

The Joy of the Lord

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes that true joy is rooted in absolute surrender to God's will and is essential for spiritual strength and hope in adversity.

Topics: "Joy in Trials", "Absolute Surrender to God"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes that true joy, as intended by God, is often misunderstood and reduced to mere happiness, which is circumstantial. He explains that joy is a profound condition of being that transcends circumstances, rooted in absolute self-surrender to God's will. This joy is not only vital for our spiritual health but also essential for enduring trials, as it is tied to our eschatological hope and the future glory that awaits believers. Katz illustrates this with the example of Paul and Silas, who sang praises in prison, demonstrating that joy can flourish even in dire situations when anchored in faith. Ultimately, he calls for a restoration of joy through a complete submission to God, which will lead to a fuller experience of His presence and strength.

Transcript

"Art Katz encouraged the duplicating of his audio messages, and there are no copyright claims for those who desire to share them with others. However, Art's books and writings (including articles on this website) do still carry a copyright, and permission needs to be sought if quoting from those is required."

We are living in an hour where the word joy is being cheapened and made to stand for something that God never intended. Its meaning has been reduced to some kind of emotional and giddy experience, rather than a life-giving provision of God to keep us from the deceptions and perils of the last days.

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

We need to ask the question: "What was the joy that Jesus had?" Do we understand the difference between joy and happiness? Happiness is circumstantial, for example, you won the sweepstakes or you inherited something. Joy, however, is a condition of being, not only independent of circumstances, but all the more profound despite circumstances, especially of an adverse kind. Joy is, therefore, not only independent of circumstances, but it cannot be affected by circumstances. That means we can experience

joy inside a prison cell, in all its dampness, the scurrying of rats, the moaning of prisoners, the hopelessness and destitution. Our joy can yet abound, all the more if we have a complete confidence in the sovereignty of God and know that our imprisonment is not some happenstance or circumstantial accident, but the very explicit outworking of Gods sovereign will for us. Joy is not a luxury but a vital, life-giving necessity.

The joy of Jesus was the absolute self-surrender and self-sacrifice of Himself to His Father, the joy of doing that which the Father sent Him to do." (Oswald Chambers My Utmost for His Highest)

This sounds like a formula not for joy, but for misery. In other words, we are to have joy in doing the will of another and it requires an absolute self-surrender. This is a complete reversal of all to which men subscribe as wisdom, but where does their wisdom bring them? Mental institutions, divorces, broken bodies, premature deaths, wasted living, anguished lives, corrupted children and broken generations. For Jesus it was not a grim obligation but a freely given self-abandonment to His Father.

The psalmist could say: "I delight to do Thy will." There is a delight in doing His will even when the fruit of it might not yet be visible or evident. You may not see it until eternity, but there is yet a delight in doing His will. Delight is a synonym for joy. There needs to be a restoration of delight, and not the least of the delights is the delight of the saints in the fellowship of the saints, enjoying the saints, not because they are clever or bright, but just because they are. The church of God and the fellowship of the saints is going to be one of our last days consolation. When every last thing goes and there is no television to look at or any other kind of thing, the saints themselves will be our delight. The enjoyment of the saints, just their presence, will be a life-giving thing.

The key to joy, the thing that really unlocks and releases it is absolute self-surrender, absolute submission to the will of God absolute. There is little or no joy in the world and even in the saints because we shrink from the condition, namely, the absoluteness of God. The opposite of absolute is halfhearted, conditional, relative, partial and lukewarm. All of these words describe this present world. We need to restore delight and joy, but the condition is the restoration of the word absolute. We will know when we have come to an utterness of spirit toward God because our joy will be full. It does not have to be revved up, it does not have to be a song service and it does not have to be conditional. Our joy will be full. It is the joy of the Lord that comes and is released in the condition of the Lord, the same condition by which He obtained it, namely, an utterness toward God that is absolute.

An absoluteness towards God is of a certain qualitative kind. It is like water on the stove boiling. It boils and boils. It is still water while it is boiling. It is not placid, neither is it dormant. It is boiling water, but it is not yet steam. It has not changed its character. A certain heat is required, a certain totality of condition and the one thing changes to another. The good feeling, the bon vivant kind of a euphoria we can feel becomes qualitatively something other, it becomes the joy of the Lord, which is our strength. Something happens at a qualitative point when things become absolute. If we are not in that place, then we need to ask what one thing we lack and what one thing is being withheld. For that one thing is sufficient to keep the water continually boiling, but never breaking into steam.

Joy is almost invariably an eschatological (that which pertains to the end) phenomenon. Almost without exception, it has to do with a reference to the future. Jesus, "for the joy set before Him endured the cross." Joy always has a future implication, and if we are robbed of that future and the absolute conviction of its coming, then we are robbed of the joy. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make

you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy," (Jude 24). Joy is always set in the context of some future thing not yet attained, but that comes at the end. That is when our joy will be full because the condition in which we are found blameless is also our eternal condition, and it entitles us to eternal reward and eternal distinction.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled [which shows it is free from earthly taint and corruption; it is the kingdom to come; it is heavenly] and will not fade away, [it is eternal] reserved in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1:3-4).

...and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Peters letters are dripping with eschatological references and steeped in apocalyptic expectancy. Everything is future, the salvation that is to be revealed and the end that is to come. Everything is tied in with the resurrection. The whole eschatological character of the faith has been lost to us. We have become a now-centered church. We are caught up in the things that are immediate. We have lost the sense of the things that are future, ultimate, eternal and the whole eschatological and apocalyptic note that makes the apostolic faith, apostolically authentic, and has condemned us to being merely charismatic, which is to say, our conversion was in all probability not yet the existential reality of a union with Him through baptism. There is a sense in which we can have joy now in that absolute surrender in doing the will of God, but the underpinning of that joy is set profoundly in the things that are future and come in the life to come.

The death and resurrection of Jesus set in motion the realization of all these things. By what power does Jesus bring the end, the completion and the fullness of our salvation and our faith, with joy inexpressible and full of glory? The same power that raised Him from the dead brings Him again. His resurrection is a foretaste of something yet future. Having ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit as the foretaste of the eschatological reality of the coming kingdom and of the power of the age to come. The resurrection is the key and there would not have been a resurrection except for the absolute surrender of Jesus to the excruciating death and descent into hell. There came the absolute exaltation because of the absolute humiliation, and the same principle is for us.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you [some circumstantial thing]; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing [or, have joy] so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation [exceeding joy]. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

The joy is exceeding at the revealing of His glory. It is set in the eschatological future, but there is a way that we can have this joy now because the joy of the Lord is our strength. Things may seem outwardly hopeless and despairing, but joy lies precisely on the basis of hope and a faith that already apprehends the future and brings it into our present consideration. We are living now eschatologically. We are saints that have a living hope. It is the blessed hope of the church. It is so blessed that it imparts something that saves us from disillusionment, from despair, from defeat and from giving up in the most hopeless of conditions.

The joy of the Lord is not some kind of sanguine personality type or soulish disposition, but the issue of to what degree we are living consistently in absolute reality. Only a joy that comes out of a true union, and is in fact the Lord Himself, can be demonstrated at a time when every condition contradicts it, and makes it for that reason the more impressive and undeniable. We are not to allow ourselves the luxury of depression. It is not our right. We are not to allow ourselves pouting. It is not our due. No self-pitying! Do not feed that thing in the soul and the flesh that wants to enjoy its disappointment and momentary unhappiness.

In Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas are brought to the marketplace before the rulers and magistrates and are beaten to within an inch of their lives and thrown into the inner dungeon. It was a place of death and hopelessness. There was no communication and no last-minute fax back to Antioch, "Send reinforcements, pray for us, we are in this condition." They were cut off in a stinking, dark cell and hearing only the moaning of the prisoners. To be in one of those primitive, pagan cells was a death sentence. You sat there with your back hanging in ribbons and exposed to all of that filth and contamination and all the things that would set in motion a slow and painful death.

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice saying, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!" (Acts 16:25-27)

In other words, "Do not get excited. We are not going anywhere! We were not prisoners before and we are not prisoners now!" Bars do not a prison make. To be free in Christ is free indeed. We are not prisoners of circumstances. The bars burst, the chains fell off and the doors burst open because they were singing hymns of praise to God. The joy of the Lord is not only our strength, it may be our deliverance and our freedom in conditions that would seem otherwise hopeless.

How many of us now are subject to moodiness and depression for much less reason than this? We are misunderstood, our wives do not understand us, we are rejected in the church, our finances stink and we have got this problem or that. It is so easy to fall into a condition of despondency and depression, and what happens when we come into that? We get weak and we even get sick. The joy of the Lord is our strength, our health, power, enablement and even deliverance. It is unconditional. Happiness is conditional. Joy is unconditional.

The basis of their ability to sing in the midst of their adversity was their eschatological hope and expectancy. They knew that for every wound, they would receive an eternal reward. For every affliction and deprivation, there would be a corresponding reward that would not fade away. The joy of the Lord will set us free from the cell of depression, self-pity, fear and all of the kinds of things that cripple and bind us, that are more effectively a prison than a literal prison. Our praise is an anticipation of the end. To bring that anticipation into the present is authentic faith. That is the apostolic mindset. The worst thing that can happen opens the most joyous, eternal prospect. How can we lose? Whether we are imprisoned, beheaded, tortured or persecuted, we receive a greater, eternal glory, and therefore, the greater the joy.

We have been robbed of the greatest foundation of our faith. We have been rooted in the present and the things that pertain only to this present life and have lost that great dimension that made the church the

overcoming church of its early history, and must be restored. We need to again lay hold of eternal hope. We have got to fight for the eschatological future, the joy that shall be revealed and the glory. This is why it says in Jude, "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." This is that faith. If we do not contend for it, eternity will go out the window like a puff. It will just be an abstraction and an obsolete term. To fight for this and to maintain this, will make for doing the will of the Lord a delight, that our joy will be full in this life. Our joy is full because we will know that however grotesque and painful these last days conditions will be, our redemption draws near. Our salvation, the finality and the fullness of it, is near.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (James 1:2-3)

The things intended for our affliction are the things that work our redemption. Fiery trials will come, but endure them for the joy that is set before us. Count it all joy, and as was said, only in the power of resurrection, not by human determination, gritting our teeth or biting our lips. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise us out of every temptation. He is able to keep us and to present us blameless before the throne in the day of the Lords appearing if we desire to be kept. That means that we can live eternally without shame and embarrassment and without having eternity to think of how we blew it and how we fell short of that glory that we could have enjoyed had we been found blameless. Our eternal reward is proportionate to our conduct, our walk and our labors in this life.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

The joy set before us is all tied in with His appearing as we have seen from the Scriptures in 1 Peter and elsewhere. When we shall see the glory of the Lord, we will share in that glory to the same degree as we have shared in His sufferings. It is the same both for Jesus and for us, but not for us in the sense of some egotistical gratification. His joy is our joy. His glory is our glory. His coming is our delight. There is no longer a separate entity between ourselves and Him. We have waited seven days at the tent of the meeting and every last thing that had to do with our independent satisfaction, even religiously, has been put to the test. He is our life, and His coming and vindication are ours.

We cannot obtain this joy independent of men. Between us and the Lord there are men, there is authority in the body of Christ and there is submission to elders. True spirituality is not some kind of idealistic, ethereal or invisible thing. There is a screen through which it must pass that really tests that absoluteness, and that is the submitting to the authority of God through men. What a beautiful spirituality we would have if only this earthly requirement was not there! That is why false spirituality that avoids men and lives privatistically and separately may have a seeming joy, but it is not authentic joy. To submit to authority that is imperfect, maybe even ungodly and maybe even unregenerate, is nearer true submission than we think.

We cannot obtain this walk, this quality, this consistency and this faith independent of each other. We need each other, each others faith and each others encouragement and prayers. This kind of attainment can only be obtained within the authentic fellowship of the saints, who have a like mind, heart and spirit; that this is also what they seek to obtain and we will encourage one another in that walk. We will not be in some slouchy, makeshift fellowship where if you get by it is okay. We will encourage one another to be the sons and daughters of the living God and strive to be found blameless. We will be willing to bear correction of even the most minute things. To acknowledge, to repent for that and to receive correction

there, that in that day, and that day is near, to be found blameless. I do not believe that we can be found blameless independent of the sanctifying work available to us in the authentic working of God through what we provide for each other in the body of Christ. The sanctifying work is performed in the abrasive friction and the things that our flesh wants to run from. It is a pain and a suffering, but it is a glory. The body of Christ is the very provision of God that we might be found blameless and virgins undefiled.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/the-joy-of-the-lord/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net