

BE JOYFUL



But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. - Acts 16:25

Paul wrote extensively about spiritual joy, which had been tested and proven in his life through the "fires" of beatings, rejections, and arrests.

As he sat in the Philippian jail, the apostle demonstrated what is possible for any surrendered believer: biblical joy through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We can lose our gladness for several reasons:

- Wrong focus. Paul and Silas were able to praise God despite severe trials because they centered on Jesus. Concentrating on our difficulties will cause delight to disappear. Refocusing through praise will bring it back.
- Disobedience. Sin steals our joy because it separates us from the Lord. As we receive His forgiveness and obey Him, joy returns.

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• Regret. We crowd out gladness when we continue to feel bad about past mistakes and failures. Our Father wants us to believe that He forgives us (1 John 1:9). He also desires that we choose to live in His grace and move ahead.

• Fear. Too often, we attempt to live out the future before it happens. With so much outside our control, we become afraid. Joy and fear cannot coexist. The Lord calls us to live by faith, asking Him to meet today's needs and trusting Him with the future.

• Someone else's suffering. How can we rejoice when others are hurting? Romans 12:15 says we are to weep with them, but we are also to offer the hope of God's presence, power and provision. A downcast spirit is a poor witness for hope.

What excuse have you been using for your lack of joy?

Prayer: I bind and cast out anything that takes away my joy, in Jesus' name.

Scriptural Reading: Acts 16:16-34

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CUT--HERE

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