

# Fullness of Joy: Honoring God & His Sufficient Word Rightly.

## *The Fullness of Joy in Being a Cessationist*

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It was not too long ago that someone posed the question to John Piper about whether or not continuationists have more and greater joy than cessationists. It's an interesting question that was given to Piper and one that he answered publicly. I read it and found myself respectfully disagreeing with him on numerous points, even to such a point that I felt it necessary to respond with a brief writeup. It should be noted that this is not a central, core, gospel tenet. There are sweet brothers in Christ who differ on these viewpoints. I do believe they are very important but I believe they are not crux, central gospel tenets. John Piper is a dear brother from whom I've benefitted greatly, so I am not disagreeing about *soteriological* issues but, at this point, I'm disagreeing with an important *hermeneutical* issue.

Cessationists would affirm that the miraculous, sign gifts ceased when the Apostles died and the canon of Scripture was completed. Thus, there are no more gifts of prophecies, speaking in tongues, healings, and interpretation of tongues today. Continuationists would affirm that all the spiritual gifts are still operative.

***Do continuationists have more joy than cessationists?*** I will argue that Piper incorrectly answered the question when he affirmed that continuationists *do have* more joy than cessationists. I would argue that cessationists do in fact have great fullness of joy. I'll argue this with a few brief headings.

### **1. God is FOR our joy; but He is not ABOUT our joy.**

The Bible states repeatedly that true believers have joy and await an everlasting eternity of joy with God! Even a fruit of the Spirit is joy in the life of a believer. But let it be said: God is for our joy and He imparts wondrous joy to our hearts, but God is not *about* our joy. The existence of God is not existing for and revolving around *our* joy. God is about *His* joy. In so far as we are united to Christ through faith, we have *His* joy made full in ourselves. True believers rejoice because of who God is and how God has revealed Himself in His Word.

### **2. Deep Joy comes in rightly interpreting the Word.**

Deep-seated, unrelenting, indomitable joy fortifies the heart of the Christian when we know we've read and understood His Word correctly. The Bible is the sufficient Word and the sign-gifts (such as tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecies, healings) have ceased when the Apostles died and the New Testament canon was complete. Thus, to know that we have the correct hermeneutic and the proper interpretation of a given text is what gives unspeakable joy to the Christian.

### **3. Satisfying Joy comes in adhering to the absolute sufficiency of the Word — no additional revelation, prophecies, or ecstatic languages are needed today.**

When we come to God's Word, we must bow the knee to the absolute authority and perfect sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Whatever the Word says, that we believe and cling to. The Bible is our only rule for conduct and godly living. It is *the* authority for it is *the* revealed, clear, inspired, inerrant, infallible, unchanging Word of God. True joy comes in clinging to this sufficient Word, not in seeking after or hearing about a new revelation or vision that someone claims to have from God, or a prophetic word from a teacher in our day. True joy is found when we cling to the body of truth that has been once for all delivered to the saints. We must cling to and hold on to the truth.

#### **4. Fullest Joy comes in Glorifying God Rightly.**

Fullest joy does not come in spiritual gifts *per se* but in using them rightly for the glory of God. Again, if the end of our worship is joy in spiritual gifts then we're missing the ultimate mark. The ultimate object and end of our worship must be to glorify God supremely through the spiritual gifts that He has given. Glorify God rightly demands that we honor His Word supremely as the sufficient, clear, authoritative revelation that He has given to us. Nothing more is needed. No further verification of the gospel is needed by way of miracles. God has given all that we need. As Peter put it: we have the prophetic word made more sure. May we honor God and His Word rightly so that God receives all the glory. The Spirit of God works in and through the written Word. Let us hold to this and cling to this as we glorify God rightly with God-given joy.

May the Lord impress upon our hearts the simple truth and joyous reality that God's Word is the precious, true, sufficient revelation that He has given to us. No new revelation or prophecy or vision from God is necessary. None at all. God's Word is *the* clear, authoritative, and inerrant truth. Let's cling to God's Word as He has revealed Himself in the written body of revelation and rejoice exceedingly in His Word knowing that *this* is the infallible, eternal, unchanging Word that He has given to us for our good, for His glory, and for our joy as we serve Him!