

This is a condition that we don't realize how it has increased throughout the world. Violence. It would have been ~~un~~thinkable 50 years ago among nations that would call themselves civilized, that diplomatic people would be seized and held no matter how uncivilized these nations might be. The idea was these diplomats if they do what is wrong, we send them out of our country. But they are diplomats. But to seize over 50 diplomats and hold them as hostages for 144 days! It was almost unheard of a few years ago.

Things that in America would not have been mentioned in polite society when I was a boy, today are trumpeted over TV and radio. It's only in the last few years we've seen signs saying Adult Pictures. You never heard of such a thing until within the last few years. But they say that practically every city in the US now has a number of places where they do not merely show that which entices to lust, but that which is actually bestiality; that which is almost beyond description. It is openly flaunted within these places in Philadelphia and elsewhere. The general attitude of people is that it has become such ~~that~~ that it is almost impossible to root it out.

I saw the inauguration on TV today. It was most interesting to see how they announced "God of our Fathers," to be played by the band. They had a sermon introducing it which ended in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and which gave full praise and recognition of God. One would think from the service this a.m. that this was a Christian nation. Yet within this year the Supreme Court has ruled it unconstitutional to even put up the Ten Commandments in the school room, though the Supreme Court itself has them placed large on the wall! Because that is the background of our country. But our country is changing, and the world is changing. You might say, How can you be joyful in a world that is going this way?

Yet the Apostle says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Over and over in the NT we are told to be joyful. When the angels sang at the birth of Christ they said there is news of great joy which shall be to all people. Apostle John said, These things I write to you that your joy might be full (your joy or our joy--there's a textual question which, but they certainly are both intended). Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

I heard an interesting thing which perhaps is not related to Christian joy but I thought it was interesting anyway in this connection. Norman Cousins who was editor of the ~~Saturday~~ Saturday Review was extremely ill in the hospital. For some reason he decided laughter was the best medicine, and he should begin to laugh. He laughed so loud and so much that they put him out of the hospital because he was disturbing everybody else. I understand he has recovered completely from his illness and has written a book about it. I want to get hold of it and see it. But it illustrates that the natural condition of man is one of joy, not one of grief, not one of sadness. The NT even says, Count it all joy when you fall