



Bicycles,
Roller Skates,
& Peanut Butter

Contemplative
Verse #6

JOY

My goal is God Himself, not joy, peace, or blessings, but Him alone. Am I measuring my life by this standard or by something less?

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

Where do the saints find their joy? It might appear, at first glance, that they carry no burdens at all. However, we must look deeper. The peace, light, and joy of God within them is evidence that they do indeed bear burdens. These burdens squeeze the grapes in our lives, producing the wine we see—but we often miss the struggle behind it. No earthly or hellish power can conquer the Spirit of God within us; it creates an inner invincibility.

Are you faithful to Jesus, or just to your ideas about Him? Do you truly follow His words, or do you compromise them with your own thoughts? Simply obey Him with unrestrained joy. "Whatever He says to you, do it." (*John 2:5*)

"Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (*1 Corinthians 1:30*) When we realize this, the limitless joy of God begins in us. Without this joy, spiritual death remains.

If life produces only a whine instead of wine, rid yourself of it ruthlessly. It is a crime for a Christian to be weak in God's strength. "None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus." (*Acts 20:24*) This is how to persevere until we depart this life. You will find this joy in hopelessness, recognizing that only God's hand can lift you up.

The proper perspective is that we are here for one purpose—to be captives marching in the procession of Christ's triumphs. We are not here for display in God's showcase but to exhibit the "captivity [of our lives] to the obedience of Christ" (*2 Corinthians 10:5*). All other perspectives pale in comparison! Phrases like "I am standing all alone, battling for Jesus" or "I have to maintain the cause of Christ" miss the point. As Paul said, in essence, "I am in the procession of a conqueror, and no matter the difficulties, I am always led in triumph."

Is this perspective being worked out in us? Paul found secret joy in being taken as a rebel against Jesus Christ and made a captive for His purpose. Paul's greatest joy was being a captive of the Lord, with no other interest in heaven or on earth. It's shameful for a Christian to talk about getting the victory. We should belong so completely to the Victor that it is always His victory, and "we are more than conquerors through Him" (*Romans 8:37*).

The true test of our spirituality comes when we face injustice, degradation, ingratitude, and turmoil—all of which can make us spiritually lazy. During these tests, we might turn to prayer and Bible reading to find a quiet retreat, using God only for peace and joy. We seek our enjoyment of Jesus Christ rather than a true realization of Him. This is the wrong direction. We turn effects into causes.

When the disciples returned from their first mission, they rejoiced because even the demons were subject to them. But Jesus said, in effect, "Don't rejoice in successful service—the great secret of joy is that you have the right relationship with Me" (*Luke 10:17-20*).

When I have truly conducted business with God based on His covenant, letting go of everything else, there is no sense of personal achievement—no human element in it at all. Instead, there is an overwhelming sense of being

united with God, transforming my life to radiate peace and joy.

God does not give us an overcoming life—He gives us life as we overcome. The strain of life builds our strength; without strain, there is no strength. If you ask God for life, liberty, and joy, He cannot grant them unless you are willing to accept the strain. Face the strain, and you will immediately gain strength. Overcome your timidity and take the first step. Then God will nourish you—"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life." (Revelation 2:7). Physically giving of yourself leads to exhaustion, but spiritually giving of yourself brings more strength.

Intense, overpowering fear brought by terror is quickly removed by joy, defined as "the passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of God's best." Joy comes from fulfilling the specific purpose for which I was created and born again, not from achieving something of my own choosing. The joy our Lord experienced came from doing what the Father sent Him to do. He says to us, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (*John 20:21*).

Are we prepared to embrace the full meaning of Paul's prayer? Are we ready to say, "Lord, make me, a sinner saved by grace, as holy as You can"? Jesus prayed for us to be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father (*John 17:21-23*). The unmistakable evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the family likeness to Jesus Christ and freedom from all that is not like Him. Are we ready to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's work in us?

Is your mind focused on God, or is it starved? Starvation of the mind, caused by neglect, is a chief source of exhaustion and weakness in a servant's life. If you've never used your mind to place yourself before God, start now. Don't wait for God to come to you. Turn your

thoughts and eyes away from idols and look to Him and be saved (*Isaiah 45:22*).

Your mind is the greatest gift God has given you and should be devoted entirely to Him. Seek to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 *Corinthians 10:5*). This will be a great asset to your faith during trials because your faith and the Spirit of God will work together. When you have thoughts and ideas worthy of God, compare them with nature—the rising and setting of the sun, the shining of the moon and stars, and the changing of the seasons. You'll see that your thoughts come from God, and your mind will no longer be at the mercy of impulsive thinking but will always serve God.

"We have sinned with our fathers and did not remember" (*Psalms 106:6-7*). Wake up and prod your memory. Don't say, "But God is not talking to me right now." He should be. Remember whose you are and whom you serve. Encourage yourself to remember, and your affection for God will increase tenfold. Your mind will be quick and enthusiastic, and your hope will be inexpressibly bright.

It is God's will for humans to have a right-standing relationship with Him, and His covenants are designed for this purpose. Why doesn't God save me? He has provided for my salvation, but I haven't entered into a relationship with Him. Why doesn't God do everything we ask? He has done it. Will I step into that covenant relationship? All of God's great blessings are complete, but they are not mine until I enter a relationship with Him based on His covenant.

Waiting for God to act is fleshly unbelief. It means I have no faith in Him. I wait for Him to do something in me so I may trust in that, but God won't do it, because that's not the basis of the God-and-man relationship. Man must go beyond the physical body and feelings in his covenant with God, just as God reaches beyond Himself in His covenant with man. It's a question of faith in God—a rare

thing. We only have faith in our feelings. I don't believe God until He puts something tangible in my hand. Then I say, "Now I believe." There is no faith in that. God says, "Look to Me, and be saved" (*Isaiah 45:22*).

When I have truly conducted business with God based on His covenant, letting go of everything else, there is no sense of personal achievement—no human ingredient at all. Instead, there is an overwhelming sense of union with God, and my life is transformed, radiating peace and joy.

Reconciliation restores the relationship between the entire human race and God, putting it back to what God designed. This is what Jesus Christ did in redemption. The church ceases to be spiritual when it becomes self-seeking, focusing only on its own organization. The reconciliation of the human race according to His plan means realizing Him in our individual and collective lives. Jesus Christ sent apostles and teachers for this purpose—that the corporate Person of Christ and His church, made up of all believers, may reflect His glory.

The body of Christ, composed of many members, is meant to be brought into being and made known. We are not here to develop a spiritual life for our own benefit or to enjoy a quiet spiritual retreat. We are here to fully realize Jesus Christ for the purpose of building His body.

Am I building up the body of Christ, or am I solely focused on my personal development? The essential thing is my relationship with Jesus Christ—"...that I may know Him..." (Philippians 3:10). Fulfilling God's perfect design for me requires total surrender—complete abandonment of myself to Him. When I desire things only for myself, the relationship is distorted. I will face great humiliation when I realize that I have not truly been concerned with knowing Jesus Christ Himself, but only with what He has done for me.

My goal is God Himself, not joy, peace, or blessings, but Him alone. Am I measuring my life by this standard or by something less?

Satan's Serpent (poem)

*In the shadows of the soul's deep night, where darkness
mingles with fleeting light, A whispering serpent coils around,
seeking to pull the spirit down.*

*The light once pure, now fades and dims, as self-deceit and
pride begin. In outward brilliance, reason shines, yet
falsehood lingers in its lines.*

*Beware the devil's subtle art, his false desires that snare the
heart. For in the guise of righteous flame, he sows the seeds
of sin and shame.*

*Cast off the veil of self-deceit, and at God's feet, lay your
defeat. In humble silence, seek His grace, to guide you
through this worldly maze.*

*For true light dwells in hearts resigned, to God's own will, not
in the mind. and in the mercy of His care, find strength to
rise from dark despair.*

The poem explores the idea of spiritual deception and the persistence of evil influences.

Here's a detailed explanation:

1. The Subtle Devil's Influence:

- The poem begins with the devil insinuating himself into a person's nature, bringing forth false or evil desires. This corrupts the individual's initial state of purity and divine connection, leading them to believe they are still guided by God, even though they are misled by their own self-centered desires.

2. Corruption of Divine Light:

- Where divine light once shone is spoiled by these false desires, resulting in the departure of God's light from the individual. This represents the loss of

spiritual purity due to succumbing to temptations and false beliefs.

3. Outward Light vs. Divine Light:

- Although the divine light has departed, the outward light of natural reason remains. This outward light gives the illusion of still possessing divine guidance, but it is merely the individual's own reasoning, not true spiritual enlightenment.

4. Self-Exaltation and Deception:

- In their self-exaltation and reliance on their own reason, the person becomes vulnerable to the devil's influence again. The devil returns with even stronger desires, as illustrated by the reference to Christ's teaching about the unclean spirit bringing back seven worse spirits.

5. Worsened Spiritual State:

- The person's spiritual state becomes worse than before because they now have an even stronger false sense of righteousness while being more deeply misled. The "*veil of self-deceit*," represents a person who appears clean and orderly but is inwardly filled with greater evil due to self-deception.

In summary, the poem warns about the dangers of spiritual complacency and self-reliance. It emphasizes that true divine guidance requires humility and constant vigilance against the devil's deceptions. The struggle between genuine spiritual light and the misleading outward light of human reason is a central theme, illustrating the ongoing battle for spiritual integrity.

The Devil prowls (poem)

In the quiet of the soul's domain, where Light of Reason we do gain, a spark of Love, divine and pure, unveils a path, a heart's allure.

Desires aligned with God's own will, in abstinence, the mind grows still, a cheerful Light begins to glow, as evil's shadow, far, must go.

The Devil prowls, but finds no gate, in barren lands of anger's state, for where God's Love and Light reside, no darkness, there, can ever bide.

Satan's whispers, they are weak, against a soul that God does seek, In Love's embrace, we stand so tall, Divine protection, over all.

The soul, transformed, is now a shield, where divine Light and Love have healed, a House swept clean, with wisdom bright, In Christ's embrace, we find our Light.

The poem delves into the complex relationship between knowledge, reason, and the spiritual state of an individual.

Let's unpack it:

1. **Self and Reason:** Here, "Self" refers to an individual's sense of self and personal reasoning or intellect.
2. **Captivated and Fast Bound in a Close and Strong Prison:** This metaphor suggests that reason and self-awareness are confined or restricted within certain limitations or negative conditions.
3. **Very Dangerous for a Man to Make Use of the Light of Knowledge in Self:** This suggests that it is risky for someone to use their intellectual knowledge solely based on their own reasoning,

especially when that reasoning is influenced by negative spiritual or material conditions.

4. **As if it were in the Possession of Self:** This implies that individuals might mistakenly believe that their knowledge and understanding are entirely their own, without considering higher or spiritual truths.

In summary, the poem warns that relying solely on one's own reasoning and knowledge can be perilous if those faculties are trapped in negative spiritual or material conditions. It emphasizes the importance of humility and recognizing that true wisdom goes beyond mere intellectual understanding, requiring spiritual enlightenment and freedom from negative influences. The poem also points out a crucial distinction between understanding the concept of love and truly embodying the spirit of love.



Two paths diverge in the realm of the heart, One leads to knowledge, one sets love apart. Doctrine of love, with words so precise, yet often they mask, the heart's true device.

In the halls of wisdom, minds gather bright, Debating the nature, the need for the light. Excellence, essence, all written in gold, yet empty the heart, if love's spirit is cold.

For knowing of love, is not the same, as living its flame, in life's tender game. One can be filled, with doctrines so grand, and still, without love, not truly understand.

So, seek not just words, or knowledge profound, but let love's true spirit, within you be found. For in the embrace, of love's gentle grace, we find the true meaning and feel its embrace.

Therefore, it is necessary for the Children of God (Christians) to know how to behave themselves when they will learn the Way of God. They must beat down and cast away their very Thoughts; and desire nothing, nor

have the least Will to learn any Thing, unless they find themselves to be in true Resignation; so that God's Spirit leadeth, teaches, and guides Man's Spirit, and that the human Will which is attached to itself, be wholly broken off from its own Lust, and resigned to God.

The poem highlights a spiritual practice of complete surrender and humility in the pursuit of divine guidance.



Inspired by the idea of spiritual surrender and divine guidance: (poem)

*In the quiet of the soul's deep night, where thoughts are stilled
and hearts take flight, a path unseen, yet brightly lit, by the
Spirit's gentle, guiding light.*

*Cast aside your willful pride, let the ego's whispers fade and
hide. For in the surrender of the mind, the true way of God
you'll find.*

*No desires to cloud the way, no need for words, no need to
say. In the silence, pure and clear, God's own voice you'll truly
hear.*

*Break the chains of earthly lust, in divine guidance place your
trust. Let the Spirit lead your heart, In every step, a sacred art.*

*For in the humble, open heart, where self has learned to take
no part, God's own Spirit flows and grows, A river of grace that
ever flows.*

*There is an eternal Contrariety between Darkness and
Light; neither of them comprehends the other, and neither
of them is the other; and yet there is only one Essence,
Being, or Substance, wherein they both subsist. But there
is a Difference in the Quality and Will; yet the Essence or
Substance is not divided, but a principle makes the*

Division. So that the one is a nothing in the other, and yet it is there, but not manifest in the Property of that Thing wherein it is.

Self-Desire of the earthly Life (poem)

In the dance of dusk and dawn they meet, A whispered clash of shadows and the fleet. Where light's embrace and darkness' shroud, Form the essence, unseen but proud.

They dwell in unity yet stand apart, one essence beating in each heart. Qualities of will, they diverge and sway, A silent chorus in the break of day.

Darkness, the keeper of secrets deep, in light's pure glow finds its retreat. Yet in the same boundless core, they stay, a paradox in night and day.

The principle that draws the line, Defines the border, a subtle sign. In one, the other hides its face, an unmanifested silent grace.

But neither win, nor yield, In the cosmos' open fields. For darkness and light, in harmony strive, the essence of being, they keep alive.

Therefore, all Speculation and Inquiry about God's Will is a vain Thing, unless the Mind be converted. For when the Mind stand captivated in the Self-Desire of the earthly Life, it cannot comprehend what the Will of God is; it run on but in Self, from one Way into another, and yet find no Rest; for Self-Desire evermore bringeth Disquiet. But when it sinks itself wholly into the Mercy of God, desiring to die from itself, and to have God's Will for a Guide to the Understanding, so that it acknowledge and esteem itself as nothing, and will nothing but what God will, then shall it both know and do the Will of God. And if the Desire of Anger in the earthly Flesh should go along or join with the Devil's Imagination, and assault the Will of the Soul, yet the resigned Desire cry to God and saith, Abba, loving Father, deliver me from Evil. And then, though the earthly

Will should grow too strong in the Wrath of God by the Infection of the Devil, the Desire of Anger would work but in or upon itself. According to what St. Paul saith, Now, if I sin, I do it not, but Sin that dwelleth in my Flesh: Also, Now I serve the Law of God in my Mind, but in my Flesh the Law of Sin. Paul meant not that the Will of the Mind or Soul should consent to the Will of the Flesh; but Sin is so strong in the Flesh, viz. the awakened Anger of God in Self, that oftentimes the Mind is brought into Lust, as it were by Force, through the evil Incitements of the wicked, or else by beholding worldly Pomp and Glory; so that it absolutely bear down the resigned Will, and rule by Force.

The passage you've shared reflects deep religious and philosophical thoughts on understanding and following the will of God. Here's a breakdown:

1. **Human Self-Desire and Understanding God's Will:** The author argues that trying to understand God's will is futile if one's mind is trapped in worldly desires. This self-centered focus leads to unrest and confusion.
2. **Complete Submission to God:** True understanding and doing God's will happen when an individual wholly submits to God's mercy, letting go of self-desire and aligning with God's will.
3. **Struggle with Earthly Desires:** Even when one desires to follow God, earthly temptations and desires (often spurred by the devil) can attack the soul's will. In these moments, one should call out to God for help.
4. **St. Paul's Struggle:** Referencing St. Paul, the author highlights the ongoing struggle between the spiritual mind's will (which seeks to follow God) and the flesh's sinful desires.

Entrapped in worldly desire

In quiet whispers, God's will does dwell, A light amidst the shadows where we fell. From earthly desires, our hearts must part, to find the divine path, deep in the heart.

The mind entrapped in worldly desire, cannot grasp the celestial fire. But in surrender, with soul laid bare, God's will reveals, in mercy's care.

Temptations rise, the devil's snare, Pulling souls into despair. Yet in the storm, a prayer sincere, "Abba, Father, keep me near."

St. Paul's struggle, a tale of old, In flesh and spirit, a battle bold. Though sin may dwell within the flesh, The soul seeks God, in hope afresh.

In every heart, this war does rage, Worldly temptations, a constant cage. But through surrender, we find the key, In God's own will, our souls set free.

Then the subtle Devil insinuate himself into the Creature, and sifts the Centre of Nature, and brings evil or false Desires into it, so that a Man becomes as it were drunken in Self, and still persuades himself that he is driven by God, by which Means the good Beginning, wherein the divine Light shone in Nature, comes to be spoiled, and so the Light of God depart from him. Yet the outward Light of the outward Nature remain shining in the creature; for its own self throw itself thereinto and suppose that it is still the first Light of God; but it is not so. And into this Self-Exaltation in the Light of its outward Reason, the Devil throw himself again, (though in the first Light, which was Divine, he had been forced to depart) now returning with the seven-fold Desire, of which Christ Spake, saying, When the unclean Spirit depart out of a Man, he wander through dry Places seeking Rest, and find none; and then he takes to himself seven Spirits worse than himself, and return to his first House; and finding it swept and

garnished, he dwells therein, and so it is worse with that Man than it was before.

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- The person's spiritual state becomes worse than before because they now have an even stronger false sense of righteousness while being more deeply misled. The "swept and garnished" house represents a person who appears clean and orderly but is inwardly filled with greater evil due to self-deception.

In summary, the passage warns about the dangers of spiritual complacency and self-reliance. It emphasizes that true divine guidance requires humility and constant vigilance against the devil's deceptions. The struggle between genuine spiritual light and the misleading outward light of human reason is a central theme, illustrating the ongoing battle for spiritual integrity.

spiritual vigilance & struggle between divine light & worldly desire: (Poem)

*In the shadows of the soul's deep night, where darkness
mingles with fleeting light, A whispering serpent coils around,
seeking to pull the spirit down.*

*The light once pure, now fades and dims, as self-deceit and
pride begins. In outward brilliance, reason shines, yet falsehood
lingers in its lines.*

*Beware the devil's subtle art, his false desires that snare the
heart. for in the guise of righteous flame, he sows the seeds of
sin and shame.*

*Cast off the veil of self-deceit, and at God's feet, lay your
defeat. In humble silence, seek His grace, to guide you through
this worldly maze.*

*For true light dwells in hearts resigned, to God's own will, not
in the mind. and in the mercy of His care, find strength to rise
from dark despair.*

This poem delves into the inner spiritual struggle between light and darkness, truth and deception. Here's a breakdown:

*In the shadows of the soul's deep night, where darkness
mingles with fleeting light, A whispering serpent coils around,
seeking to pull the spirit down.*

- This imagery sets the stage for the poem, highlighting the inner conflict within the soul. The “whispering serpent” symbolizes temptation and evil, trying to bring the soul into darkness.

*The light once pure, now fades and dims, as self-deceit and
pride begins. In outward brilliance, reason shines, yet falsehood
lingers in its lines.*

- This section describes how the purity of the soul's light is tainted by self-deception and pride. Despite appearing reasonable and brilliant, underlying falsehoods and deceit remain.

*Beware the devil's subtle art, his false desires that snare the
heart. for in the guise of righteous flame, he sows the seeds of
sin and shame.*

- The devil's temptations are cunning, appearing as righteous desires but leading to sin and shame. The heart must remain vigilant against these deceptive snares.

*Cast off the veil of self-deceit, and at God's feet, lay your
defeat. In humble silence, seek His grace, to guide you through
this worldly maze.*

- To overcome this struggle, one must remove self-deception and humbly surrender to God. Seeking

God's grace provides guidance through life's challenges and temptations.

For true light dwells in hearts resigned, to God's own will, not in the mind. and in the mercy of His care, find strength to rise from dark despair.

- True divine light is found in hearts that fully surrender to God's will, rather than relying solely on the mind. God's mercy provides the strength to overcome despair and rise above inner darkness.

Overall, the poem emphasizes the importance of humility, vigilance, and seeking God's grace to navigate the spiritual battle between light and darkness, truth and deceit.



***God is
stronger
than your
struggle!***

