

"THE THIEF - WHO COMES TO STEAL"

John 10:9-10 "I Am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Jesus is the way to the Father. A bold statement that might even sound arrogant to some, yet its true. Knowing Jesus is eternal life (John 17:3). We only start to live to the full when we receive Jesus into our hearts. On the other hand satan is a thief. He comes to take what is not his. He has only three ambitions which Jesus clearly stated; to steal, kill and destroy.

Provision And Power In His Word

God has made His divine power (2 Peter 1:3-4) available to us as believers through Jesus Christ. God does not expect us to live the Christian life in our own strength. He has made provision for all the help we need by His Word (promises) and by the Holy Spirit.

Satan Sows Doubt And Unbelief

Satan however has set about to steal these provisions that God has made. He accomplishes this by concealing our eyes to God's promises. He sows doubt and unbelief in our hearts. All this is done in an attempt to take our focus off God's provision and put it on his lies. When Jesus said that satan has come to steal He meant it. We need to realize that we have an enemy who is intent on stealing what is rightfully ours. Satan is a thief. When you are aware of the possibility that a thief might try to invade your house you take extra security measures. We need to do the same in our Christian walk. We need to be vigilant (1 Peter 5:8). It is so easy for satan to rob us of our rights in Christ Jesus when we refuse to take precautions and be vigilant. This is why Jesus warned us about it. (John 10:10)

Worrying Is His Weapon Of Choice

Worry is one of his most effective weapons that satan uses to steal from us. Worrying about tomorrow denies you from enjoying today. Worrying steals your joy and peace. To worry is to say God is not faithful. Worrying takes your eyes off God's provision and fixes them on satan's activities. Jesus had a lot to say about worrying (Matthew 6:25-34). Worrying opens the door to fear. Fear robs us from having a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). We need a sound mind (or peaceful mind) if we are to hear from God. God desires to speak to us through His Word and by His Spirit. When we allow worry and fear to rule us we lose our peace. We no longer hear God. Satan succeeds in stealing what is ours. **Guard your heart and mind against worry and fear.** Remember, they are weapons satan uses to steal from you. Worry and fear take away your peace and joy. Fix your eyes on God's words, not on satan's lies.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." (James 1:2-8) One of the hardest lessons we Christians have to learn is how to be joyful in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, James tells us to count it all joy when we enter into suffering and affliction. What does he mean when he says, "Count it all joy"? We are to consider what we are going through as a matter of joy, not because the thing itself is something that is pleasurable, but because tribulation works patience within us. There is at least one good thing happening to us in the midst of pain and suffering. We are therefore called to think about our circumstances in that light. Our suffering is not an exercise in futility. **God has a purpose, and that purpose is always good. We can count all things joy because God is working in all situations, even the most painful, for our sanctification and ultimate glorification.** In order to count earthly afflictions joy, we have to be able to take into account the future. Sometimes a Christian's hope for heaven is ridiculed in our day. The lost mock those whose lives are characterized by hope. But sometimes this is all we have. When our lives are filled with sorrow and grief, we must be able to look to the future—to heaven—to find the joy that can soothe our troubled souls. Our joy must be based on looking to God and to the inheritance we will receive in heaven. This is exactly what Jesus did.

"THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM"



He was able to endure the cross because of the joy that was set before Him. "Looking to Jesus the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the sake of the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken

His seat at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

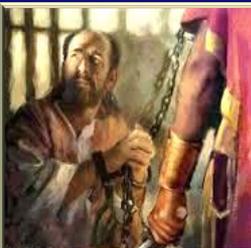
"THE GLORY THAT AWAITS US"



We, too, must realize that the suffering we endure in this life cannot compare with the joy that is laid up for us in heaven. "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight

of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18)

"SUFFERING IS MOMENTARY"



Sometimes in the moment, it is hard to keep our eyes fixed on the future. When we are in the midst of the trial, we can easily become consumed by it. Paul understood this. He who suffered many trials knew what it meant to feel pain. **"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not**

destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body...." (2 Corinthians 4:8-10) Paul held on to the hope that this suffering is only momentary, that in a short while we will reach our final destination where **"There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."** (Rev. 21:4). During those times when sorrow is at its peak, **we must remember that we are strangers here, that the labor pains only last for a little while and joy will come in the morning.** That is our hope. That is what enables us to count it all joy as we endure suffering and pain.

"COUNT IT ALL JOY"

To be able to count it all joy, you have to be able to trust God. Do you have that kind of confidence in the sovereignty and goodness of God? Do you look to Christ in the midst of your sufferings, or do you tend to focus on the present situation until you are consumed by it? Ask God to help you rejoice in Him and to count it all joy. **"THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH"**



Nehemiah told the repentant Israelites that to be able to count it all joy, **"The joy of the Lord would be their strength."** (Nehemiah 8:10). You have to be able to trust God. The early church was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord, **"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and**



ate together with glad and sincere hearts..." (Acts 2:46) and joy in the Holy Spirit. **"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."** (Acts 13:52) This is a distinguishing mark of the Kingdom of God. Those who are part of the kingdom share in the Kingdom's delight. **"For the Kingdom of God is**

not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17).

"JOY-A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT"



Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Forbearance, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."** (Galatians 5:22:25) The Joy of the Lord

may be inexplicable to the one who does not possess it. But, for the believer in Christ, the joy of the Lord comes as naturally as grapes on a vine. As we abide in Christ, the True Vine, we the branches are full of His strength and vitality, and the fruit we produce, including joy, is His doing (John 15:5).

"IT IS OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY TO REJOICE IN THE LORD"



Philippians 4:4 - **"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - **"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

Philippians 3:1 - **"Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."**

"HELD IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND"



In Christ, the believer is **"filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy"** (1 Peter 1:8). Because of its supernatural origin, the joy of the Lord—our gladness of heart—is present even through the trials of life. We know we are

children of God, and no one can snatch us away from Him; **"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand"** (John 10:28–29). We are heirs to **"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade,"** and no one can steal it from us (1 Peter 1:4); (Matthew 6:20) **"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."** We see the Author and Finisher of our faith, and, let the enemy rage ever so much, we know who wins in the end. **"And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."** (Hebrews 12:1,2).