

Alfred E. Bouter

Real joy

*"Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy;
and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God."*

Psalm 43:4

"My joy." We find this expression about eight times in the Scriptures, and they are a great encouragement to us. When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, the joy of the Lord is our strength, as the remnant in Nehemiah's days experienced (Neh. 8:10). So it will be for the Jewish remnant in the Great Tribulation. Robbed from the true temple service of God, because of the Antichrist's intervention, and fled from Jerusalem, they will cast themselves completely on the Lord. But this is exactly what we, as Christians, need to do! At the same time we will experience the Lord's presence, and this is true joy.

This is what Jeremiah did when he spoke about "the city of my joy" (Jer. 49:25), and John the Baptist in the time that people turned their attention to Christ, and away from him; but he had heard the voice of the Bridegroom, and his joy was fulfilled (John 3:29). Before the Lord Jesus departed from this world, He instructed His disciples by saying: *"I have spoken these things to you that My joy may be in you, and your joy be full"* (John 15:11). Wonderful privilege for us as well! Furthermore, in John 17:13, in His prayer to the Father, the Lord said: *"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."* Is this not the Lord's desire for us today, so that we can worship Him?

When Paul found himself in difficult circumstances, he found his joy in the Lord, and could write to the believers in Corinth with words of comfort and encouragement, so that they might have the same joy he had: *"having confidence*

in you all that my joy is the joy of you all" (2 Cor. 2:3). Although he was going through severe tribulations, he confirmed his exceeding joy (2 Cor. 7:4).

What about us today? We, Christians, are often marked by absence of real joy. Or we try to give the impression to others that we are happy, but the Lord knows our hearts. Let us, therefore, accept God's dealings with us, and the afflictions He allows, so that we may introduce Christ into these difficulties and experience His joy, so that we may have real joy. Then we can share this with others, just like Paul did in writing to the Philippians from his prison cell in Rome.

