

Joy

What Too Many Christians Do Not Understand and the World Cannot Comprehend

In 1719 the great songwriter, Isaac Watts, wrote what many consider the greatest hymn of praise ever penned—"Joy to the World". Perhaps the greatest lesson from this song I missed far too long as a Christian is this:

The lyric is "joy **to** the world"—not "joy in the world or joy from the world"!

Wresting with that truth until we pin it to our understanding is not a game-changer. It is a life-changer and the message the Holy Spirit would have me write and teach this week. The truth be told it was born out of my own bad attitude and absence of joy.

When I searched the word joy as used in the Bible, I found this. "There are 25 Hebrew words and 10 Greek words that make up over 150 references to joy in the Bible. I love this quote from CH Spurgeon that has great application to our study today.

"We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word—He intended to be conspicuous in our lives."

Before we begin, let's understand one major point—joy does NOT mean happiness.

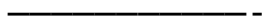
Happiness is an emotion that comes and goes with circumstances. Biblical Joy is a condition of our hearts and souls tied to God because of Who He is and our relationship with all three Persons of the Triune God. True Joy cannot be experienced outside of the Triune God.

1) God the Father took joy from being in relationship with us.

- 2) Jesus Christ found joy in redeeming us from the death penalty of sin.
- 3) Holy Spirit takes joy when sinners repent and give their lives to Christ.

“We experience true joy when we experience the true God.”

As we study three aspects of JOY in God’s Word, this will be made clearer.



Old Testament Joy (Two key Hebrew words: sameach and simchah)
Joy, gladness, pleasure

The Joy of the Lord – What Gives God “Joy” and How We Experience It

Old Testament joy was rooted in the nature and character of God. It was evident at creation—God took joy in what was created including man – “it was good.” God took particular joy in His creation of man because we were “created in His image or likeness”. We were perfect and able to receive His perfect joy and give it back to Him out of who we were and how we lived—perfectly. But that all changed in Genesis 3.

The joy of the Lord is the pleasure or delight He takes in His people when we: ***love Him, listen to Him, and live for Him.***

Love Him

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”
Deuteronomy 6: 5

Listen to and Live for Him

“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do...so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you... “0

Israel, listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.” (From Deuteronomy 6)

The Joy of the Lord Expressed in Old Testament Scripture.

1) David understood the joy of the Lord and joy in the Lord more than anyone in the Old Testament, perhaps the entire Bible. He wrote,

“I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely... You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” Psalm 16: 8-9, 11

In his most penitent Psalm, David worshiped and pleaded with Lord for forgiveness and restoration of the joy of His salvation. One commentator noted, the Lord did not take it away. David walked away from it.

“Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.” Psalm 51: 11-12

2) Overrun in 586 BC, now in 446 BC, King Artaxerxes of Persia allowed Nehemiah and others to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls that surrounded the city. He even funded the operation. Once the walls were completed, Ezra called all the people together to read the Law to them. It had been decades since this happened. As the Word of God was read, the people were reminded of Who God is and how sinful they had been, so they wept. But this was to be a day of celebration.

“Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it,

all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground...Then Nehemiah...said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. (Nehemiah said) "this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8: 5,6, 9, 10

"Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

What does that line mean? Nehemiah reminded them God had been loving and forgiving throughout their history—always loved them and was always ready to forgive broken and repentant hearts. God took great joy in His people when they came to Him like that.

Summary: The Joy of the Lord is inextricably linked to our relationship with God through –love, obedience, and prayer-worship from contrite, repentant hearts.

No matter how much the world or Satan and demonic forces try to steal your joy, remember the love of God toward you never wains. He loves us no matter what.

Happiness is circumstantial—joy in the Lord and joy from the Lord are not. The joy He derives from our lives comes from the amount of His joy we can take in and hold onto—no matter what happens. To increase your ability to understand and experience the joy of the Lord, do these two things:

- Immerse yourself in His Word.
- Fall to your knees or on your face in confession before him as David and the Israelites did.

Your Father wants to restore your joy with His. That is how relationships work.

Walter