



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

12. Suicidal Storm-Super-serenity

Receive the therapy of God as Gail received it.

"You were too jovial in your song service tonight," remarked Gail, in a rather disgusted tone of voice. We were both in college, trying to adjust to life as we saw it. Gail's father was a philosophy professor, and Gail seemed to lean toward his quiet sophistication. I was an exuberant, optimistic extrovert who believed that religion and joy should always blend. I never dreamed in those days that I would be anything else but a joyful, cheerful, wholesome Christian, singing everywhere I went.

Then suddenly I found myself shocked by a blow from my own church people. In extreme trauma I became sick and was confined to my bed. I couldn't so much as crawl to the next room.

The story of this experience appears in one of our books. I won't repeat it here, except to say that an eminent physician diagnosed my case as nervous exhaustion. After a thorough examination, the doctor looked me in the eyes and said, "Six months in bed for you!"

Then, as my aching, weary, frustrated head lay on the pillow, God brought my mind back to an incident in which another physician had made a prescription for a case similar to mine. This doctor had offered his suggestion for a cure for nerve problems. Now, three hundred miles from home, I was going to test this theory. I would try his suggestion and see if it would work for me; I had nothing to lose, and possibly a great deal to win. The thought of six months in bed frightened me; I was willing to try anything!

To the best of my ability I did exactly as my physician friend had suggested. To my utter amazement, and to the amazement of the doctor who was attending me, it worked! I was up and out of that bed in three days and returned home.

As marvelous as my recovery had been, I did very little about sharing it with others who needed it desperately—perhaps more desperately than I needed it. Oh, yes, I did touch upon it now and then, with wonderful results; yet somehow it seemed that my one-track mind neither fully comprehended the secret of my own recovery, nor did I realize what it could do for weary, frustrated souls who go to their physicians only to be informed that there is not a thing wrong with them organically. They need exactly what I needed.

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It was literally several years, believe it or not, before I really got down to business in the matter of sharing this tremendous secret—this Bible therapy for nerves. When I did, I was amazed to discover that it did for others almost exactly what it had accomplished for me.

Then, as providence would have it, my wife and I met Gail again, that college student of years before. Now Gail was a professional counsellor, having obtained a master's degree in that field. Gail, as well as I, had gone through some leveling-off experiences since those days when we were young people in college together. Gail had done graduate work and had excelled in the field of teaching; I had become a minister.

Now it was my privilege to conduct a series of meetings in the church where Gail attended. While there we renewed our old acquaintance. We talked over many events that had occurred. Then I referred to the song service I had conducted. Gail had completely forgotten the remark she had made to me after that song service. Of course we laughed together.

We met on several occasions and spent time exploring many fields of thought. Gail had become an author, and since I had written several manuscripts, I asked her to examine them and offer me any suggestions. This she promised to do.

One day, after my wife and I had been over to see Gail, we both noticed that there was something lacking in her outlook. She seemed unhappy. Her expression was usually sad. She seemed disappointed in life. One day Gail talked to my wife and me about the time since we had been in college together. She told us of some of the heartache that she had had to endure. It seemed to Gail, at times, that life was not worth living.

My wife and I began to pray for Gail. We asked the Lord to bring her the release we had discovered when I had been stricken with nervous exhaustion. She had found one disappointment after another and had focused her attention and interest on those disappointments. Her life had seemed one of sighs and failures. On these experiences she focused her gaze until she had contemplated ending it all.

I, too, had learned something since we had been in college together. I had learned that the philosophy I had as a young college student was the right one. My philosophy was that religion and joy would go together. In 826 texts the Bible teaches that the Christian ought to be the happiest person on the face of the earth. Once a person has found Jesus, he can exclaim, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

It does not follow that the Christian will never have heartbreaking experiences. Rather he will rise above them in the consciousness that trials are to perfect patience. As my wife and I studied this subject, we learned that those who believe in the speedy return of Jesus are commanded to equate all the signs about us with joy. This is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, where Paul enjoins, "Rejoice evermore," and, "this is the will of God." "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

We learned that the Lord's day of worship especially, and all days in general, are to be equated with joy, rejoicing as the psalmist set us an example in singing; "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 188:24.

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Our study showed that, as far as our world is concerned, this program of rejoicing was initiated the first week of Creation when the "foundations of the earth" were "fastened"; "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7.

We learned that the hallowed day set up at the close of Creation week was in token of our Creator's rest, and that we are thus called to remember His wonderful works with rejoicing! In the days of ancient Israel God's professed people welcomed the coming of the holy Sabbath day as a bridegroom welcomes his bride. The day was welcomed by the blowing of trumpets and songs of gladness. And why not? No people in all the world at any time in history, except God's chosen ones, could boast of a God who is a loving Creator.

The heathen who worshiped their gods of wood and stone could not make this claim. None but the worshipers of Jehovah could point to the starry heavens and exclaim. "The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king. . . . He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Jeremiah 10:12.

This idea is in harmony with the true Sabbath-keeping philosophy of thanksgiving, which runs throughout the Scripture whenever God is at the center of the picture.

We had been teaching in our lecture series that, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," Proverbs 17:22, and that, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10.

We had concluded that self-centeredness leads to self-destruction: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: but in me is thine help." Hosea 13:9.

This truth is illustrated in a statement which a guide at a mental institution made to a guest in answer to a question. The guest was impressed with the intelligent conversation of most of the inmates. The guest wondered why it was that they were in the institution. The guide said this, "Yes, these people can converse intelligently, it seems. They are in this respect much as are other people. But they are in this place because, if you will notice carefully, their conversation points almost entirely, directly or indirectly, to self."

God's holy day, when rightly observed, turns our thoughts to the Lord. But more than this, it makes Him a joyful center, a delightful hub, as it were, around which all creation moves in harmony.

"When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center." Education 297.

This, in essence, was what our friend, the medical doctor, shared with me as a prescription. It is the true Sabbath-keeping philosophy. With a few alterations, my wife and I now use it in helping people who are in dire need, and call it the "Ten-point Program for Nerves."

When, a few months after we had visited with Gail in her city, she drove two hundred fifty miles to come see us, we knew that providence had sent her. She had volunteered to help us with some manuscripts that we hoped to have published soon. We rented a room for Gail right next to ours, and it was not long before the Lord directed the conversation in the line where His Holy Spirit could use us.

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One day when Gail felt particularly relaxed and confidential she said, "I'm so tired of it all: I'd just like to lie down and die! More than once I've decided life isn't worth living. As far as I'm concerned, life is just one big disappointment."

Here was Gail, a lady with her master's degree in the field of counselling! If anyone should have been equipped to face life and analyze it, surely it was she; but she was totally frustrated. She was a Christian, after the order of things, and yet Christianity had not brought joy and confidence into her life. Life had been a great disappointment to Gail. She had given so much, it seemed, but had been given so little in return.

It was then that I reviewed with Gail my own frustrating experience, my nerve exhaustion, and my complete change and healing in just three days. Gail listened, I shared with her the ten-point program that a doctor had suggested to me. I told Gail that this simple program had been prescribed by the Great Physician centuries before, and it had been placed in His manual, the Bible, for happy, delightful living.

"It is so simple," I said, "that it is difficult to imagine that it could be so effective. The fact that it has effected a cure in the lives of so many testifies to its power." Then sitting tall in my chair, with my eyes sparkling, and tingling with the thrill of being able to share this wonderful formula for happiness and joy, I said, "Now, Gail, I want to share this with you; I know it will do wonders for you too.

Here it is: Make a list of ten things each morning—for ten days—of things for which you are, or should be, thankful. Write them on a small piece of paper and carry that piece of paper with you all day. Often throughout the day take out that piece of paper and repeat out loud, if possible, these ten things for which you are thankful."

"But what kinds of things are you talking about?" Gail asked with great interest.

"Well, the first day the list might include:

1. Air
2. Light
3. Sight
4. Jesus
5. The Bible
6. Forgiveness
7. Salvation
8. Cleansing
9. Husband
10. Hearing

"Then put each of these words into a sentence, like this:

1. Thank You, Lord, for air.
2. Thank You, Lord, for light.
3. Thank You, Lord, for sight.
4. Thank You, Lord, for Jesus, and so on down the list."

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I shared with Gail how I had used this to such great advantage. I told her that the secret to success in this program was to say these sentences out loud. Something happens when thanks is uttered. The mind and spirit find healing. When oral repetition is not appropriate, the next best thing is to say them over in the mind. It is good to say these things for which we are thankful, perhaps every half hour, so that a schedule can be set up.

Then I shared with Gail that the items themselves that appear on the list are not of prime importance. "Write down anything that comes to your mind," I suggested. "For example, your list might end like this:

8. 'Thank You, Lord, for bones to keep me together.'
9. 'Thank You, Lord, for flesh on my bones.'
10. 'Thank you, Lord, for skin.'

"On the fourth day we might thank God for all the diseases we do not have:

1. Tuberculosis
2. Cancer
3. Leprosy
4. etc.

"If you find it hard to recall blessings for which to be thankful, open the dictionary, and you'll find scores—hundreds of things—for which to be thankful."

Gail sat there all this time just listening. Suddenly she said, "But why resort to this kind of therapy? I'm generally a cheerful person."

"So was I," I replied, "but I still had nervous exhaustion." Then I went on to explain that we, as a human race, have become degenerate, so unthankful, "that our foolish hearts are darkened." Romans 1:21. That's why we must educate our minds to be thankful. It will not come naturally. We must put forth all our energies to be grateful.

"Let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love." If we will follow this simple program, "no tongue can express, no finite mind can conceive, the blessings that result from appreciating the goodness and love of God." Ministry of Healing 253. It is as much a moral duty to be thankful as it is to pray.

Gail spent three days with us. She had come to discuss a manuscript with us, but we had spent the time in discussing the therapy of joy and the importance of faith, hope, and love. We had practically no discussion of the manuscript, but the time was spent, I felt, in a more profitable way.

On the last morning that Gail was with us, she was having a little trouble making her list of ten things for which to be thankful. Seeing a cat outside the door, she said, "I've got it! Thank You, Lord, for the cat. The cat has nine lives so that makes ten things!"

Gail was a little skeptical about the ten-point program. Her education didn't accept this simple program. How could anything so simple work? But because of her respect for us, and because it had helped me so much, Gail decided she would put it to a test. She had nothing to lose, and besides she was leaving, and if it didn't work we wouldn't know about it. So, with an expression

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of gratefulness to us for the time we had spent together and for the help she had received, Gail bade us good-bye and promised to test the program.

Just two weeks later, we moved to another city, a little closer to where Gail lived. She came to see us. We were holding a series of meetings in the local church. Gail entered the church, along with the other worshipers, and sat down. I had to look a second time before I recognized her! Her whole countenance had changed! I just could not believe my eyes. Was this the same lady we had seen just two weeks ago?

As soon as the service was over and I greeted the people at the door, I found Gail. I wanted to hear the story! My wife felt the same as I did, and a mutual friend had already invited Gail to come home with us for lunch.

While dinner was being prepared, I could wait no longer, turning to Gail, I said, "Gail, what has happened since we saw you last? You don't look the same. You look wonderful!"

"Well, it's really very simple; I went home to my school; as you know, I'm teaching some rather unruly children, I thought if this program will work for me, it will work for my children too. If it doesn't work for them, I decided it wouldn't work for me. So I put the ten-point program to a test for my entire classroom.

"I offered a special prize to each child who would bring a list of ten things for which he or she was thankful each day until school closes. There are twelve weeks of school left. When you multiply twelve weeks by five days by ten things each day, you know how long a list these children will have!"

Gail did not ask the children to go over their lists as she and I had done. All they were to do was to bring the new list each day. But in just two weeks the program was paying huge dividends, to herself and to the children. The classroom was changed.

"And I feel wonderful! I just never realized how powerful a simple little program like this could be," Gail said, still beaming.

Gail later sent us a most glowing report of the changed atmosphere in the school. Problem children became near honor students. Happiness, joy, and gladness chased the tattling away.

Then a bigger surprise came to Gail. The parents began to help the children find and write their lists day by day. Then the parents themselves, some of whom were real "sourpusses," became happy, wholesome, cooperative souls. The school and the church became almost a little heaven on earth.

Why? How did this happen? What was the reason for the change? The thinking pattern of the people, the children, and their teacher was changed. Instead of focusing on the negative side of life, they began to think thankfully, hopefully, cheerfully. It is a demonstration of the philosophy found in Proverbs 23:7. Which says. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Over the past several years we have heard from Gail on a number of occasions. The picture remains the same—hopeful, cheerful, and happy.

"There are no more ugly clouds in my sky. I haven't a single unsolved problem in the world," wrote Gail. "Now I'm really happy," she says without a moment's hesitation.

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The letters keep coming, each one a glowing testimony to the power of the program. In one letter she said, "This is your contribution to life. Please don't lose any more time in getting this information to people everywhere. It's the most important and valuable information from the Word of God that I have yet received. Share it!"

And that's why I'm sharing it with you now. Does it sound too simple for you to try? I don't blame you for being skeptical, but I challenge you to try it, just for three days! You, too, will realize the power of a thankful heart. When the heart is thankful, it can't be unhappy.

A happy heart is better than any medicine or pill you can find. Go ahead—be happy—you have a right to!

Dear Lord in heaven, Thou hast promised that in Thy presence there is fullness of joy. Psalm 16:11. We ask that this joy may flow into the hearts and lives of the readers. We believe that Thou art standing at the door of the heart offering "joy and peace in believing." Romans 15:13. And we receive the answer in dear Jesus' name. Amen.

STORM'S RAINBOW

Threat'ning is the morning sky;
Sad the cooing of the doves.
Darkness gathers; hear the cry-
No one cares and no one loves.

Missionless and purposeless
Is the life without our Lord:
There is only emptiness
Where no harmonies accord.

Then, ah, then, man lifts his eyes
To a hope that wakes the heart;
There's a rainbow in the skies,
Bringing man another start.

"I forgive you." speaks a voice:
I will build the life of man.
You may sing! You may rejoice!
You may find new hope again.

Reflection: As we conclude the thrilling account of this chapter, we strongly recommend that you not merely review the seven great Bible facts following but also start practicing the ten-point program that was used of our Lord to bring healing to Gail.

Seven Great Bible Facts:

1. When our Lord made this world, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).
2. We are exhorted to "declare his works with rejoicing" (Psalm 107:22).

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3. Thus He "made his wonderful works to be remembered" (Psalm 111:4).
4. The holy worship day is the memorial of His wonderful created works (Exodus 20:8-11).
5. We are exhorted to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. . . . Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein" (Psalm 96:9, 11, 12).
6. The merry heart is like a medicine, and the "Joy of the Lord is . . . [our] strength" (Proverbs 17:22: Nehemiah 8:10).
7. God promises to draw near with His life-giving presence as we rejoice in Him. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. " Zechariah 2:10: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:4-7).