

“...I WILL OFFER IN HIS TABERNACLE THE
SACRIFICES OF JOY”

1Peter2:5-9 tells us that we, as believers in Jesus, are a “holy and royal priesthood.” As this “holy and royal priesthood” unto the Lord, we no longer offer up animal sacrifices, but rather we are to offer “spiritual sacrifices.” We are to worship God in and through these “spiritual

sacrifices” and everything that is contained in them. These “spiritual sacrifices” are to be expressed in and through the lifestyle of each and every person who calls themselves a disciple of Jesus.

The scriptures reveal to us four specific “spiritual sacrifices.” They are and in no particular order, the “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15); the “sacrifice of joy” (Psalm 27:6); the “sacrifice of thanksgiving” (Psalms 107:22; 116:17) and the “sacrifice of righteousness” (Psalm 4:5; 51:19). For this discussion, I would like to key in on the “sacrifice of joy.” It states in Psalm 27:6, “*And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle **sacrifices of joy**; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.*”

When you look in a dictionary the most common definitions of “joy” as a noun are as follows: the emotion of great happiness; something or someone that provides a source of happiness. Webster’s dictionary defines it as, “the passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good; pleasurable feelings or emotions caused by success, good fortune, and the like, or by a rational prospect of possessing what we love or desire; gladness; exhilaration of spirits; delight. It is something that causes joy or happiness; the sign or exhibition of joy; gayety; mirth; merriment; festivity.” As a verb it describes it as, “To give joy to; to congratulate; to gladden; to make joyful; to exhilarate; to enjoy; to rejoice; to be glad; to delight; to exult.”

Notice that in the above definitions they refer to things that are in the natural, the flesh. This is especially, true when they use the term “happiness.” Many times Biblical “joy” is confused with happiness. Happiness has everything to do with outside circumstances, events and situations. Confusion sometimes can occur because we do see the term “happy” used within the scriptures. Actually it occurs 28 times in the KJV in both the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament.

However, when we do a word study on the term “happy” as used within the scriptures, we see that it is used as a reference to, and is synonymous with, an individual being “blessed.” Now, don’t get me wrong. When a person is “blessed” this can make one very, as we would say in the natural understanding, “joyful.” We must realize that both terms, happy and joy, as used in the scriptures each take on a different meaning than what we have come to know them as in our English language. The scriptures make a very clear distinction between the term “happy” and “joy” as we will see.

The Hebrew word translated into the English term “joy” is *těruwah`* which means – an alarm, a signal, a sound of tempest, a shout, a shout or blast of war or an alarm or joy; it is an alarm of war, a war-cry, a battle-cry, a blast (for march), a shout of joy (with religious impulse). The Greek word translated to the term “joy” is “*charo*” which means - to rejoice, be glad, to rejoice exceedingly, to be well and thrive. It is interesting to note that the words “joy,” “gifts” (as in the spiritual gifts) and “grace” all come from the same root Greek word when used in the New Testament – *chairō*. Could it be that the “gifts” that God gives to His people along with His “grace” are connected with God’s “joy?” Hmmm....

When used in the Jewish scriptures (Old Testament) the term “joy,” as we can see from our Hebrew definition has much to do with warfare. The best way that I can explain this is to give you an example. Have you ever seen an old cavalry or war movie and you had two armies on opposite sides facing each other? The call would go forth, “Charge!!!” All the soldiers would go forward yelling and screaming towards their enemy. In some instances we would see a loud ritual of yelling, drums or some type of trumpets blaring prior to the battle taking place. The idea behind this yelling and screaming and loud tactics was twofold.

When armies would meet and the sound was given to charge, the armies would go towards each other screaming and yelling. Prior to this, if the commanding officer was a good one, he would speak to his men words of encouragement and give them the plan of action so that they would be confident in what they were going to do. The soldiers would become confident and start to believe they would be victorious. By the time they went into battle they would be all charged up. The adrenaline juices would be flowing. They would be a little nervous, yet confident. They knew, that they knew, that they knew, that they were going to win.

So, when the time for battle came, they went forth with shouts of victory and confidence. "I win!!!" "I win!!!" "You lose and I win." "Look out here I come!!!" "You better run or you will be defeated." There would be blasts from the trumpets or bugles. In some armies they used drums. It was the sound of alarm to go forward because the battle is on and they were confident that they would be victorious.

The other aspect of all of the above mentioned tactics was that as they would be charging and screaming these things the idea was to throw fear into the enemy camp causing the enemy to begin to believe that, just maybe, they were going to lose and that they should retreat or die. That is exactly what the "sacrifice of joy" is to be for the Christian. "I win!!!" "Look out devil. Here I come in the power of God's might!!!" "You lose!!!" You see, "spiritual joy" is, knowing, that you know, that you know, that you know that you will ultimately be victorious.

If I may, at this juncture, I would like to share an old saying which I believe may be appropriate here. It goes like this, "If a man goes into a contest or battle believing he will lose or die, he will probably find a way to lose or die. If a man goes into a contest or battle believing he will be victorious and live, he will find any way possible to live and be victorious." This is telling us that the mindset of the one entering into any contest or battle is vital. A mindset of confident assurance helps in allaying and casting away all doubts. This must be the mindset of anyone who is about to enter into any kind of contest or battle.

Actually, this is a scriptural principle. Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" Whatever is in your heart is a strong determinant concerning the outcomes of events and situations in your life. Of course our heart must be kept steadfast on God's power and might and not on anything of self or natural physical abilities. So how does this tie into our discussion of "spiritual joy?" Well, let's find out.

If we look into the context of our scripture reference for the "sacrifices of joy" as found in Psalm 27:6, we see that David, prior to stating that he will offer unto God the "sacrifices of joy," writes concerning being in situations of trouble and at times when his enemies are surrounding him. It is then that David will choose to offer the "sacrifices of joy" unto the Lord. It is then that he will encourage himself and refresh himself with shouts of joy; with shouts of victory

"Spiritual joy," or we can say the "God kind of joy," is totally dependent on the ways, concepts and principles of the Kingdom of God. It has absolutely nothing to do with anything in the natural realm. The "God kind of joy" has everything to do with God's Kingdom and His Kingdom has everything to do with His Spirit and with His truth dwelling within the believer. It has everything to do with faith – faith in the God that we serve. It has everything to do with trusting in the Lord with all your heart and not leaning on your own understanding. It is acknowledging Him in all your ways knowing that He is in control and directs the paths your life takes you on. (Proverbs 3:5-6) However, true "spiritual joy" goes much further than this "life's path." It is really referring to the path that leads to the eternal.

We must understand what God means when He says, "You win!!!" The "winning" and ultimate victory that the believer is to experience is not necessarily in this natural realm. Hebrew 12:1 tells us, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; **who for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross,*

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The "joy" in this scripture is not referring to Jesus' passion and the cross. Jesus did not regard the cross itself as a joy. But He looked past the horror of the cross to what laid beyond the cross. Jesus did not delight in the agony and the shame He experienced on the cross. Yet, He was able to endure it through to the end because He looked past the natural which looked like defeat, and saw the ultimate victory. The victory was that after it was all said and done, He would be back at the right hand of the Father – back in the "throne room of heaven." That was His joy. That was the driving force that kept Him to endure everything He went through.

Just as Jesus' "joy" was His driving force that allowed Him to endure through His life here on this earth, so it is in the believer's life. This is the ultimate joy, the driving force in our lives. It is the assurance of knowing that our ultimate destination and finish line is to one day be sitting in heavenly places with the Father along with Jesus. We win!!! This is seen in the parables of Jesus. In Matthew 25, Jesus uses the "Parable of the Talents." Without going into detail concerning the parable itself, I would like to key in on two verses that say the same thing.

In Matthew 25:21 and 23 we hear Jesus teach what the reward would be concerning the two faithful servants who wisely used what they were given. He states, *"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: **enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**"* Did you hear what Jesus said? He said that the faithful servants would be able to enter into the joy of their lord. As we know this parable was one that Jesus gave towards the end of His ministry and it was concerning the end times as well as entering eternity. Through this we see that the true joy of the believer and disciple of Jesus is not really to be experienced upon this earth. Rather it will be experienced in its fullness as we enter into eternity as a child of God. The joy for us now as we go through life is the joy of knowing that our ultimate joy is found in eternity when we are with our Lord.

This was and is the joy that we read of concerning the martyrs that have gone on before since the beginning of the Body of Christ after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. It was the joy that the Apostles had. It was the joy we read of that Paul had. It was this same joy that every martyr had. It was the joy of knowing with absolute and complete certainty, their final destination. Real joy will not truly be experienced in its fullness on this side of eternity. It will be truly experienced only when we enter into God's joy on that day when we "pass over" – whether through physical death or when Jesus returns - into eternity.

The scriptures tell us in Nehemiah 8:10 that the "... *joy of the Lord is my strength.*" It is a spiritual force not based on a feeling or on the circumstances. Notice, it states that it is the **"joy of the Lord,"** not your joy. If we look at this scripture in its context, it was spoken over the people as they gathered by the rebuilt Temple and walls of the Temple upon their return from captivity in Babylon. It was spoken to them after the reading of the entire Torah – the Word of God. The people began to weep and grieve because after listening to God's Word and promises, they recognized two things.

First, how great; how wonderful and how faithful their God was to them. Secondly, was that they began to realize their unfaithfulness to Him as a people in the past that had caused their captivity. Yet God demonstrated His grace and mercy as He delivered them from their captivity to Babylon in a mighty and miraculous way. Not one drop of blood was shed by any of the people. It was all God!!! When they heard God's Word it pierced their hearts. They began to weep. The leadership declared and encouraged them with the truth that it is God's joy that is and always will be His people's strength. They were now able to experience God's joy over them for God rejoices over His people. Zephaniah 3:17 tells us, *"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, **he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.**"* It is God's joy that would be their strength for whatever would come next.

True joy, the God kind of joy, is based on the truth of God's Word and His faithfulness to His people. True joy comes from, and is only found, in God. Jesus points us to this truth as He states in John 15:11, "*These things have I spoken unto you, **that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.***" The "joy" that Jesus had is the "joy" that He gives to His disciples. The "joy" that Jesus has is obviously the "God kind of joy."

Let's take a look at James 1:2-4. It tells us to "*count it all joy*" when difficult times come your way. Oh boy, that sounds like fun; just what I want to do; be joyful when stuff is hitting the fan. However, that is the time when I need to "*count it all joy.*" The devil comes to test, tempt and try your faith. He comes to see if you really believe in your heart what you say with your mouth. He comes and sets up a battle ground and the battle ground is in your mind. Do I really believe that I win no matter what it looks like?

The "sacrifice" aspect is that of choosing to endure in your faith to the end no matter what things may seem. It comes into play when at times you may not feel like you win or it may not look like you are going to make it through the difficult times. It is at those times when you don't "feel" as if you can or even want to endure to the end. It is at this time that you must "die to the flesh" and start declaring and yelling shouts of victory and praises to the Lord. It is at that time that you must remember that the greater "prize," the greater joy, is yet to come in eternity as you enter into "the joy of your Lord" forever and ever.

The tribulations that we encounter will bring us to a place where a choice needs to be made. If we choose to "*count it all joy*" it will bring forth steadfastness in God which works experience - knowing we have won and made it through other difficulties prior to the one we are going through now makes it easier to believe we can win again. This brings forth "hope" – the assurance and confidence that we can and will make it through. As we remain steadfast it brings us to a place of completeness within our relationship with the Lord - wanting and lacking for nothing.

When you offer unto the Lord your "sacrifices of joy," the spiritual atmosphere becomes permeated with these "sounds and sacrifices of joy." The enemy shudders at this sound. As you continue to declare these shouts and blasts of victory, these "shouts of joy," all of a sudden your spirit gets refreshed. Out of your heart flows declarations of scripture and praise resulting in the difficult "issues" of life seemingly fading away in the hope and assurance of the future glory (eternity) that is to come. You begin to realize, hey, I **will** make it through. You choose, as the scripture declares, to "endure to the end, knowing that you shall be saved." (Matthew 10:22) Therefore, as Philippians 4:4 and Nehemiah 8:10 exhorts each of us as believers in Christ, "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice*" for the "*joy of the Lord is your strength.*"
WE WIN!!!