

Winning the Exchange

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.” Hebrews 11: 1,2,

I received a note from a grandson this week relating a litany of world events and opining upon anticipated consequent threatening trends that he saw in them. His mind was clear and strong. His faith was resolute. When he was finished, he asked me for my opinion. I share that response with you.

“Our lives move in different orbits, yet I am not untouched by the same things that you deal with today. The difference, to the extent that it exists, is in degree. I will attempt to at least touch on a couple of realities that may aid in brightening our perspectives. As children of our Heavenly Father, we are made to positively respond to stimuli with two distinct emotional products: happiness and joy. They are discrete things because they are composed of different stuff. Both are good, but one is better. We must discuss them very briefly. They are germane to our interpretation of the events that press us.

"Happiness", for purposes of this exchange, identifies a good, positive, and pleasant "feeling" that we derive from observation, interpretation, and understanding of the superficial. We are happy or sad depending upon our subjective read of the things that are seen. It is an emotion that is evanescent. It is passing.

The second word may be rightly used in this context only by the Christian. The word is "joy". Joy is delight sourced in truth – a truth that the world does not know and therefore does not value. It is what the Puritans used to call “potbellied” in that it is a verity containing many others: God is in control, God will do right, God will work all things for the good of those who love Him, God will be victorious! The temporal joy that derives from this eternal truth is in direct proportion to the grace given us to believe it.

No one knows what tomorrow brings. I hope that you will live to possess an America bearing the same blessing that my generation has known, but it may not be so. The temporal horizon may be darkening for us all. It may well be that impending potential changes *will* impinge upon our happiness, but it *must* not diminish our joy.

It is an encouragement to me to anticipate someday hearing personally the stories of all our brothers and sisters who have already been caught up in circumstances such as you now apprehend. We will someday be able to do this in a leisurely fashion should we choose. We will then have plenty of time! The scripture already conveys many of these narratives. What I want you to note, as aid to your right view of them, is that The Lord never apologizes for their occurrence. Why should He not? His folks have gone through some pretty difficult experiences. The reason may be found, I think, partly in nature of the compensation. I ask myself. “How many persons who have gone to the cross, or have endured the fire, have gone to the block, or have otherwise given all in earthly terms for the cause of Christ, would exchange an eternal martyr’s crown for an extended earthly life? As the Book of Hebrews states above, **they have received their commendation**”. It is infinitely valuable. It is eternal.”

George Moore

Elder Emeritus