

We need to come back to Jesus, to gaze upon His love and finished work and allow His Holy Spirit to once again ignite salvation joy into our lives.

Galatians 5 v 22 tells us that **one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is JOY**. You see there is a close link between salvation joy and our first love for Jesus. If we allow the pressures and problems of life to rob us of salvation joy then over time our first loves for Jesus will go also. Revelation 2 v 4 says to the church at Ephesus, “ Yet I hold this against you, you have forsaken your first love.” We see that Jesus first loved us and gave Himself for us. We experience this full and complete salvation and in **JOY** respond to Him in love and in gratitude. This state of rejoicing and of joy is meant to be the ongoing response of our hearts to Jesus and all He has accomplished. When I let the world pressure or tempt me into sin I take my eyes off Jesus and focus on worthless things. Over time sin and doubt is established within my heart and my joy in Jesus slips away... my peace and assurance in Jesus slips away.. As this continues my first love for Jesus slips away.

So we need to follow the command of Scripture and rejoice in the Lord **ALWAYS**. As we do this we make visible our faith and trust in Jesus. As we do this we sprinkle our trust in the promises and salvation of our God. As we do this we overcome our circumstances, we set our spirits free and we break through to a place and presence in Jesus that produces everlasting **victorious JOY**. We need to meditate on Scripture, invest time in understanding the great and glorious salvation that we have found in Jesus. To remind ourselves of who we are and what Jesus has accomplished for us as children of the Living God. For our joy, is not found in the things or circumstances of this world. **OUR** joy is found permanently and fully in Jesus. As Nehemiah 8 v 10 says:-

“The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

I wonder what you need in your life to be truly happy and secure? What do you need in your life to be full of real joy?

Many of us are looking to the things of this world to provide for us the inner joy and peace that we are looking for.

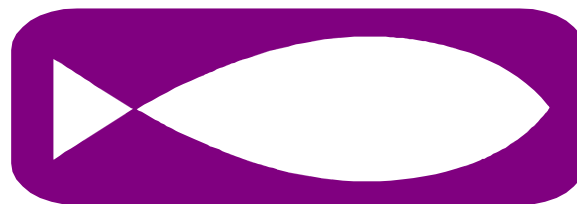
Often we can pursue external things to bring the happiness we are seeking. Things like money, bigger houses, lots of friends.

Yet there is a joy that we can discover that is not dependant on the right circumstances, or the material pleasures we have.

It is a joy that is established within us and helps us overcome all circumstances of life whatever they may be.

This tract is written to help all of us discover and cultivate a real, powerful and lasting joy that is established in the heart of God and is part of His perfect plan for His children.

Scripture makes it clear each one of us has the potential in Jesus to find a joy that conquers all situations as we walk hand in hand with Him.



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THE PRINCIPLES



OF
LASTING JOY.

***“Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again : Rejoice!”
Philippians 4 v 4***

For many people the quest for joy and true happiness is a long one. Millions of pounds a year are spent to try to discover the heart of real lasting joy. Yet contained within our relationship with Jesus we find that God Himself has promised His people the joy and peace that we are looking for. It is established

in our lives as a free gift of grace and is something that we can cultivate as we grow deeper in our intimacy and understanding of Jesus and His salvation.

In Philippians 4 v 4 we find that twice Paul places the command of the Lord Jesus over us to “rejoice in the Lord.”

It is in the context of our citizenship being in heaven (see Philippians 3 v 20 – 21) that we are called to rejoice in the Lord Jesus and His great salvation for us. This is a call not only to receive the joy of the Lord, but

cultivate its expression in our lives. The question is when life can be so hard, unkind and unpredictable, how is it possible to develop this kind of joy and rejoicing in our lives? What is established here by Paul is that the joy Christians have in their

lives is not the same sort of joy that the world has.

The world’s joy VS Christian Joy.

When we look at worldly joy we see that it is dependent on things going my way and my life prospering in good and happy experiences. The world’s joy is dependant on my circumstances and is easily undermined and snatched away. Sadly for some Christians in the church this is the only sort of joy they have experienced. The problem with this joy is that it does not last and is inconstant. We are up one minute and down the next. Happy in the LORD one minute and doubting the Lord the next, victorious when things are going well and defeated when

adversity comes to our door. If your joy is like this then you have not found the joy of the Lord. If your rejoicing is like this then you have never known the freedom of rejoicing in the Lord.

Paul declares to us that Christian joy is not dependant upon the circumstances of good things happening in our lives. The focus of **Christian joy is centred on Jesus Himself and His great and full salvation.** This is why in Philippians 4 he calls us to “rejoice in the Lord....” He does not say rejoice in your circumstances, because they go up and down. He does not say rejoice in the good things that happen to you, for they come and go. Paul declares let your joy and the centre of your rejoicing be in Christ and His work in your life. Hebrews 13 verse 8 declares to us, **“ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** what this tells us is that in a world that is always changing and unpredictable, the nature of Jesus, His promises to you and His great salvation does not change but is constant, firm and forever.

The heart of Christian joy is something like this:-

Jesus is my salvation and life – He has forgiven me – cleansed me – saved me from the dead works of this world. He has released divine love and acceptance over me as through the Holy Spirit I have been born again. Through Jesus I have found peace with God and the

fulfillment of purpose I was created for as I grow empowered and equipped by His faithful presence in me. Whatever I go through I am never alone for Jesus is with me always. Whatever I endure I am loved and valued by God. **Even if I am forsaken by the good things of this world and have nothing, my life is full of eternal purpose, eternal peace and eternal life.** My past is His – My present is His – My future is His. Even my death only draws me into the fullness of His salvation and promises for me, as I am resurrected from the

dead and seated with Jesus in heaven... In these facts that do not change..... In these promises that do not change.... **In the LORD who does not change..... We find the true nature of REAL, deep and eternal JOY. It is a joy that all of us can learn to cultivate more of in our lives.**

In the Old Testament there was a man who learnt to grow in the joy of the Lord. His name was Habakkuk. Here we see a man who is surrounded by circumstances where everything is going wrong. At the start of the book, his life and focus is ruled by the fears and anxieties that surround him and the people of God. He starts of the book very negatively, even accusing the Lord of neglecting His

People. Habakkuk 1 v 2 “ How long, O Lord must I call for help, but you do not listen, or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me.”

As you read through the book you see how the Lord teaches him the secret of **REAL JOY.** The Lord teaches Him about the nature and focus of lasting rejoicing. To such a degree does Habakkuk engage with the Lord that he declares this **wonderful truth concerning the full freedom from circumstances that the joy of the Lord brings.**

Habakkuk 3 v 17 – 18 “ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and not cattle in the stalls, **YET** I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”

The word for joy used here is “geel” It is a word that means to rejoice, be glad, to dance and spin around in intense motion. This is not some quiet inner sense of well being, but in the face of difficult circumstances, it is a response of passionate delight, rejoicing and expression.

This is the type of rejoicing and praise that pulls down strongholds, releases powerful faith and sets captives free.

Habakkuk has fixed his eyes and hope on the Lord and the Lord has become the unchanging source of the prophet’s strength and joy.

What is declared here is that it is possible to so train our hearts, minds and emotions in the salvation of our God that we establish a joy in our lives that rises above our circumstances and enables us to rejoice in the Lord always.

In Psalm 51 His psalm of repentance David declares this in verse 12, “ Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.”

David had taken his eyes of the Lord and had focused them upon lustful and sinful things. When he is confronted with his sin by Nathan, David comes to a place of repentance. In verses 11– 12 he understands once again that the Lord is his hope and salvation and he asks for a restoration of salvation joy.

Whatever our focus has been up to this point, it is never too late to build our lives on the precepts of God. If we do this then the Lord will bless us as His people. Even if we have developed a habit of fixing our eyes on our circumstances or situations the Lord would have us invite Him to release a restoration of salvation joy into the centre of our lives.

