

1 John 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Analysis

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. John's purpose in writing is the completion or fulfillment of joy. The verb "may be full" (peplērōmenē, πεπληρωμένη) is in the perfect passive periphrastic, indicating a completed state of fullness that continues. True joy is found not in circumstances but in fellowship with God through Christ.

This joy is distinctly Christian—rooted in objective reality (the incarnation, Christ's work) and experienced communally. It's not self-generated positive thinking but the natural fruit of knowing God through Christ. The connection between truth and joy is crucial: John writes to bring joy through truth, not apart from truth.

The phrase echoes Jesus' words in John 15:11 and 16:24. Jesus' joy comes from perfect fellowship with the Father and perfect obedience to His will. Believers share this joy through union with Christ. The fullness of joy is found not in religious experiences, worldly pleasures, or human achievement but in knowing the triune God through the apostolic testimony to Christ. This sets the stage for John's epistle: assurance, love, and discernment are not burdens but pathways to joy.

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world, various philosophies and religions promised happiness or tranquility. Epicureanism sought pleasure through moderation. Stoicism pursued contentment through detachment. Mystery religions offered ecstatic

experiences. The imperial cult promised prosperity through emperor worship. Against this backdrop, Christianity's claim that true joy is found in the crucified and risen Christ was radical.

The Gnostic teachers likely promised superior joy through secret knowledge and liberation from material constraints. They may have portrayed apostolic Christianity as legalistic and joyless. John counters that genuine, lasting joy comes only through the truth about Christ that the apostles proclaimed.

The early church's joyful witness despite persecution puzzled and attracted pagans. Roman officials couldn't understand Christians singing hymns in prison or facing martyrdom with joy. This supernatural joy testified to the reality of their fellowship with God.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does your understanding of joy differ from John's description of joy rooted in fellowship with God through Christ?
2. What obstacles to full joy might exist in your life—unconfessed sin, false beliefs, broken relationships, or misplaced priorities?
3. How might your local church better cultivate joy that flows from fellowship with the Father and Son?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ταῦτα	γράφομεν	ὑμῖν,	ἵνα	ἡ	χαρὰ	ὑμῶν	ἥ
And	these things	write we	unto you	that	G3588	joy	your	may be
G2532	G5023	G1125	G5213	G2443		G5479	G5216	G5600
πεπληρωμένη								
full								
G4137								

Additional Cross-References

John 15:11 (Parallel theme): These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

John 16:24 (Parallel theme): Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

2 John 1:12 (Parallel theme): Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

2 Corinthians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Ephesians 3:19 (Parallel theme): And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

John 3:29 (Parallel theme): He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Isaiah 61:10 (Parallel theme): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.