

LOSING AND RECOVERING THE JOY OF SALVATION

Surveying Christendom today, we are convinced that multitudes of Christians have lost the joy of salvation. This state of affairs is not new to this day, but is a fact common to all the ages.

The scriptures show the presence of backsliding both in the Old and the New Testament. In the Old, we find David crying unto the Lord, saying, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Psalms 51:12-13).

In the New Testament, we find the Lord saying to the church at Ephesus, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:4-5).

In both Old Testament and New Testament scriptures, we find evidence of backsliding or of brethren losing the joy of the Lord’s salvation.

The Joy of Salvation

The joy of salvation—what is it? Its joy may be summed up as follows:

1. It is the joyous sense of deliverance, or of escape from impending doom (Psalms 7:11-13).
2. It is the joyous sense of pardon, or conscious freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1).
3. It is the joyous sense of hope, impelling, victorious, and assuring hope, with full and perfect anchorage (Hebrews 6:19).
4. It is the joyous sense of peace, that peace which passeth all understanding, even the peace of standing in the grace of God (Romans 5:1-2).
5. It is the joyous sense of assurance, assurance which comes because believers know that they are God’s sheep and that they are held in the hands of the Father and of the Son (John 10:27-29).

When surveying the joy of the Lord’s salvation, its joyous sense of deliverance, its joyous sense of pardon, its joyous sense of hope, its joyous sense of peace, and its joyous sense of assurance, then we can understand why there is laughter in the heart, a song on the lip, and rapture in life of the saints. My, my, what a possession! The moment we believe, that moment we receive the Lord Jesus into our hearts, and that moment the joy of His salvation abounds in our souls.

Losing the Joy of Salvation

But the laughter and the song, the rapture and the peace of the Lord’s salvation may cool off. What is this change that we call, losing the joy of salvation? Is it the loss of salvation? No, it is the loss of the joy which attends salvation. This loss comes when we leave our first love (Revelation 2:4), and it often happens even in the saints who hold fast to the doctrines of our faith. It is not enough to believe right, we must live right. Belief unexercised ends up in backsliding. It is not enough to say, “Lord, Lord,” we must follow Him upon whom we call (Matthew 4:19).

The loss of salvation's joy is occasioned by our yielding to the flesh. This is so, because the flesh is against God (Romans 8:5). David so yielded and lost the joy of the Lord's salvation.

This joy is lost, when we lose sight of the value of human souls. Of this the Master says, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul, What shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The lure of gold and the things which gold buys causes love's flame to flicker and the saint's heart to grow cold. As a consequence, saved people become unconcerned about the doom of sinners.

The loss of salvation's joy is occasioned by substituting Satan's humanitarianism for the Lord's work. Works and grace do not mix in salvation. Humanitarianism is a mental invention. It is a satanic figment, selfish in motive and function. To make humanitarianism a substitute for grace in service is to dwarf our affections for the Lord and to reduce our interest in lost souls. The loss of salvation's joy is caused by indulgence in so called light sins. To indulge these, dwarfs our joy in the Lord's salvation.

The loss of salvation's joy is caused by compromising the truth. Since the truth makes one free, (John 8:32), to compromise it fashions chains for the delivered soul, and this compromise witnesses the saint following the Lord afar off—such a walk is a joyless one for any saint.

We find Israel, during the period of the Judges, forgetting the Lord's deliverance, turning away from the temple to go to the woods for worship, like Boy Scouts do today, and the end of their forgetting and turning was the loss of their devotion and their loyalty to the God of heaven. They ended up in the joyless worship of false gods. Seven times during the period of the Judges, Israel's affections for the Lord cooled off, seven times they apostatized; seven times enemies invaded their land to conquer; and seven times they went into slavery.

Sin and its ways chill the hearts of God's covenant people and lose them the joy of His salvation.

Oh, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Recovering the Joy of Salvation

How may the joy of the Lord's salvation be recovered? This is important, and the Lord does not leave us without light on this matter. Have the fires of your love ceased to burn and has its flame ceased to give light? Do you have but the slumbering embers of His love in your heart? If so, we want to show you how that your love can abound again with its full warmth and its full light and its full zeal and its full joy.

Turn with us to Psalm 51 and there we find the Lord's way of recovering the lost joy of His salvation clearly set forth for us. It is illustrated by David's way of recovering the lost joy of the Lord's salvation.

1. It is the way of confessing one's sins (Psalms 51:1-5). This record shows David pouring out his soul in the confession of his sins. He doesn't spare himself. Knowing himself to be guilty of adultery and murder, he pleads for forgiveness, he pleads with the Lord to blot out his transgressions, to wash him through and through from his iniquity, and to cleanse his life from its sins. David, a saved sinful man, pleads with the Lord for cleansing and for blotting out of his sins. He pleads not for salvation but for cleansing and forgiveness.

2. Again we find David crying out for purging, saying, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalms 51:7). David, being conscious of the moral filth involved in his sins, cried out for purging, purging of his life and not of his born again heart.
3. Again David cries out for a clean heart. Clean heart here can but refer to the fleshly heart of his life (Psalms 51:11). His flesh had occasioned his transgression and he knew it.
4. And again David cries out to the Lord, saying, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit” Thus David moves step by step toward a renewed walk with the Lord. By these steps, David surely recovered the joy of the Lord’s salvation and he went to work for the Lord. He says, “Then will I teach transgressors thy way; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Psalms 51:13).

Today, beloved, if you find your heart cold and indifferent. If you find your salvation a joyless one, then follow the footsteps of David and the joy-bells will ring in your soul again.

You ask what makes me happy,
My mind is so free from care.
It is because my Savior,
In mercy heard my prayer.

He brought me out of darkness,
And now the light I see.
O blessed loving Savior,
To thee my praise shall be.

–The Baptist Challenge

Published June 2013