

THE JOY OF THE LORD

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I have been talking of the need to guard our minds. They are a target area for satan — either directly or via the world and its relentless influence.

A problem area for many ... because we tend to go through life oblivious of the unseen realm — relying only on our 5 physical senses ... perhaps believing all our thoughts and attitudes are entirely “our own”.

But we need to be sober-minded ... vigilant ... alert.

1 Peter 5:7-8

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

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8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

Satan is our adversary ... looking to devour people — maybe YOU? We have to resist the devil.

We have seen previously that we have spiritual weapons and spiritual armour. We need them! Not just platitudes.

Last week we looked at the Helmet of Salvation. A helmet protects our head ... our minds. It would be foolish to go to battle with our head unprotected.

The helmet is said to be THE HOPE OF SALVATION in 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5 ... the confident expectation of what we can look forward to. Particularly necessary when one of satan’s approaches is to discourage us.

Discouragement is a powerful weapon the devil can use against us. It is not always something we can identify specifically ... maybe an overall feeling of hopelessness. We can look around at society ... or the church and its impotence ... our own lives — too many failures ... too little personal growth ... too few answers to prayer ... and just conclude “what’s the point ... why even

bother"? Just lose heart ... then largely give up ... stop trying. And that's where satan wants us to be.

The zeal and enthusiasm we once had fades away and discouragement creeps in... and satan can see that we're an easy target.

So last week we focused on the need to keep our hope alive. Real Biblical hope is a strong "anchor of the soul". If we're tempted to feel down and discouraged ... we can try to re-focus on that sure hope ... that sure expectation.

Psalms 42:1, 11

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God. (*Hungering and thirsting for God*)

11 **Why are you cast down, O my soul?**

And why are you disquieted within me? (*It is natural*)

Hope in God; (*the antidote to that discouragement*)

For I shall yet praise Him,

The help of my countenance and my God.

Psalms 42:11 NET

11 **Why am I discouraged?**

Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!

Psalms 42:11 TPT

11 **So I say to my soul,**

"Don't be discouraged. Don't be disturbed.

For I know my God will break through for me."

We need to be aware that there is a temptation to be discouraged ... if we focus on all these problems ... rather than on our God and our Hope. Part of guarding our minds.

In this connection there is one other key characteristic that is an antidote to discouragement — a quality that protects us from losing heart — losing hope.

Galatians 5:16-25

16 I say then: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 **Now the works of the flesh are evident**, which are: **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,**

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

24 And **those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**.

25 **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit**.

If we walk in the Spirit ... we'll produce Fruit of the Spirit. We can crucify the flesh.

Nine Fruits of the spirit. The first is Love ... which is the most important — **but next is Joy**.

What part does joy play in our lives? How important is it? What does it do? What is it? Do we have it?

The Greek is "chara". It is used just under 60 times in the New Testament. Sometimes translated "gladness".

It has a similar meaning to "happiness" — but with one major difference. Happiness is a great feeling to have ... but it is very much dependant on external factors and can be very short-lived.

We get some good news in the morning ... big tax rebate ... we're happy!! Two hours later we discover we've got a flat tyre — and no spare — now we're downright miserable.

Maybe we plan a picnic months ahead. We wake up in the morning and the sun's shining — we're happy! Or ... it is pouring with rain and a chill wind — we're upset and miserable! (Most people are!)

But Biblical Joy is different. It comes from the inside — a Fruit of the Spirit. It is not easily affected by external factors or circumstances.

James 1:1-4

1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

Greetings.

2 **My brethren, count it all joy (chara) when you fall into various trials,**

3 **knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

The circumstances are against us! In a trial ... in adversities ... the wind in our faces. It is easy and natural to feel down ... to grumble ... to complain. But we DECIDE TO BE JOYFUL!

If our joy keeps going ... we're not going to become disheartened ... lose hope ... get fatigued.

Most of us don't count it joy! "Oh God ... why has this happened to me?! O woe is me!"

But if we count it all joy ... satan is not going to get to us ... not going to discourage us. It is not a natural joy?

John 15:7-11

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

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

Jesus: My Joy.

Was Jesus miserable? Struggling with depression? No! Jesus was a joyful person even though he was being opposed everyday.

Jesus' joy is to be in His disciples. Just a platitude?

John 17:12-13, 20

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, **that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.**

20 **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;**

"My joy" in them. Jesus wants His joy to be available to His disciples ... and to all believers including us today.

Jesus would have benefited from this inner attitude of joy. Helped Him. He faced endless opposition and criticism ... far worse than we will ever have or experience. It can help us too.

As Galatians said ... it's a Fruit of the Spirit. It comes from the Holy Spirit in us.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-7

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

6 **And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,**

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 WEYMOUTH

6 ... **after you had received the Message amid severe persecution, and yet with the joy which the Holy Spirit gives,**

Most of us wouldn't show much "joy" in the midst of afflictions ... but that's the teaching of scripture. So that difficulties ... frustrations ... disappointments ... persecutions ... can't defeat us.

Our minds are protected. Hope and Joy.

Colossians 1:9-12

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

11 **strengthened with all might,** according to His glorious power, **for all patience and longsuffering with joy;** *(KJV: Joyfulness)*

12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

To endure ... be steadfast ... suffer long ... but rather than being "worn down" — we're joyful! Joy keeps us going.

Weebles wobble ... but they don't fall down — they're full of joy! 😊

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who** according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. **Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**
9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:8 THE VOICE

8 ...**celebrate with a joy that is glorious and beyond words.**

Even in “various trials”. Does that sound like you and me? How do we face trials?

It doesn't sound like just natural “happiness”? A powerful spiritual quality. It implies joy is bubbling over ... even though external circumstances might be rough.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is often called “An Epistle of Joy” — because Paul refers so often to being joyful or rejoicing (and this from a man in prison!)

Philippians 1:1-7

1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 **always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,**
5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,
6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;
7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Philippians 1:24-26

24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.
25 And being confident of this, **I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, (joy in faith)**
26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

Philippians 3:1

1 **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.** For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Philippians 4:4-8

4 **Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;**

7 **and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. *(These are the things that our minds should be dwelling on)*

Philippians 4:10-13

10 But **I rejoiced in the Lord greatly** that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for **I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:**

12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Paul is not a “modern vicar” offering religious platitudes! He’s a warrior! Paul knows the importance of a decision to lean on the Spirit and be joyful. Part of guarding our minds ... especially against discouragement.

There was an interesting incident at Philippi on Paul’s first visit. It shows his attitude.

Acts 16:11-12

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

12 and from there **to Philippi**, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And **we were staying in that city for some days.**

Acts 16:19-31

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, **they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.**

20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "**These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;**

21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; **and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.**

23 **And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison,** commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

24 Having received such a charge, **he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

25 **But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,** and the prisoners were listening to them.

26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Paul and Silas were singing songs at midnight — IN PRISON!

They were not morose ... miserable ... depressed. They were in good spirits! Encouraged!

This led to Paul's freedom ... and the conversion of the jailer and his family!

Paul's choice? Be miserable ... or joyful. Ours too?

Nehemiah 8:8-12

8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. *(It was natural to mourn when they realised their shortcomings)*

10 Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." *(being joyful in Jehovah is a "strength and stronghold" [Amplified Bible])*

11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved."

12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

"Joy" here is Chara in the Old Testament Greek.

If Old Testament believers could rejoice with their limited understanding — how much more should we today? We have a lot to rejoice over!

Romans 5:1-2

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:9-11

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Romans 5:11 NASB

11 ... but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ

The devil's always looking at ways to get to us ... to get at us. If he can discourage us ... get us to lose heart ... lose hope ... we're in spiritual danger.

KEEP THE JOY ALIVE.

John 15:1-11

1 **"I am the true vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

5 **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

8 **By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; **abide in My love.**

10 **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love**, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

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

We need to ABIDE IN JESUS to bear fruit (such as "joy" ... Fruit of the Spirit).

To be "vitally united". Fruit is a natural product on a fruit tree ... provided we cultivate the tree and keep it healthy.

JOY COMES FROM JESUS. SO STICK CLOSE TO THE LORD JESUS!