

### **Misery or Joy?**

*“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...”* (Hebrews 12:2 NIV)

Is it God’s will for us to be miserable? No. It is not God’s design, will, or intent for us to be miserable. He does not delight in our pain. He certainly did not delight in the suffering of His own Son on the cross. Neither did Jesus want the suffering that bearing the weight of sin would cause Him (Matthew 26:39).

Why then, does God allow pain in our lives? Why would He endure seeing His own Son in pain? What could make it worth experiencing and witnessing this pain? Only something of great value: our salvation.

What object of great value, then, is worth our pain, the difficulties we go through? “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience...that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4 NKJV). Like Jesus, we are to endure our “cross” for the joy set before us. God would not allow any suffering in our lives without purpose (Romans 8:28).

What if you believe that there is a purpose, yet you are still miserable? How can this be possible? When we have wrong expectations, we look to circumstances or people for blessing rather than looking for the blessing of knowing and experiencing God.

What is the solution? First, understand the process of becoming miserable. Misery happens when our emotions overwhelm us, when what we feel is what we

think. What we dwell on in our mind greatly impacts how we feel. It can become a vicious cycle: the more you feel, the more you think about how you are feeling which then intensifies how you are feeling. This cycle only goes downward.

Second, see the cause of your misery. While our circumstances, health situations, and/or other people can cause hardship, pain, discomfort, and grief, they do not have to cause us misery. Misery results when we focus on what is causing us pain rather than focusing on the One who can get us through it. When stress, trials, temptations, and troubles of any kind overwhelm us, the only way to avoid the vicious cycle toward misery is to focus on Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). Deliberately choose to think about God and what is good (Philippians 4:8); this can be done by reading the Word of God, singing praises, listening to spiritual songs and Bible messages. Think about God, who He is, what He has done for us. The answer to our misery does not lie in removing what is causing pain but in dwelling on the only One who can fill us with joy, peace, and contentment despite our circumstances.



**—Anne Foust**

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