

Love makes the hardest of hearts to be soft. Joy touches the deepest part of that softened heart. We and our world need believers who express the fruit of God's Spirit..joy. Today we are going to look at joy.. the second quality of the Spirit's fruit.

What does it mean to have joy? It means to have gladness, to rejoice, to have enjoyment...to celebrate! There are many reasons for us to have joy in our lives. But let us look at what Christ says should be the most important reason for our joy.

Let's read Luke 10:17-20. Christ sent 72 disciples out two at a time to cities along His journey. The disciples were to bring peace, healing and the word of God to the people of these cities. Why were the disciples joyful?

They EXPERIENCED the power to overcome the devil and escape his harm when acting in the name of Jesus! WOW ! They were amazed at all this power coming from themselves! It brought them to rejoicing and celebration! I can see these guys flexing their muscles and jumping for joy as they told Jesus what had happened to them.

This reminds me of my grandson at age 3 in his fresh, new Karate suit taking a stance and punching the air with all his might. Impressing everyone with his strength and yelling Ha-Yah at the top of his little lungs !

But, Jesus set their thinking on a straight path. He suggests to them that the greatest reason to rejoice is that \_\_\_\_\_ are written in \_\_\_\_\_. NOT that "the spirits submit to you ".

Even King David after his great sin with Bathsheba cries out to the Lord to "Restore to me the \_\_\_\_\_ of your SALVATION." What is David saying he needs in order for joy to return to him? God's \_\_\_\_\_. Why is this of such great importance?

Salvation:

- \* Is God's alone to give.
- \* Is a gift we are free to accept, but did not earn or do anything to DESERVE.
- \* Saves us from the penalty of eternal death and the power of sin over our life.
- \* Is God's creation of a new heart and right Spirit living in us forever.

I would say that is of great, enormous, gigantic, importance. God's saving grace that cleans away the sin from our lives, promises eternity with Him, gives us back our *j-o-y* !!

We can discover joy in some surprising places. Let's look at some of these places.

\* Matthew 28:8: "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy.."

The women found joy in the empty tomb of Jesus. They knew He was risen and alive !

\* Luke 1:44: "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." From the womb of his mother John the Baptist discovered the Messiah !

3) James 1:2-3 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops PERSEVERANCE." We are to find joy in the maturing of our faith through trials.

Each of these verses describes a very different CIRCUMSTANCE. But we share in the discovery of Christ and the joy of each of those who discovered Him in a different way.

How did you discover Christ? How did you feel? Describe your joy !

We too can find SUPERNATURAL results from the discovery of our Lord and Savior in every circumstance where we wish to find Him. Through his many trials the Apostle Paul learned:

- \* the presence of the Lord in difficulties and trials
- \* the purpose of God in those difficulties and trials
- \* the power of God in taking him through difficulties
- \* how to use God's strength to help him persevere

We can read about one such trial in Acts 16:16-40.

1) God heard Paul's songs of praise and God's presence caused the doors of the jail to fly open and the chains to fall away from the prisoners.

2) The jailer and his family were all brought to the Lord because of Paul's strength in the Lord to stay in the prison, rather than run away and save himself.

3) Paul says "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" Philippians 4:13

Have you ever discovered Christ's presence in the middle of your struggles? Perhaps in a new way. Jer. 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart".



We see that to have our names written in heaven gives us the joy of eternal life and forgiveness of our sin. We have discovered the joy of the presence, purpose, and power of Christ in the trials of our life. But, there is more. The joy we have when we are **RESTORED** to a right relationship with the Lord.

Life is hard. We are all going to have trials and problems in life. Sometimes we try to solve these problems on our own without seeking God's wisdom and guidance first. Other times we seek God and then do as we please. This leads to sin in our life and often makes the problems harder.

**DISCIPLINE** comes before restoration. The word discipline means to "teach". In our homes we teach our children in different ways. Sometimes in a "gentle" way with just a word. Other times we may discipline our children in a "firmer" way—and one they may not like very much! Tell some ways and reasons you have disciplined your own children.

Hebrews 12:6-7 tells us that "the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?" Do you allow your children to do as they please?

Just as our children are brought back into our loving favor following firm discipline, so are we restored to God's loving favor as well. Let's read John 15:1-17 and think about it.

- 1) Why does the gardener prune the branches? So they will bear more \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) How has God cleaned us? "Because of the \_\_\_\_\_ I have spoken to you."
- 3) How does a branch bear fruit? It remains in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) What is important in having our prayers answered? To keep \_\_\_\_\_ Word in us.
- 5) How can we remain in His love? (v10) "\_\_\_\_\_ my commands."
- 6) Why has Christ told us to remain in Him" (v 11)"that your \_\_\_\_\_ may be complete."

We may have happiness in life experiences. Inner joy comes only from Christ. He is the giver of true joy. We are to remain, live, and dwell in Him. Not to allow ourselves to be moved away from Him even in our trials, discipline or difficulties.

We are also to be joy to each other! Yes, as believers we are not to be alone in our joy! We are to share it with one another and our joyless world. Make friends with believers of different colors, different cultures, different economic levels. The body of Christ comes in all shapes and sizes. They will become your joy too!

Memory Verse: Psalm 43:3-4 "Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight"

IS THERE A COMMAND TO OBEY? Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Rejoice and thank the Lord for He restores us and makes us strong.

WHAT DID GOD SHOW US TODAY?

- 1) Rejoice your name is written in heaven in the Book of Life. Luke 10:17-20
- 2) God's presence, purpose and power are with us in all our trials. Acts 16:16-40
- 3) When we seek Christ with all our heart, we will find Him. Jeremiah 29:13
- 4) When we remain in the Lord our joy will be complete. John 15:1-17

How will you begin to show the joy of God's love in your heart with others?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Request: \_\_\_\_\_

Word Study:

- 1) circumstance: What is going on at the time of an event. Her circumstance was that she had lost her family ties, entered a new culture with a new language and needed help.
- 2) deserve: to have a claim for a reward based on one's own works. Do we deserve salvation?
- 3) discipline: to act or be trained to live by certain rules or standards. God disciplines believers
- 4) experienced: to become wise or skilled in a certain way. Disciples experienced the power to overcome the devil because of Jesus.
- 5) perseverance: steady, dedicated in a certain action even through difficulties. Life's trials help us to learn perseverance in gaining spiritual maturity.
- 7) restored: to bring back, put back, return to the original state. God's forgiveness restores us to His favor.
- 8) salvation: See Bible Word List.
- 9) supernatural: above or beyond what is natural. A characteristic of God.