

Joyful and Willing!

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” (Ps.51:12-15)

We know that Psalm 51 was written by King David in response to being found out that he had committed both adultery and murder. Through this Psalm we see that David is humbled, broken, and repentant. After all that David cries out in verse 12 – “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and make me willing to obey you.”

“Restore” is a desire to return to a previous point of blessing, peace and favour. He has already experienced regret and remorse and wants His relationship with the Lord to be restored/retuned to what it once was.

For David this is a return to a place of salvation. The Hebrew word here is “yiseka” that denotes safety, deliverance, freedom, security – which is a dramatic contrast to verse 11 where David pleads with the Lord – “Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me.” These are feelings of alienation, isolation and separation. David did not want that. He wanted restoration of intimacy that would also instill a renewed desire for obedience and faithfulness.

It seems evident that David experienced a touch from the Lord in that now he wanted his lips to be opened to praise the Lord. And this is the power of grace: truth leads to confession, and repentance and trusting in the Lord’s faithfulness brings joy and a surrendered heart fixed on obedience.

While King David experienced all of this as a result of his sinful behaviour, it isn’t necessary for us to be “caught in sin” to know this kind of experience. Circumstances that propel us into despair and darkness, that make us vulnerable to disobedience, don’t have to have the last say. These can provide opportunities to cry out to the Lord, “Lord restore the joy of my salvation, put a willingness in me to obey you.”

In 2016 I had fallen into a pit of despair, darkness and emptiness. My wife of 25 years had died of cancer. And now I was sinking into the abyss of numbness. If something didn’t change, who knows what path of apostasy might have unfolded. It was a time when I couldn’t recall if I was even talking to the Lord or even interested in Him. But one day, as I looked out the window into the trees covered with fresh snow, I noticed that some of the trees were exhibiting buds. And in that quiet moment I heard the Lord say – “You can stay where you are and bear some fruit or you can come with me and bear much fruit”. Something began to bubble up within. Despair and grief were being pushed aside, and the joy of the Lord began to break forth. And I said “Yes Lord!”

I was on the path to disobedience, but by the Lord’s grace, His joy was restored and I yielded to His grace and power to obey His calling upon my life. And in that season, I remarried and life exploded with His peace, His presence and His power. There was much fruit and lots of praising the Lord.

Whatever darkness, despair or disobedience you may be dancing with doesn’t have to be that which controls you or defines you. The Lord has more for you, just as He had more and much more for David. But we must be willing to cry out for the joy, to be yielded to Him in order to be obedient and overflowing with praise and adoration.

May you be blessed with His joy in this time of brokenness and having a contrite heart.

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