

REACHING REAL FULFILLMENT AS A CHRISTIAN
"Part I: The Need To Rely On Scripture As One's Final Authority"
(1 John 1:1-7a; 2:3-4, 6)

Introduction: (To show the need for the message...)

(1) A week ago, while my wife, Nadine, was delivering newspapers, she came up to a home around 6 a.m. and heard the husband and wife arguing loudly from their bedroom in the house. From the bit she heard, Nadine discovered that relationships outside of that marriage had put a strain on the couple's capacity to appreciate one another, and they were really having it out!

However, Nadine has before spotted a bumper sticker on a vehicle in the home's driveway that reads: "Anticipate Miracles!"

Believers! They have accepted Christ as Savior and desired to be a testimony in their lives by placing the bumper sticker on their car. But, obviously, they were not experiencing the blessed joy of their salvation at 6 o 'clock that morning!

Wibley said the couple was driving along the highway when, 'standing out in the middle of the woods and the countryside was a mammoth castle called Foxwoods, which, glistening in the sunlight, really was a deceptive and terrible thing to be enticed to.' Wibley said he went in because he had always wanted to watch the boxing matches at the complex. He said a waitress offered him what she said was an iced tea, but which turned out to contain alcohol. He said he had the drink that was offered his wife." The rest is history.

(3) The same scene can be duplicated in many other homes and even churches around the world! One church got into a division over whether they would say "forgive us our debts" or "forgive us our trespasses" in the Lord's Prayer. Feelings ran so high that one group split and built another church across the same intersection from the other. A newspaper reporter wrote about the incident, saying that "one congregation now has its debts, and another its trespasses!"

Can this spiritual "dry rot" **be checked on an ongoing basis? If so, HOW?!**

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message...)

Need: "When one accepts Christ as his Savior, he is supposed to enjoy fullness of life, cf. Jn. 10:10! But, though he doesn't have Job's disastrous trials, a devout believer or a Gospel-preaching church can habitually experience painful unhappiness! Why?!"

- I. **John wrote 1 John to those who already knew Christ as their Savior, 1 John 5:13a. He was concerned that believers obtain full joy in living, implying that this fullness can be missed, 1 Jn. 1:1-4.**
- II. **The believer's FIRST STEP in realizing fullness of joy is to adhere to Scripture as his final authority for reality :**
 - A. The first message John gave to cause fulfilling joy for believers was that God was light without any trace of darkness, 1:5.
 - B. Such a symbol pictures God's exposure of reality through the Scriptures and His Son, Jesus Christ:
 1. As an entity, light exposes what is real.
 2. In both the Old and New testaments, this symbol pictures the ministry of Jesus Christ and Scripture:
 - a. In place of sinful Israel that sought guidance through evil spirit mediums, God said that if they did not go to Scripture for guidance, there was no "light" in them, Isa. 8:19-20.
 - b. Accordingly, the Galileans who sat in "darkness" beheld God's light in Christ who expounded God's truth, Is. 9:1-2, 6.
 - c. John picks up Isaiah's theme in his Gospel to relay that Jesus, God's light, "expounded" God's truth, John 1:1,9, 18.
 - C. Thus, 1 John 1:5 teaches that God as "light" has revealed what man needs to know is reality , and that through Christ and the Scriptures (1 Jn. 2:3-4,6)! He also states that God has no anti-Biblical or anti-Christ qualities so that any non-Biblical "spiritual" ultimate authority is not from God, 1 Jn. 1:5b!
- III. **Applying this truth to the Christian life exposes the "nuts and bolts" of fulfillment or its lack for believers (as follows):**
 - A. If a believer claims to commune with God but he orders his life from authorities independent of Scripture or Christ , he lies about such communion, and his entire life "produces" (*poioumen*, UBS Gr. N.T., p. 814; Trench, *Syn. of the N.T.*, p. 361f) works that are outside of God's truth , 1 John 1:6!
 - B. However, if he orders his life in accord with Scripture's ultimate authority (and that of Christ's), he communes with God in righteousness, 1 John 1:7. (cf. John 14:21,22-23)

C. As a result of these two opposite experiences in a believer's life, the following contrasting experiential results occur:

1. Whether one applies Scripture alone as his ultimate definer of reality affects how he spiritually helps or hinders others:
 - a. If one depends ultimately upon Scripture for reality, he will not cause others to stumble inadvertently into sin, 1 J. 2:10.
 - b. However, if he lives by depending upon extra-Biblical input for his final authority, he will inevitably cause others to be misled into spiritual injury in their lives, 1 Jn. 2:10 implied.
2. Whether one applies Scripture alone as his ultimate authority for life affects his clarity of direction in living:
 - a. If one lives by depending upon any authority as ultimate that is extra-Biblical to define reality, he will not know for sure where he is going as this exercise will come to distort his viewpoint, 1 Jn. 2:10. In time, this exercise will cause him personal spiritual barrenness and pain, Mtt. 15:14.
 - b. Yet, if he orders his life aligned with Scripture as ultimate authority, he will enjoy practical guidance and meaningful gestures of intimate friendship from God, Jn. 14:21-26.

Application: If we sense a lack of the fullness that comes at salvation, as FIRST order of business, we must check to see if we truly (1) believed on Christ for salvation from sin to begin to relate to God well, Mtt. 7:21-23 with 1 Jn. 4:1-3. (2) Then, as a believer, we need to (a) look only to Scripture as our final authority of defining all reality! If we rely on any human rule instead, we will head for the "darkness" of pain, fizzling relationships, uncertainty about life's direction and a loss of spiritual intimacy with God! (b) Scripture leads us to reverse such "dry rot" by confessing our sins (1 J. 1:9) and depending upon the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Ga. 5:16-22) for the continual intake of Scripture which sustains fulfillment, cf. 1 Peter 2:2-3! In time, we will experience meaningful direction and fulfilling intimacy with God, becoming a blessing to others!

Lesson: The starting point of sustaining happiness in the Christian walk is for the believer to use Scripture alone as his final authority of defining what is reality! Any deviation from this rule eventually yields a host of errant viewpoints that bring "dry rot" experiences.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the lesson of the message...)

On a bright June day in 1872, in Brooklyn, New York, a thirty-seven-year-old Christian homemaker was busy performing her regular household chores. God had called her to fulfill these chores in accord with the teaching in the Pastoral Epistles, and she went about them as unto the Lord.

While thus preoccupied, Annie Sherwood Hawks began thinking about the Lord, wondering how anyone could ever live with God in joy or in pain. Suddenly, she sensed a nearness to the Lord that was overwhelming. She sat down at a desk beside an open window with light summer breezes fluttering the curtains, and wrote a poem.

Her pastor, Dr. Robert Lowry, and accomplished hymn writer, saw the poem and put it to music.

Many years later, when Annie Sherwood Hawks lost her beloved husband in death, she found her hymn to be of surprising comfort to her. What had been a simple poem written as a homemaker who was doing her Biblical chores about the house had come not only to minister to countless thousands of people, but to herself in her deepest hour of need.

The poem goes as follows: "I need thee ev'ry hour, Most gracious Lord; No tender voice like thine Can peace afford. I need thee, O I need thee; Ev'ry hour I need thee! O bless me now, my Savior, I come to thee." It is number 382 in our Church hymnal!!

A believer, a wife and homemaker, busy with her chores about her home in Brooklyn, New York, was ordering her life in the light of Scripture's assignment for her life. As a result, for over 122 years, she has become an enormous blessing to believers in her hymn of fellowship with Christ Who is in the light!

If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another..!