

Joyful No Matter "What"

God created man to be joyful. Every man wants to be joyful. God created man as a musical instrument or musician, sharing with the heavenlies in the praises of our Lord. Only when we fell through the temptation of the serpent were we removed from the paradise of Joy- so it was intended by God for us to live with this perpetual joy and gladness of mind and soul.

We can appreciate this in the writings of David as we see in psalm 20.

- ¹ May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble;
 May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
- ² May He send you help from the sanctuary,
 And strengthen you out of Zion;
- ³ May He remember all your offerings,
 And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah

- ⁴ May He grant you according to your heart's *desire*,
 And fulfill all your purpose.
- ⁵ **We will rejoice in your salvation,**
 And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners!
 May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

- ⁶ **Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;**
 He will answer him from His holy heaven
 With the saving strength of His right hand.

- ⁷ Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;
 But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
- ⁸ They have bowed down and fallen;
 But we have risen and stand upright.

- ⁹ Save, LORD!
 May the King answer us when we call. Amen.

Here we see that there is no shadow of doubt in the mind of the reader. He remains hopeful and at ease in the midst of the trouble and patiently waits on the Lord to deliver. He does not at any time ask why me or why this. He asked that your burnt offering may be acceptable before the Lord. Yet if God created us to be filled with joy, created in His likeness as we see in the plan of Paradise, then how can we be joyful in suffering?

You have to focus your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the source of joy. The Lord Jesus Himself came and was incarnated to be crucified for the world, and this was His pleasure. In His mission he carried the very sin of the world, lived as a common man and died a fools death. We usually accept

suffering as a means of correction. Although through the Lords guiltless suffering, we see it became sanctified and blessed so that we may enjoy all suffering as though enduring it for the name of our Lord.

Think of the creation. It was all for our enjoyment. It is so elaborate and beautiful and why- for us to **enjoy**.

Consider Joseph, if he had not suffered he would not have been exalted, becoming as we know second to pharaoh in his day. He went from ashes to glory through much tribulation.

Consider St Paul in Acts 13:50-52

⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Here the apostle writes that his persecution caused them to praise and glory in the name of the Lord- what a mystery! Again in Acts 5:40-41

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

So let us learn from them and "Rejoice in the Lord Always!" Phil 4:4

Happiness vs Joy

So is there a distinction between the two? Yes indeed as they differ in their source and the permanence.

It is important to distinguish between (earthly) happiness and (heavenly) joy.

Happiness is dependent on happenings and people. Joy is the divine dimension of life, enjoyed only in the company of ones Creator. Our inner peace and joy are intertwined and ought not be affected by promotion or emotion, trials, misfortune or circumstance. It is the presence of God Himself that allows us to experience and live in joy. It is apart from the external situation.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" as above mentioned appears in St Pauls letter to the Philippians. The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians was written from a cold wet prison in Rome.

St Paul's mission and objective was to preach in Rome, the hub of all power and influence at the time, so that his ministry might spread to all nations. So as we see he did not fulfill his dream but rather he entered Rome not as a respected missionary but rather as a shackled criminal in chains, awaiting death row.

So despite the fact that St Pauls plans for himself and the ministry fell apart before him, he gleefully wrote this epistle of joy. He had everything taken away from under his feet yet he wrote these letters of

nothing but encouragement and joy at the end of his life. Every word in this book was written in the prison when he was awaiting his execution.

So as all these old and new testament saints, instead of asking God why, we should ask what? What should we learn? Now what should we do? St Paul gave thanks for his chains as they were a witness to the Jews. So the very thing that St Paul didn't want was the very thing that he needed.

What do you wish you could change?

BE JOYFUL NO MATTER WHAT

Instead of asking why me or why is this happening, ask what...

1. Now WHAT?

Now what is God doing? Now what is God's purpose? Now what does God want to show me? Now what does God want to do through this?

"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." Philippians 1:12-14

God can change your bad circumstance or misfortunes into gladness. God can change your unhappiness into joy! Think of Moses reaching the Red Sea and how it proved the power of God to the faithless Jews.

2. So WHAT?

"It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." Philippians 1:15-18

So what will this matter and what does this mean and what can I learn from this. We need to look beyond the little hiccups and problems and focus on the long term benefit and possible outcome.

Consider what is really important right now and let's get to the stage where we can really discern what is worthy of stealing our inner joy!

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21