

## Brandon Lewis --- The Fullness of Joy

In Doctrine and Covenants 101:36 we read, “Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.” From this scripture I have come to understand that a fullness of joy cannot be reached outside the presence of our Father, as Christ is the only person that can make returning to His presence possible. This idea is also stated in 3 Nephi 28:10. For me, this idea makes sense, and also makes D&C 18 that much more beautiful, recognizing that no matter how great the joy that is felt from sharing the gospel on earth, it will be exponentially greater when we are united in the kingdom of God.

However, I have felt at times that this definition of a fullness of joy is contradicted in the scriptures. For example, in Alma 26:11, Ammon exclaims that his joy is full after converting the Lamanites. Alma does the same for similar reasons in Alma 29:13. During his ministry to the Americas, Christ even tells the Nephites that he experiences a fullness of joy because of their generation in 3 Nephi 27:30-31.

In an effort to better understand these passages, I focused my studies on this topic for some time, which proved to be very beneficial. I want to share what I learned, with the intent that my thoughts will edify and also motivate those that read them to study out the topic for themselves.

The first thought that started to tie everything together came from a dear friend while I was working in the temple. He shared with me the way his sister has come to define ‘the elect.’ She said that when we elect public officials, we expect them to serve us to the best of their ability for the duration of their term of office. Similarly, the elect of God are those that have no other desire but to serve, or (stealing a phrase from D&C 123:13) in other words waste and wear out their lives in the service of God.

This helped me understand a fullness of joy, because in my mind those that profess to have a fullness of joy in the scriptures are the elect of God, or those that have no other desire but to serve. This is evident from Alma 29:1 and Mosiah 28:3.

My thoughts also reflected back on 3 Nephi 27:14-21 and D&C 132:1-11, which speak about the gospel and the new and everlasting covenant, respectively. I realized that the desire to serve and be called the elect of God stems back to Ephesians 1 and has everything to do with covenants. Certainly Alma, Ammon, and especially Christ completed here what they had covenanted to do there. Their desire to serve others is an integral part of who they are.

These thoughts prepared me to read D&C 93:33-34, which reads, “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.” In what was a beautiful and memorable moment, I connected this scripture not with the resurrection, but with the idea of perfection, as defined in Moroni 10:32-33. When one is capable of uniting the will of the spirit with the body, one becomes complete and perfect. It is this perfection that creates a fullness of joy, as it is what allows us to return and live with God.

Understanding this, the scriptures from Alma and 3 Nephi helped me recognize the importance of friendship as a uniting and completing power. Alma and Ammon became more complete and closer to perfection when they converted those that they had covenanted to convert. Christ was able to tell the Nephites that his joy was full in them because he knew they would join him in the Kingdom of His father. Likewise, our joy becomes fuller when we fulfill our covenants, share the gospel, marry, have children, or simply get together with friends and converse. We cannot be complete or perfect alone. We are all in this together, which is the way it is supposed to be, as

together we are complete and find a fullness of joy. Brandon,