

Rejoice At The Feast

Mike Ford (1955-2021)

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Two weeks from now we will be on our way. Is that not exciting! I do not know when I have been as excited about an upcoming Feast as this year. And I know I am speaking for all of you. We cannot wait! Two weeks, and we will be headed to San Antonio.

To begin with this afternoon let us turn to Deuteronomy 16.

Deuteronomy 16:13-14 "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."

Everyone—we are to rejoice. But what if things go wrong? What if you go to your boss to get the time off and he will not give it? And if you go, do not expect a job when you return! Or maybe the teachers give you a little headache, a little hassle over withdrawing the kids out of school? What if your car is giving you problems, maybe it breaks down on the way to San Antonio? Maybe you get to the beautiful and newly remodeled Seven Oaks and you have got fleas in your room. What do you do? How do you rejoice when things go wrong?

Well, first of all, we need to put the problem in perspective. Now, most of us have been attending the Feast for many, many years and you know that Satan intensifies his efforts against you during holy day season. Satan hates the holy days. He does not want us to enjoy them.

Now, we are always striving to stay close to God, but it is particularly important around the Feast time. Trials are going to come from areas that you know you can expect, but they are also going to come from unexpected

areas and we have to be on guard. We have to know they are coming and be ready for them.

At the same time that I am anticipating this Feast like no other, we have had trials in our own family unlike any other year. It has been a really weird time this last month, a lot of trials. You know Satan is going to do it, you know he is going to attack you. Be on guard.

Another aspect of keeping these problems in perspective is look to the future. The Feast looks to the future. It does not focus on today's problem. Let us turn to Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

This is true all year long, but it is even more important during a Feast that pictures the fulfilling of part of God's plan.

Now, the trials that come up during the Feast season, before and during, they cannot rob us of our eternal inheritance unless we let them take over. That is why we live in temporary dwellings to remind us that this life is only for a short time. These problems are only temporary. We are only pilgrims.

We are commanded to rejoice. We need to keep that in mind. God does not say have a super great time. He says rejoice; and there is a difference, believe it or not. Certainly, I know we are going to have a great time. We always do. But the word rejoice as used here means "to be glad," "to be happy," "to be delighted." You know, it does not mean euphoria or a real high like you have in the world sometimes and then the corresponding low. It is more of a state of mind and a mood. It is more of a level like this, but it is a level of being delighted, of being happy, of sustained joy.

Now, if you put that problem in perspective, what do you then do about the problem, about the trial? Well, I am going to give you a solution. It is so simple that I am glad you do not have rotten tomatoes to throw or something of that sort because it is going to seem, "Oh, that's so obvious!" But what do you do with those problems? *You take them to God.* Obvious, right? Simple. But it is so simple that we forget it a lot of times. We just plain forget it.

Whether this is your first Feast, which I do not think it will be for any of us, or our twentieth, Satan is going to try to prevent you from rejoicing. It *is* going to happen. So when a problem comes up, you put it in perspective, you reduce it down to its relative importance, and then you take it to God.

Turn back a couple of pages to Philippians 4.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

You know, when I was a young teenager, 13,14,15 years old, we began to attend the Feast and my mother and five children would go off to the Feast. My dad never attended services so mom never knew if she would have any money or not to go to the Feast, but she was going. And invariably, I remember this happening several times, right up to the day we are going to leave, the car is packed: Are we going to have any money? And I think dad would give her, I remember him giving her \$300 one year. Six people off to the Feast. Jekyll Island or Big Sandy. We slept in tents and we ate peanut butter sandwiches. And I have nothing but pleasant memories.

Now, a few years ago, my family and I went to Pensacola for the Feast and we had a lot more than \$300. And when we got there, our condo was dirty and it was infested with roaches. We had switched Feast sites and we had made the reservation late and this was all we could get. And instead of praying about it, we let it bother us and we complained. And a few years later, I was telling someone about this episode and I realized I am *still* complaining. Two years later, I was still complaining about those roaches. Now, granted, they were *big* roaches, but I was still complaining.

What would have happened if I put the problem in perspective and I had just let God handle it, if I had given the problem to God? Well, I do not know

because I did not do that, but He might have provided another room. He might have straightened out my attitude so that those roaches did not bother me. He might have led me to read Romans 8, verse 18. I think you are all familiar with this scripture. Paul says,

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

My complaining caused me to miss the whole point of the Feast. Instead of seeing the big picture, I only saw myself. You know, sometimes during our trials, we do not want a simple solution: Take your problem to God. We would like to think that our trial is different than anything anyone has ever had. I mean, these roaches were as big as house cats! You know, you want it to really be special. But it is not that way. There is nothing that we have gone through that has not been suffered by others. God has seen it all.

In 1963, the first year the Feast was held at Jekyll Island, and 4,800 brethren gathered under the big tent there in Jekyll Island. And some of you were there, my wife was there. Granted she was a very small child at the time, but she was there and all she remembers that first year was a lot of rain. You know, the people there that year at the Feast had a problem and it was Hurricane Flora. I do not know how many of you are familiar with this or heard this story, but Hurricane Flora was on a path that would take it directly over Jekyll Island during the middle of the Feast. So the brethren were asked to pray that God would turn that hurricane. They took their problem to God.

I would like to read what happened next from a copy of an article that was in the *Good News* that fall of 1963. And this article quotes from the *Star News* which is a newspaper from Pasadena, CA.

Weather scientists are baffled and awed by Hurricane Flora. Nothing quite like it ever happened before since the Weather Bureau started keeping hurricane records. What baffles them is Flora's peculiar conduct during a four-day period when it practically stood still and aimed blows unceasingly upon Cuba and utterly devastating a large part of Haiti. "We just can't explain Flora's behavior," Dr. Robert N. White, chief of the US Weather

Bureau said today. Flora is the first hurricane in recorded history that's stalled in a small Caribbean region for more than 24 to 36 hours.

You cannot really see this, but there is a map here that shows southeastern United States and the Caribbean region and it shows this path of the hurricane. It came up above South America, came across between Haiti and Cuba. October 3rd it hit the southern tip of Haiti. October 4th it is hitting Cuba. The Feast that year was October 3rd to the 9th. So this is the right during the Feast within a day or two. It should have been right over Jekyll Island, but October 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th, the hurricane stood still, and on the 9th took a path directly due east and headed back out to sea.

Amazing! I would not expect God to answer all our prayers quite that dramatically. But the point is that He will answer them. He has commanded us to rejoice and He will allow us to do that.

For a final scripture, let us turn to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:2-3 Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

No matter what trials may come upon you, we are told to rejoice at the Feast—and you can do this. If your room does not satisfy you, your car breaks down, you get sick, you do not know if you have a job when you return home, if you have big roaches in your room, it does not matter. It does not matter. Put the problem in perspective and take it to God; and let us all rejoice at the Feast.