, it wasn’t only the lyrics or melody that made the song worshipful; the singers needed a heart of joy for all that the Lord had done for them. God was more interested in joyful hearts than vocal ability — that’s why David’s attitude pleased God so much. Although surrounded by enemies and under intense stress, David didn’t complain or get bitter. Rather, he went to the tabernacle and made sacrifices with “shouts of joy,” saying, “I will sing and make music to the Lord” (Psalm 27:6).

We Christians have been forgiven, cleansed, justified, and sealed with the Spirit — and we will live eternally with Christ! Joyous singing, shouts of praise, and exuberant thanksgiving are certainly in order. Although there is a time to “be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10), we should also remember to “sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob” (Psalm 81:1).

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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