



Ransom Notes

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“Shear Joy”

“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

Friday morning and I’m off for my weekly rearrangement of the mostly white locks on my head. As the ‘beautification’ process began, we decide a bit of clipping was in order. No shaggy dog image for Kathy.

Kelly and I chattered away, solving all of life’s problems as only two women are skilled at doing. Suddenly, I became aware of a different sound as the cutting continues. Bashful me immediately inquired, “What is happening?”

“We are just thinning the hair a bit and yes, I’m using different shears.” In response to my inquiring look she added, “These are **texturizing or blending** shears.

When the hair gets a bit thick, we need to remove some hair.” Kelly hands me the item as she points out that one blade has spaced-out teeth. This allows her to remove hair in a more controlled and precise manner. Hmm! Amazing what the brains God gave us can create. Regardless, I’m filled with joy that my beautician has been alert and located this helpful tool.

As I reflected on the joy of being trimmed so swiftly and creating a “less-ugly” me, words from the scripture came to mind. Paul, recognizing that the followers in Rome were having challenges, tried to encourage them. Romans 15:13 begins with, *“May the God of hope fill you with all JOY and PEACE. . .”* Great words for these days of discouragement, sadness, or even anger as friends and family lose jobs, struggle to provide basics for their household, or face medical and emotional bumps in the road of life.

But, you ask, “How do we find that joy and peace when the eviction papers for your apartment have just arrived due to inability to pay the rent?” Paul continues, “. . . as you **TRUST** in him (God), so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Sounds simple, but *trusting* is not easy.

Romans 15:4 adds a hint. *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”* Joy does not automatically fill your heart each morning as you pop out of bed and head for your next twelve-fourteen hours scrambling around in this world. Joy hides itself as you reach for the toothpaste only to discover the last person squeezed it empty. Glancing at your daily calendar, you groan when you remember three appointments that day which will create tension in your life. Regardless, you hop in your car.

The bluebird of happiness zips off to sit on someone else’s shoulder. Oh-my! Your heart begins beating faster. You are halfway to your destination and realize you must return home for the copious notes you prepared for that special committee report needed in forty-seven minutes. Your heart panics. The traffic is heavy. You’ll be late. Tears or maybe even anger creep into your mind. Joy is elusive. Yes, joy does not surround your heart and soul today and you’ve only been up for about ninety-seven minutes. Incidentally, patience is a foreign subject for this author.

How then can some impatient individual find joy? Paul said **trust** and **endure**. Playing a round of golf or writing an issue of Ransom Notes, despite moments of frustration, truly brings me joy — two types of joy. Golf is physically refreshing and takes my mind off other challenges facing me. That one spectacular drive to the seventh green will work for bragging rights at dinner that evening and bring a temporary smile. I play nine holes and smile and feel a bit of happiness.

That day’s golfing success, however, is not the joy the scripture is suggesting when Paul said we can be filled with joy and peace. Paul is referring to the peace and joy that can fill us as we contemplate our future with the Saviour. Philippians 4:4-9 should be read by each of you, dear readers. Yes, we are to rejoice (have joy) always in the Lord. Then Paul hints at our actions. *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the PEACE of GOD, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (4:6-7).* Don’t hesitate to pray for guidance in acquiring this tranquil feeling of peace and joy.

He then shares the details or roadmap for joy. *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me (Paul) — put it into practice (model). And the God of PEACE will be with you” (4:8-9).*

So, back to our shears. Let’s be selective in our behavior.

Cut out thoughts of anger, disappointment, hatred, or fear. Focus on true, noble, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy thoughts and actions. You will experience the “Shear Joy” of the Lord.