

Night Joy

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us.

Psalm 67:1

THE PAIN IS WRITTEN ACROSS HIS FACE—the kind of pain that, try as one might, cannot be kept private. His uncomfortable step and slow toward the platform betrays the agony of being vertical when one should be horizontal, and his Sunday suit and tie do nothing to hide the fact that he should not be here at all.

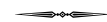
He makes every effort to appear his normal self, but cannot isolate from his countenance the wincing stabs that come from within.

His recent accident had left him hospitalized with broken ribs and worse, and though now on the mend at home, he still experiences brutal pain at every move. But he had insisted on attending the dedication of his little girl and boy at church this morning, for he lives and works for his family, for all of them, and nothing would keep him away.

Standing on the platform with his wife and the other parents and their children, he tries to respond to the pastor's gentle humor and the comments being made by others. But each time his face twists into an unnatural expression. Though his lips may turn up in a smile, his eyes cannot, revealing the physical price he pays for just standing here.

It is torture for him—and torture to behold.

But then his little girl bounces and giggles and reaches out toward him—and the pain disappears. Then and only then do his eyes smile with open delight at the exultant joy radiating from the child. Her boundless and infectious spirit envelop him, wiping away, if only for a moment, any thought of his physical torment.



And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

Matthew 17:2

To someone who has been living in a darkened room, even the dimmest illumination may seem brilliant. We all live in a world filled with dim imitations of that which is authentic and true. We have grown accustomed to the *faux*, darkened reality that man has created for himself.

In the beginning, God's creation was filled with the true brilliance of His illumination. It was pure, pristine. It was a world bathed in the light of His glory and magnificence. And in that glorious light

there dwelt the true joy.

But man chose an alternate world, one filled with darkness and pain, frustration, and alienation from the true light. Being alienated from the light meant that man was separated, as well, from the true joy. So man crafted a substitute joy, an earthly, counterfeit joy that was not joy at all. And, as time passed, man came to believe that this was indeed the highest joy one could have.

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 1:4,9-10

When the Son of God came to earth His true light cast the pitiful imitations to which man had become accustomed back into the shadows where they belonged. For the first time since his fall, man could have a taste of the authentic, glorious light of God's presence—a light superior to anything he could ever imagine.

And in that light was revealed the true high joy of Christ's presence. Radiance alone is little more than energy, but in *this* light was manifested the unbridled ecstasies of the Godhead. Now earth-bound "joy" was unmasked as the pretender it had always been. Now man could know *real* joy—a joy native to the presence of all that is good, and right, and pure.

Long ago the first man chose darkness and pain over the light and pure joy of God's presence. He abandoned all that was holy for all that was corrupt. In Christ we regain that sweet communion, and can know—even while our feet tread the soil of fallen earth—some of His heavenly joy.

But, oh, what bliss on that day when we kneel before our Lord in person. And, after graciously accepting our worship and adoration, he gently lifts us to our feet, and smiles. Our eyes will meet His, and in that moment of communion we will experience, for the very first time, the exultant rush of pure, unfiltered joy!

No earthly experience—not even the delight found in a little girl's adoring smile—can compare to the true and profound heavenly joy that removes all pain and guilt, and passes every other earth-bound emotion into insignificance. ☺

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Jude 1:24-25

*Show me Thy face—one transient gleam
Of loveliness divine,
And I shall never think or dream
Of other love save Thine:
All lesser light will darken quite,
All lower glories wane,
The beautiful of earth will scarce
Seem beautiful again.*

*Show me Thy face—my faith and love
Shall henceforth fixed be,
And nothing here have power to move
My soul's serenity.
My life shall seem a trance, a dream,
And all I feel and see,
Illusive, visionary—Thou
The one reality!*

Author Unknown

