

## JOY

**“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).**

- Are you discouraged?
- If you are a Christian, you don't have to be discouraged!
- If you will fix your eyes on Jesus your discouragement can be turned into joy !

The word “joy” in the Bible comes from the Greek word “chara”. It refers to super natural happiness that comes from the Holy Spirit. In fact, “joy” is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Just as man cannot produce “fruit”, man cannot produce “joy”. Joy is a gift from God!

Note that “joy” came to Jesus because He endured the cross. While He was suffering on the outside, His heart was filled with joy on the inside. Joy refers to the inward satisfaction we experience when we do the will of God. The Bible has a lot to say about joy!

- When the wise men saw the star they rejoiced with great joy (Matt. 2:10).
- The kingdom of heaven is like finding a treasure in a field and then with joy selling all you have to buy that field (Matt. 13:44).
- The women at the tomb were filled with joy when they realized that Jesus was resurrected from the dead (Matt. 28:8).
- When we are rejected on earth we can leap for joy because we have a great reward waiting for us in heaven (Lk. 6:22-23).
- There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Lk. 15:7).
- The night before Jesus was crucified He spoke to His disciples about joy.
  - **“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (Jn. 15:11).**
  - **“You will grieve but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (Jn. 16:20-22).**
  - **“Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full” (Jn. 16:24).**
  - Jesus also prayed for His disciples on that night. He said: **“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them” (Jn. 17:13).**
  - We do not understand the peace that comes from God by looking in a dictionary. The world does not know or understand true peace. Jesus said: **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (Jn. 14:27).**
- WE CAN EXPERIENCE THIS JOY AND PEACE IF WE FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS!

The Apostle Paul knew this and expressed his own personal focus on Christ in his letter to the Philippians. He wrote: **“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”** (Phil. 3:7-11)

Even though Paul wrote this letter from prison it is still a letter about “joy” and “rejoicing”. “Chara” is a noun that is translated as “joy”. “Chairo” is a verb translated as “rejoicing”.

- **“In all my prayers for you, I always pray with joy”** (1:4).
- **“The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice”** (1:18).
- **“Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith”** (1:25).
- **“Make my joy complete by being like minded”** (2:2).
- **“But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me”** (2:17-18).
- Regarding Epaphroditus: **“Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy”** (2:28-29).
- **“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord”** (3:1).
- **“Therefore dear brothers you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord”** (4:1).
- **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice”** (4:4).
- **“I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me”** (4:10).
- Remember! Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. Because he fixed his eyes on Jesus he was not discouraged, but filled with “joy” and “rejoicing”.

As we have said, true “joy” cannot be produced by man for it is the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Please note that the “fruit of the Spirit” manifests itself in nine different ways. The verb in this verse is singular. The Bible does not say the “fruits of the Spirit are”, but the **“fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control”**. These nine manifestations of the Spirit are so inter related that they are one. When we die to self and totally surrender to God His Holy Spirit enables us to produce beautiful fruit that manifests itself in many ways. We don’t produce the fruit, but the Spirit of Jesus does. Jesus said: **“No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me”** (Jn. 15:4). When we “remain” in Jesus He provides us with joy. Paradoxically, those who seek for peace and joy do not find it. The peace that Jesus gives is not like the world gives (Jn. 14:27). It comes as a by-product of serving God. Jesus is our example. He was not seeking for joy when he went to the cross, He was seeking to please God. When He forget Himself and focused on doing the will of God, joy found Him. In the same way, when we forget about ourselves and focus on doing the will of God,

we too can be filled with **“an inexpressible and glorious joy”** (1 Pet. 1:8). In fact you will discover that: **“the joy of the Lord is your strength”** (Neh. 8:10).

- To the Romans Paul wrote: **“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”** (Rom. 15:13).
- To the Thessalonians Paul wrote: **“You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit”** (1 Thess. 1:6).
- James wrote: **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”** (Ja. 1:2-4).
- Peter wrote: **“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”** (1 Pet. 4:12-13).
- John wrote: **“It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth** (3 Jn. 3-4).
- Jude wrote: **“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen”** (Jude 24-25).

#### FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS

Jesus, you recall, once fed 5,000 men besides women and children with only 5 loaves and 2 small fish. (For your information, the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle, other than the resurrection, which is found in all four Gospels) When the multitudes realized Jesus could feed them they wanted to force him to be their king (Jn. 6:15). Jesus immediately made his disciples get in a boat and go over to the other side while he dismissed the multitude (Matt. 14:22). After dismissing the multitude Jesus went up into the mountain to pray.

The boat the disciples were in was being buffeted by the waves and the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus came walking unto them on the water. The disciples were terrified and thought Jesus was a ghost. Jesus said: **“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid”** (Matt. 14:27).

**“Lord, if it is you” Peter replied, “Tell me to come to you on the water”**

**“Come” he said.**

**“Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus”.**

**“But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me’”**

**“Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith’, he said, ‘why did you doubt?’”** (Matt. 14:28-31).

Do you see it? As long as Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus he had super natural power. When he took his eyes off of Jesus the super natural power was gone and he began to sink.

A similar lesson can be learned from Israel in the wilderness. They wanted God to deliver them from slavery in Egypt, but when He did so, they complained against God and Moses and said: **“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food”** (Nu. 21:5).

**REMEMBER! GOD DOES NOT LIKE GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING!** So **“The Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people, and many Israelites died”** (Nu. 21:6).

When the people repented and asked Moses to pray for them **“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live’ . . . Then anyone who was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived”** (Nu. 21:8-9).

Based on the fact that Israel had 603,550 fighting men (Nu. 1:46), we believe that their total population was over 2,000,000 people. Their camp was arranged with 3 tribes on the east, 3 tribes on the south, 3 tribes on the west, and 3 tribes on the north (Nu. 2:1-34). The tabernacle was in the middle. The distance from the furthest tent to the Tabernacle was almost a mile. This was a Sabbath Day’s journey. The point is, if you were dying after being bitten by a poisonous snake you probably had to walk a long way to get to the bronze snake. As the poison from the snake was taking your life, looking at the bronze snake would restore it. You may be certain that these dying Israelites fixed their eyes on that snake and refused to look anywhere else until they were completely healed.

Jesus made reference to this bronze snake while talking with Nicodemus. Jesus told him: **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that anyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (Jn. 3:5-16).

Fixing your eyes on Jesus is not easy. It takes dedication and consecration. Jesus said: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self”** (Lk. 9:23-25).

So then **“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”**.