

Joyful Expectation – The Joy of Our Salvation

So often, when we hear about the *joy of the Lord* the emphasis is on having **joy** in the midst of trials and tribulations. And even though this is true, and very beneficial, there is a far more pleasant route to God's joy. I sincerely believe that our expectations should be directed toward the "joy" we experience because God has abundantly blessed us, rather than the "joy" we have to find in negative circumstances. That is why JOY is the theme for the whole month of December.

Isaiah 35:10 and 51:11 declare, *"Those whom the Lord has paid for and set free will return. They will come to Zion with singing. Joy that lasts forever will crown their heads. They will be glad and full of joy. Sorrow and sad voices will be gone."* (NLV)

Notice, those whom God has 'ransomed' have been crowned with joy. **1 Timothy 2:5-6** says, *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for us all."* Our crowning glory is joy! And so it should be, for our freedom has been bought with a price! Jesus shed His precious blood, and gave up His life so that we can be free from sin and death. *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."* That's where our "joy" originates. It started at the cross, and thereafter, it was bestowed upon us as a crown! Quite simply, the crown epitomises the joy of our salvation.

In Psalm 35:9 the psalmist says, *"And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; It shall rejoice in His salvation."* I like the way Isaiah brings it to life... *"Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3)*. Another translation says, *"As water from a well brings joy to the thirsty, so people draw joy from their salvation."* Are you drawing **joy** from the wells of your salvation? What marvellous imagery! Drawing "joy" from the wells (plural) from our salvation. Joy can be drawn out at any time and from a well that is close by! The well symbolises a source of "living water" which we are able to draw from and be blessed. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit and represents His ministry here on earth. The Holy Spirit wants to fill us with joy! *"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52)*.

The New Living Translation of **Isaiah 12:3** provides another marvellous picture... *"With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation!"* We should all be drinking deeply from the fountain of our salvation - all the time! But the problem is, most of us are thirsty for other things. We probably don't understand the importance of **joy**, and the powerful connection it has to salvation. So let's try to unravel this truth by exploring "salvation" and how it effects joy and happiness.

The Greek word for salvation is the word "soteria." It is used throughout the New Testament and has various applications. The most common being, *"the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted immediately by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, in whom alone it is to be obtained."* In God's Word "salvation" is spoken of in three tenses - past, present, and future: (1) Christians have been saved, (2) Christians are being saved, and (3) Christians are about to be saved. In **Ephesians 2:8, 9**, salvation is a *past*, completed act; in **1 Corinthians 1:18**, salvation is a *present*, continuous work; and in **Hebrews 1:14**, salvation is a *future*, inherited possession. But for the purpose of this series on **Joy**, I would like us to focus on the "soteria" that is personal and relates to our daily activities - *the present, continuous work of salvation*.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Often the question asked of us is, "Are you saved?" And we may answer, "Yes, I have been saved?" Notice the word "saved" in both the question and the answer is in 'past tense'. It leaves the impression that **salvation** is over and done with - that salvation is something we have already done and now we can get on with our lives. This view of salvation makes it very hard for us to sustain the *"joy of our salvation!"* Many churches reduce salvation to a theological formula to be adhered to, which leaves lives devoid of God's living presence and power. The main question should be... *"Are you being saved?"*

Try to imagine sustaining your interest in football by merely reading the rulebook. You acquire a very specific knowledge of how the game is to be played, but you've never observed a game being played. Or, maybe you have never played the game either! Many learn and obey the rules *"to be saved,"* but they are not experiencing **salvation** as an ongoing occurrence. If you can't experience salvation as an ongoing event you will not recognise the presence and power of God in your life, and consequently, you will not experience true joy.

You may have read the Bible; you may have even obeyed its rules in the 'past tense', but you're not experiencing the *"joy of God's presence and power."* Why do you think this is? The main reason is that there is no action on your part. You have a form of godliness but you deny the power of God being employed on your behalf! If you fail to recognise the presence of God in your life you will not accept His **saving** power. As a result, you will never be able to fully comprehend that you are **"being saved."** And consequently, you will have nothing to be joyful about!

God provides limitless good reasons to be **joyful** by continually *"saving"* us. It is with such **joy** that we drink deeply from the wells of salvation. So stop thinking about having to be joyful in the storm, rather think about being joyful in the victory (in salvation)! That is where your earnest expectation should lie. Isn't easier to praise Him when the spoils of the battle are already in your possession? Doesn't His infallible word declare that we are more than conquerors? Well, being more than a conqueror means that you have all the benefits of the victory without having gone into battle. This understanding gives birth to the "joy of salvation" - of being "being saved!"

Listen once more to the words of the psalmist... *"And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation" (Psalm 35:9).* Is your soul being joyful "in" the Lord? Can you freely rejoice "in" your salvation? I believe you can! God's presence and power is always with us, and He is continually rescuing us from danger, disaster and misfortune. To deny this is to deny His "saving" power. Yes, God does want us to praise Him in the storm, but He also wants us to **"rejoice in our salvation!"** And He wants to give us every good reason to rejoice! **Philippians 4:4**, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"* Rejoicing is a lifestyle, it should be as ongoing and as consistent as our salvation is!

Let me ask you that all important question once again, *"Are you being saved?"* If you have revelation of this truth, your joy will be full! In **John 15:11** Jesus said this, *"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."* The underlying theme of all that the Lord Jesus spoke about was the 'love of God'. This unconditional and amazing **love** was what sent Jesus to the cross. You cannot separate the love of God from

the message of salvation (whether past, present or future). You are presently “being saved” by the love of God. That means His saving power is motivated by His unconditional love. Listen closely to what I’m saying here. The presence and power of God that is an integral part of your life, is there to demonstrate the great love God has for you. He wants to rescue you from any harm or disaster so that you may grasp the length and depth of His great love.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter’. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

God is in the saving business! He rescues us every opportunity He gets. Why? Because He wants to demonstrate His great love for us. Surely this will make us happy! Surely joy will be evident in our lives! Surely we will drink deeply from the limitless wells of salvation! Look around and you will see the goodness of the Lord. **Psalm 106:8** declares, *“Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power known.”* God intends for His mighty power to be made known to mankind through the ongoing work of salvation.

The million dollar question is this... *“Why does God want to keep saving us - even after our names have been written in the Book of Life.”* The answer is very simple, *“it brings Him great joy.”* Yes, salvation causes God to rejoice!

Zephaniah 3:17 says, *“The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”*

To paraphrase.... God Almighty is present among us to save (rescue and deliver us from all harm); He rejoices over us because salvation gives Him pleasure. His wonderful love brings us peace, and He sings over us with great joy!

When experiencing the JOY of our salvation, we “rejoice” with God! We do exactly what He is doing over us! So let’s expect God’s **saving power** to manifest in our lives continually.

Here is a scripture we can all stand on. *“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” (Psalm 20:6).*