

August 26, 2012

“Confidence”

Ps 90:14 NLT

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.

The writer of Psalm 90 did not think it was an impossible goal to be filled with joy all our days, every day, to the end of our lives. However, there was a condition; and that condition was that we must be satisfied with the unfailing love of God.

Knowing we are loved by God is the basis of joy. I think that when I started this 90 day experiment in joy, my confidence was in myself; as if I would find the secret of maintaining joy in the Lord always. I still have confidence for sustained joy but now my confidence has shifted.

My confidence is no longer in myself, but in the Lord. I guess it is not like I didn't have confidence in the Lord or His Word, but now my confidence in Him is deeper. It is the difference between asking, “Will I be joyful today?” And asking, “What form will my joy take today?” There is a world of difference in these two questions. The first one (“Will I be joyful today?”) can cause anxiety, but the second question (“What form will my joy take today?”) causes me to live in confident expectation, with amazement and adoration to what the Lord does.

A life of joy depends on approaching each day in the confidence of faith. And the time when confidence is needed the most is when worldly circumstances threaten joy.

Heb 10:35 NLT

Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you!

Faith ought to result in good works, but our faith is not concerned with our good work, but the good work of God in us.

Jer 17:7 NIV

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

Joy comes from a deep confidence in God and His life in us by the Holy Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Does God want you to be joyful, rejoicing always? Does God want you to be thankful in all circumstances in this dark world? Your joy depends on answering these questions with a resounding, “Yes!” David had this confidence when he wrote toward the end of the 23 Psalm:

Ps 23:6 NLT

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life,

When I began this experiment in joy 90 days ago my focus was, “Can I really do this?” But now my focus is on God, “How wonderful He is to do this for me!” Now I know that it is not up to me to maintain joy, God does it all. Joy is not self-produced, but is given by God. When I focus on Him and His promises, when I trust, praise, and thank Him, He takes away anxiety, and doubt, He delivers from trials and temptations, and He fills with peace and joy.

There are days I don't feel much joy. But I found that I could live without grumbling about it – that was a new revelation to me. I could choose to not be miserable and ruin my day and the day of everyone else around me.

You will be amazed at how easily this can be done. Gloomy moods that may have held you for hours or days can be short lived, shaken off in a moment, just by recognizing their source, that they are based on lies. Don't listen to the lies of the enemy, that's what got us in trouble in the first place – how long will we keep entertaining “the father of lies.”

I found that sometimes unhappiness creeps in without me noticing that it is happening, but I'm learning to notice it and I am getting more skilled at not listening to the lies, but rather tell myself the truth: God is with me, God is good, I must accept what is going on right now, and trust a loving God. I may not like my circumstances, but I don't have to complain about them. I found when I did that joy would return, just as if it had been there all the time.

Joy is there all the time, because joy is not a thing, but a capacity of the heart. Joy is in a Person, and that Person is Jesus, and Jesus is always present, everywhere, every moment, in all circumstances. Joy is part of you. You are the Lord's joy, and He is yours. You can't really lose joy, you may not feel it but it still has to be there, just as you don't always feel the presence of God, but God is always there. And if joy is a characteristic of God who lives in you by the Holy Spirit you can't lose joy. The more you believe this the more it will change you.

We all have questions for God, don't we? But you know what I think? I think that if God was here **right now** all our questions would melt away. Just to be with Him would be answer enough. Well, guess what? We *are* with Him, and He is with us. Why not relax and enjoy Him? Joy is not rooted in what, when, why, or how, but in Who.

John 16:22 NLT

You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.

Here Jesus was talking about His resurrection, “I will see you again; then you will rejoice.” Jesus is alive, and is with us forever. By His Spirit, He is with us right now, in this we rejoice, “And no one can rob you of that joy” – what joy? The joy that we are with Him and He with us always and forever.

If Rom 8:39 (NIV) is true and nothing can ... “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Then nothing can separate us from the joy of the Lord either.

Jesus gives His word that our joy cannot be taken from us. Joy lives in us because He lives in us. It inhabits a place in us that nothing can touch as long as you honor that place. You can surrender your joy, but no person, no circumstance; nothing can take it from you. It is here to stay as long as you trust and obey God.

Joy deepens as more and more we realize that it proceeds from God rather than from anything we do. I don't mean that we shouldn't do the things that help maintain joy, but joy is too pure, too holy, too fathomless to be of any human origin. I know God wants us to keep on working, fighting, believing, obeying, yet He also wants us to know that joy is His free gift and that He can produce it in us without our help at all. If you're skeptical of being joyful every day, it's because you believe it's impossible, well, it is. That is exactly the point. We cannot achieve the life of God on our own. Joy is God's work; faith is ours.

In a novel by Michael D. O'Brien, *Strangers and Sojourners*, the author portrays a character who goes snow-blind while camping by a remote lake in northern Ontario. After lying in his tent for several weeks in midwinter, not only blind but in excruciating pain, the man regains his sight and runs outside to see what many people never see in their entire lives and says:

“It was too wonderful! I ran out and I saw!”

“What did you see?” (he was questioned)

“I saw that everything is so beautiful we should fall down and worship God a hundred times a day.”

Joy's purpose is to rejoice in God, the Giver of joy and Giver of everything good. As this remains your focus, your joy will last. Don't desire joy itself, desire God. Worldly people may be happy for a number of reasons, but Christian joy is joy in the Lord. Joy comes not from what we do, it comes from God. Rejoicing is a pure, selfless activity of the soul and the only motive is that joy is freely given, so we freely return it to God. If rejoicing is not pure to the point of sacrifice, joy will soon dissipate – be wasted, thrown away, squandered.

Heavenly joy does not come from early plans, but ...

James 1:17 NLT

Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights.

Ps 126:3 NIV

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Joy is not out *there* somewhere; it is *here* inside us. Because God is in us joy has a permanent place in our heart. The more you can grasp that truth, the more you will taste of everlasting joy **now**.

It's not that I don't see and ache for the troubles of this world, but I am learning to get into the habit to see past it to something more real, more permanent, to that place of everlasting joy.

I have found the secret to joy and it can be described in one word: "Confidence!" Confidence in God; Confidence in God's promises; Confidence that we can be filled with joy always; Confidence that we can rejoice in the Lord, always; Confidence that joy is in us, always. Confidence is certainty, conviction, faith, complete trust. Faith is our work- Joy is God's work; faith is ours.

Do you believe in the unfailing love of God for you? Then sing for joy to the end of your life.