

Joy – Spiritual Health Made Visible

Winston Churchill was not only an inspirational leader against the terror of Nazi Germany, but was also a humourist.

Adolf Hitler announced at a Nazi rally during the Battle of Britain that Germany would wring England's neck like a helpless chicken.

Winston Churchill spoke the next day in Parliament and said that Herr Hitler was in for a big surprise because he would find England is "*some chicken with some neck.*"

This was humour that a nation under siege really needed.

As Winston Churchill demonstrated, leaders need to rise above their circumstances, and the spiritual health needed is what Christians call joy.

What is the source of such joy? –

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*"

Joy is one of the "fruits" of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a true Christians.

The surest way to understand the Christian meaning of "joy" is to see how it is used in God's Word, the Christian Bible.

John 16:20-24 [New King James] "*Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*"

Jesus Christ tells His disciples of His impending separation preparing them for the terror of His trial and death. Nevertheless, in this dangerous moment He tells them about joy.

"Joy" is united by Jesus Christ to the word "peace" which means wholeness and salvation. Sorrow will be turned to joy when we discover that Jesus Christ has won the victory over death itself, through His resurrection.

This transformation of sorrow and fear into joy is the very core of joy.

What we thought would be a permanent loss, producing fear and grief, becomes a surprising victory.

The result of this reversal is joy.

Joy is the realisation that Jesus Christ has denied death its finality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 [New King James] "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery:*

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

In this upheaval we have the definition of "joy." **The "sting" of death is not fatal, because through Jesus Christ there is the potential of a new life beyond death.** We also calm down, which is why Jesus Christ used the word "peace."

No wonder two disciples were glad and their hearts strangely warmed on the road to Emmaus, [Luke 24:13-32].

This is the joy that results from knowing the ending to the story of life, an ending that is better than anyone expects.

Facets of genuine joy –

Joy is the result of knowing the truth –

Joy is the "fruit" of a gigantic secret that humanity could never have expected, except for the good news that Jesus Christ brought from God the Father.

This joy clears the air so we can see things about life as they really are.

Joy causes celebration –

Gladness and song go with joy. **There is an energy in joy that cures fatigue and discouragement.**

James 1:2-4 [New King James] *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*

This is why James links the facing of trials with our knowing the faithfulness of our Saviour Creator God, in producing in us the very "likeness" of God, patience being one of those characteristics of God.

Joy is the result of the presence of the Eternal God –

Joy is the result of knowing the Eternal God and that He is always nearby [John 14:15-18; John 15:11-17]. **Satan and all evil cannot understand this inner joy that can only come as a result of our relationship with the Creator God.**