

PRAISING GOD

Devotional of the Month



UNCEASING JOY

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This might seem strange to some people, but the first thing I experienced when my father died after a long fight from dementia was joy. I knew he was out of pain and in the arms of Jesus whom he loved and taught my sisters and me to love. In fact, what I said to my closest family and friends was, “Daddy went home to be with Jesus.” For me, much of my grieving was done during his illness, as we lost him little by little, but in the moment, there was the type of joy only the Holy Spirit could supply.

God’s word says, “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever! Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name be filled with joy” (Psalm 5:11).

From this Scripture, we can see that God wants all of those who belong to him to be joyful and sing his praises. Another verse, 1 Thess. 5:16-18, tells us to “Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will.” How can God expect anyone to be joyful and thankful continually in this world full of sorrow? Could someone who just lost her baby give thanks? What about a person who lost her job or another who has been diagnosed with a serious illness? Could a couple whose marriage is crumbling before their eyes experience joy?



*“I will give you a
new heart and put
a new spirit in you;
I will remove from
you your heart of
stone and give you
a heart of flesh.”*

~ Ezekiel 36:26

The answer is “yes.” They may grieve. They could possibly even be angry at God and in despair about the situation. These feelings come as a result of their circumstances. Joy, however, is different because it is possible despite your circumstances. How can this be? Joy can be experienced through the power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Thess. 1:6) It is the fruit produced in a believer when he or she is filled with the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)

What wonderful news! Believers can indeed be filled with joy despite the cares of this world. Those who love God and have the certainty of eternal life may have joy that comes from within, rather than a sort of happiness which is as fickle as a relationship between two teens.

Joy along with praise flows from deep within our souls. From the knowledge that God saved us from both our sins and certain death because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cruel cross where he became sin for us. Sorrow leads to joy when we realize God raised Jesus from the dead and he will raise us all from the dead in due time when Jesus returns.

The Bible illustrates that joy and praise are possible during the most difficult times. Acts 6:25 relates how the apostles Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns while in chains after they were bloodied and in pain from beatings, and left in darkness in a dank, rat-infested Roman prison. In 1 Thess. 1:6 Paul writes to the believers of the church at Thessalonica, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” People can also be joyful when they suffer because of Christ who suffered to be able to forgive our

sins. This is illustrated in Acts. when some of the apostles were flogged by the members of the Sanhedrin. Verse 5:41, reads, “The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had considered them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.”

Finally, we can be joyful because God’s word is full of promises for those who believe. One promise is that God rewards those who are joyful. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, tells the crowd that those who mourn will be comforted. (Matt. 5:4) It gets even better. In Jer. 31:13, Jeremiah writes God’s words saying, “I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and exchange their sorrow for joy.” What a wonderful promise given by God to all believers! Another assurance, found in the Gospels, is that our joy may not be taken away from us. (John 16:22) We are also told, “The joy of the Lord is [our] strength” (Neh. 8:10). Each of us can remain strong amid sorrow and suffering. God gives us his power to get us through the most painful of circumstances.

From the passages above we know several things about being joyful despite great sorrow. God commands believers to have joy, but he also makes it possible because he has given us his Holy Spirit who enables us to do so. Readers of the Word can find examples of apostles who were able to be joyous despite dire circumstances, and even rejoiced when they experienced persecution because they preached the Gospel. We can find comfort in the Scriptures because of the many promises God has for believers who express their joy. May you find joy and the ability to praise God no matter what you face daily.



"...for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit."

1 Thess. 1:6

