

Freedom's Gate

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The Joy of the Lord

- Live By The Word -

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," (Luke 4:4b). I love the word of God. Psalm 19:8 tells us the word rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes. I can attest to both. There are many times when the word has brought me such great joy and

opened the eyes of my understanding.

I think it is interesting what God says in Luke 4:4 – that we actually live, not only by bread, but by every word of God. Most of us think we live only by bread! For many Christians, it is a new thought to **live** by the word. The Lord had drawn my attention to this scripture years ago, but I always thought of it in general terms. In other words, I thought of it in this way: The whole Bible was for my instruction on how to live my life in Jesus.

Now certainly that is true, but there are times when the Lord gives us a rhema word. That means He gives a specific word for a specific situation. There are times when we don't need the whole Bible; we need a NOW word that will put us over!

- A Now Word -

For the past two months, the Lord has been speaking to me of the joy of the Lord. He was speaking to me in my spirit about it, but I was also hearing it from other places and reading it in Christian articles. I believe it is a NOW word for many of us, self included.

Nehemiah 8:10b says, "Do not sorrow for the joy of the Lord is your strength." I like to say it this way: The **Lord's** joy is your strength. Saying it that way makes it clearer Whose joy it is.

The joy of the natural man is based on our circumstances. If all of our ducks are in a row and things are going well in our life, then we say we feel joyful. But all too quickly that 'joy' can disappear when something rocks our world. If our smooth sailing suddenly becomes rough, joy is hard to locate.

- True Joy -

Seeing we have a real enemy that does not want us joyful, it appears that we (Body of Christ) have some waking up to do. Joy isn't just a gleeful feeling we feel in our flesh, it is a **force** in the spirit realm and it is real! It is part of the fruit of the Spirit and it is intended to put you over when the thief comes knocking at your door.

Strength in Nehemiah 8:10 (Hebrew) means: a fortified place, a defense, force, fortress, rock, a strong hold. It comes from a root word meaning to prevail and to be strong. Joy (Hebrew) means: rejoicing, gladness, and comes from a root word meaning to rejoice, make glad, **be joined**.

You will notice that I put in bold letters 'be joined.' That is because that is the most important part – to be joined to the Lord. It is another way to say, 'abiding in Christ.' Using these meanings, let's read Nehemiah 8:10b again: Being joined to the Lord, partaking of His rejoicing and gladness, is your defense and fortress, your rock, your stronghold. It is your place of prevailing and being strong.

Joy has nothing to do with circumstances, good or bad. Joy comes from relationship and relationship starts with our position in Him, or being joined to Christ. It is in receiving that position by faith that we have access to the mind of Christ. The mind of the natural man or carnal man (which is what most Christians function with) is all over the place. One minute it is happy, the next minute it is sad; sometimes it reasons, and then other times it is totally passive. What is even more alarming is that Romans 8:6,7 tells us that the carnal mind is an **absolute enemy of God**. So obviously, joy will not be found there.

The mind of Christ is not like that. It is sound, not afraid, peaceful, full of joy, doesn't reason, but proclaims. It rejoices in every situation; **only in Christ** can you do that. True joy can only be found in Him.

- Relationship with the Holy Spirit -

This is **why** we need to have relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is not enough only to know our position. We need to know how to **live** in Christ because that is where joy manifests in our life. I am married to Joe Pranger; that is my position. It is a fact – I am his wife. But there would be no joy in our marriage if I didn't have relationship with him. I could go around and tell everyone, "I am Joe Pranger's wife, yes that is my position. I am his wife!" But if I didn't talk to Joe, spend time with him or listen to him, I would have no clue what Joe Pranger is all about, even though I am legally his. Do you see that?

It is the same way with the Holy Spirit. We can know our position with Him and still not have relationship with Him. He wants to spend time with us. He desires to tell us many things – He wants us to know His voice.

- Sons and Daughters -

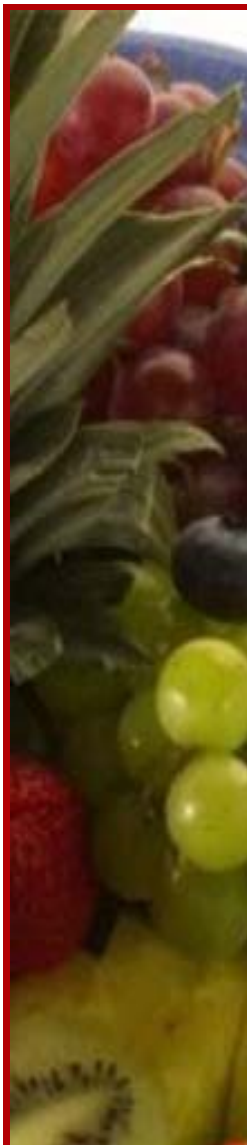
In John 3:29, when John the Baptist heard the voice of the bridegroom (Jesus), he rejoiced greatly and said, "This joy of mine is fulfilled." My goodness, John the Baptist lived under the Old Covenant and he said that! We have a much better covenant and we should be rejoicing every day all day long because He is **in us and we are in Him!** The Holy Spirit didn't indwell men yet and John called himself the friend of the bridegroom. Church, we are the bride and are much more than friends; we are sons and daughters of the Most High God. That is something to rejoice about!

We had six children, three sons and three daughters. They are all married; now we have twelve children, six sons and six daughters. All are heirs to what we have, even though only six of them were born to us naturally. By covenant, they are sons and daughters and heirs. In our eyes, there is no difference. It is the same way with God. In His eyes, there is no difference between Jesus and us. He is the head and we are His Body.

- My Daily Walk -

I remember when I first started learning to have a relationship with the Lord. I had accepted Christ as my Savior at church camp when I was seventeen, but that seed laid dormant for thirteen years. Then God sent a pastor to our home to awaken that seed when I was thirty. And awaken me, He did. Excitement about God living in me (I didn't know about living in Him yet) and God being my Daddy flooded my soul. I talked to God all day long about everything! And I mean everything! He was my new found friend and I bent His

Continue on back



My heart cries out for My children
who walk away
My Spirit is wooing, calling them
back to stay
The devil has plots and plans to
snare them in a trap
But My plans and strategies are
greater causing his bands to
snap
Releasing them, releasing them
as his prey
They will return and hide in Me,
keeping him at bay
No longer will the enemy snare
them in a hole
For he robbed and plundered –
from My people he stole
But this is a new day – the hour
I've raised My people for
They will shout! They will rejoice!
They will say restore!
Take your position in Me – this is
the hour
In greater measure, I'm releasing
My power
Declare and proclaim My Word
Let it be mightily heard
I will use it to draw My children
home
No longer will it be that they roam
Only in Me can peace be found.
Only in Me can you hear the
joyful sound,
'It is well with your soul
For I the Lord have made you
whole'

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22, 23

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:11



ear. I was constantly talking to the Lord no matter what I was doing and I really didn't give Him much opportunity to get a word in edge wise. But my Father loved me so much that He let it go because He understood how excited I was about Him. I was learning about relationship!

I began to read my Bible. I loved it and still do! The word never grows old to me – God has a way of making it fresh every day. When I first started reading it, I didn't have a clue where to read or even what a good portion of it meant. I just latched onto what I did understand and Holy Spirit began to teach me. I began to learn to 'listen' instead of talking all the time.

-Learning His Voice-

When I first began to know God's voice, I learned it through the word. Later I learned about the witness of the Spirit.....that there could be a **knowing** inside of me that He was speaking to me. I have learned to know Him through worship in song and prayer. There are so many facets to our relationship with God and for the most part, we have barely tapped into it. I believe there is **so much more** that He has for us.

As I was writing this, I found myself reflecting back to those first days I was writing about. We had four children by this time and there were struggles from time to time like every other couple. But I'm telling you I had this joy about the Lord and His word. He was constantly confirming His love to me with answered prayer.

One incident sticks out in my mind. We had a horse named Red and this horse had 'personality'. He had a mind of his own and he thought he was boss. One day he got loose in a field and Joe and I were trying to get him back to the one side where the gate was. Every time Joe would get close to him, that horse would take off. He was all over the field. You almost got the feeling he was laughing at you. I was standing at one end near the gate, watching Joe trying to get this horse corralled. Finally, I just started using my new found faith. I said, "Lord, get that horse back over here and make him go through the gate." Immediately, that horse came right across the field and went through the gate!

-Our First Love-

In Revelation 2:4b, Jesus tells the church at Ephesus that they had left their first love. What is the **first love**? His love for us! We need to return to that first love – His love for us! Most of us need a good

dose of just meditating on the love of God **for us!** He loves us so much. Could it be that in those first days, I was so focused on how much He loved me that there were no hindrances to His just showering on me that love? In those early days, I wasn't sin conscious thinking all the time of how I displeased God. No! I was excited about Him and His word and joy was bubbling in me every day!

Church, this is where the Lord wants us – just so full of Him that joy is bubbling up

I BELIEVE that there is **so much more**, that He has for us.

and out of us. Stop thinking about all of your mistakes and the hard hits you've had from the devil. We have all had them. Stop thinking about what a sinner you are and start thinking about what a wonderful son you are. That's how God sees you – **in** His wonderful Son, Jesus! Start meditating on the love of God and specifically how much He loves you. Give joy a chance! God is ready to release that in you full force!

Remember what Nehemiah 8:10 says? "**Do not sorrow** for the joy of the Lord is your strength." I realize that situations have happened to many of you that have made you 'feel' sorrowful, but you **must** resist a spirit of grief! The devil uses it to steal your joy and your strength. Jesus took all that has come against your peace and joy. Isaiah 53:4 says He bore your grief and carried your sorrows. Allow your spirit man to rise up and take dominion and you will walk in His peace and joy. (Ephesians 2:14)

In conclusion, there is one more thing I would like to say about joy. Over the years, I have found repeatedly that the more I walk in the authority that Jesus gave us, the more I walk in joy. So right now from my position seated with Christ in God far above all principality, power, might, and dominion, I use that authority to bless you: I bind the enemy and command the works of darkness to cease operating in your life. I command the spirit of sorrow and grief to leave you. Fear, and sickness, I tell you now, depart from God's people. Unforgiveness, go! I loose healing, peace and joy to be your portion now in Jesus name.

"Come and enter into the joy of the Lord. Enter into Him and abide in the Rest."

Ann Pranger