



“A JOYFUL CHILD”

Neh. 8:10b “The joy of the LORD is your strength”

The LORD wants His children to be overflowing with a spirit of joy! We are to be satisfied with His involvement in our daily life. He desires that our hearts would overflow with thankfulness for our salvation and His help that is available at all times. When we are truly confident we are His children this becomes our inner desire.

What is it that *blocks or hinders* us from enjoying our Christian walk? Why do so many Believers look as haggard as those who do not know the LORD? Our bodies lose energy and our voice seems to lose that zeal that once attracted other to ask how Christ could make such a difference in our lives! Just what have we allowed in our lives that *clouds and crowds out the peace that made us different* from unbelievers?

Have we filled our minds with burdens and things that *absolutely must be done right now* and neglected our vital time for spiritual renewal and just let it fall by the wayside?

Joy brings spiritual strength! That is a fact that as Believers we must not ignore! Even our experiences of pain and sorrows are to enlarge our capacity for His joy! Knowing others pray for us and we pray for them in our hard times will encourage our soul. The testimonies of others holding fast to their faith through their trials will encourage us! When we release our burdens to Him, His joy will flow freely within again! The LORD has said that *we will face many trials and tests* in our lives, so why are we so *surprised* when they come?

1 Thess3: 7-9 LB “So we are greatly comforted, dear brothers, in all our crushing troubles and suffering here, now that we know you are standing true to the LORD. We can bear anything as long as we know you remain strong in Him. How can we thank God enough for you and the joy and delight you have given us in our praying for you?”

Why drag through the week without joy and the evidence of the abundant life the LORD has promised to us? LORD! Take us back to our first love! What joy we had as we felt His cleansing power surging through our spirit! At God’s altar we will find the joy we are seeking for!

Ps.43: 4-5 LB “There I will go to the altar of God my exceeding joy, and praise Him with my harp. O God- my God! O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged? Trust in God! I shall again praise Him for His wonderful help; He will make me smile again!”

Eph. 1:11-12 LB “Moreover, because of what Christ has done we have become gifts to God that He delights in, for as part of God’s sovereign plan we were chosen from the beginning to be His, and all things happen just as He decided long ago. God’s purpose in this was that we should praise God and give glory to Him for doing all these mighty things for us, who were the first to trust in Christ.”

These verses make it clear that *we are His children!* Do we seek His Presence for a joyful heart? Do we believe He is truly with us even when we do not sense His Presence? As His child, we are a part of the Body of Christ. We are to trust His Spirit within us to fill us with His power, love and joy. He is the One who enables us to walk in righteous conduct in spite of all we face in life. The reflection of His joy within us will encourage others!

Excerpt from “The Overflowing Cup” by Mary Mayko

“GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS”

Salvation means so much more than our initial “*Born Again*” experience! Thank God for His wonderful plan of salvation! We rejoice in the fact that we have hope in the Future of seeing Jesus face to face and the glory of Heaven. Just imagine the thrill of exploring all the wonders there!



While we bask in the knowledge of where we are going to spend Eternity, we need to draw on God’s power to help us daily! As we reflect on God’s mercies, it will help us to walk in joy and confidence here on this earth. Today’s stresses often interfere with our desires to pause and reflect on God’s blessings. His mercies and compassions never fail, but are new every morning!

Lam. 3:22-23 KJV “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.”

God’s mercy and faithfulness are blessings for His children! There are times when we fail Him in some way and feel much sorrow over that! Thankfully, we can come quickly to Him and receive His mercy that brings fresh peace to our hearts! How we need to show Him we are grateful for His blessings! Our gratitude delights His heart! Everyone needs to feel appreciated or recognized for their efforts! Our LORD deserves much more praise than He receives! Gratitude is a great motivator! It makes one want to do even more to show how thankful they are!

The LORD has made every provision for every need we may have, and often our God-given desires! When we walk with Him with a clear conscience we can enjoy His blessings! Careful when you get mad easily at God over something that didn’t go as *you expected*! Be thankful God does not give us *what we deserve*! Remember His compassions and mercy? If He rewarded us *according to our motives*, just what would we receive?

Let us give God the glory and worship He is entitled to and be thankful for the peace He grants us when we place our trust in Him!

Phil4:6-7 LB “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything: tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.”

REFLECTION:

“I will take courage from His sweet Word, accepting His comfort and trusting in His promises I have heard! One day my struggles and concerns of this earthy journey will be past, and I’ll be safely Home in Heaven sitting at Jesus’ feet at last!”

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HIS PRECIOUS JEWELS

Mal 3:16-17 LB “Then those who feared and loved the Lord spoke often of Him to each other. And He had a Book of Remembrance drawn up in which He recorded the names of those who feared Him and loved to think about Him. “They shall be mine,” says the Lord Almighty, “In that day when I make up My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares an obedient and dutiful son.”

The Bible (KJV) has an astonishing 1,704 references to the 62 gemstones and minerals that were known in Biblical times! The frequency of these references assures us of their importance! What spiritual insights can we gain from taking a look at some of those verses?

In Gen2:11-12 it speaks of a land called Havilah that contained gold, bdellium and onyx stone! Isn't it interesting that God provided valuable minerals and jewels when He created the Earth! The priestly garments had gold and precious stones that adorned it. Each stone on the priestly breastplate represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The name of the tribe was inscribed on the stone and these were worn over the heart of the High Priest! Two onyx stones had six tribes engraved on each and these stones were placed on the shoulders of the priest to bear the names before the LORD!

The Lord rained down brimstone and fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah! (Gen.19:24)

The Bible mentions silver, gold, copper, iron, sulfur, pearls, diamonds and emeralds and many other precious gems, minerals and stones. While some are rather obscure, others carry definite significance in they way they are used or referred to in Scripture.

The roads by which these valuable gems traveled, is a fascinating study in itself! Amber was probably first carried by Baltic traders. Later, the Babylonian dealers in lapis lazuli and Egyptian traders in turquoise dealt with other Cultures including Israel.

Agate, a semiprecious stone of the quartz family was placed in the breastplate belonging to the High Priest. (Exodus 28:15, 17, 19 A.V.) We also find it referred to in Isaiah 54:12 “And I will make thy windows of *agates*, and thy gates of *carbuncles*, and all thy borders of thy *pleasant stones*.”

Agate was used by ancient people as an amulet to protect them from thunderstorms, spiders, and dangers of all types! A caravan traveler would have advised you to carry an

agate pebble in your mouth to suck upon and so allay your thirst as you rode a camel over the desert!

This marvelously beautiful stone was held in high value and sold for a costly price! In the verses in Isaiah 54 God gives His people an outstanding picture of His absolute love for them! "I'll make your windows of *Agates*" We use a window to look out, to see what is going on, to look up at the sky, to discern the weather and to receive light into our life and home! We would hardly close it up with an object we could not see through, yet in this passage God is doing that very thing!

How many times in our life is the weather foul, it is dark instead of light, and we wonder "*what is going on?*" Circumstances leave us trembling! God has shut us in. He would have us look to Him, to His Word and see His Hand! To perceive this in our heart and mind, this occurrence becomes precious in our life, a "*real gem!*" Then we are allowing Him to circle us with His love! "*All thy borders*" would be better read as "*Thy whole circuit*" consisting of *His precious stones!*

The *Carbuncle*, formerly referred to is one of several of the red precious stones such as ruby, and is actually is the *garnet* cut in rounded form (cabachon). This gem, once so rare, was reserved for royalty only! Hidden deep within the dark-red heart of the *garnet* lie ancient virtues attributed to man as no other gem!

The lovely *glowing garnet*, when cut in the rounded form is the *carbuncle* of the ancients! There is an old Hebrew Legend which tells that a large carbuncle was hung in the ark (Noah's ark) and it supplied plenteous light to all the voyagers with the craft! The ancient Hebrew word once used for carbuncle, literally meant: "*lighting a fire*". This certainly describes the deep, clear-red, glowing color of this gem, due in great part to the inclusion of ferric iron.

Our scripture in Isaiah says the gates will be of carbuncle, and this reminds me of the red blood over the entrance of the Hebrew's home in Exodus, when the death angel passed over the land of Egypt! The carbuncle was in the Priest breastplate on the first row, a place of great significance!

We are God's jewels, His precious stones placed over His heart, a place of great significance!

Excerpt from "Echoes for Today's Listening" by Rev. JK Golding