

IMPACT

I **M**ust **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; *in all your ways acknowledge Him* and He shall direct your path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Passage: I John 1:4 “And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

Quote: As a Christian maintains fellowship with God through reading, studying and applying Scripture; through prayer; through confession of sin; and through getting, giving and growing in a local church, the joy of the Holy Spirit will become increasingly evident.

Professing Christians can fall into the trap of basing their assurance on feelings and on circumstances. How much confidence would Old Testament believers like Joseph and New Testament believers like Paul have if they followed the line of thinking that says, “I must not be one of God’s children because I don’t feel like He is blessing me.” Even genuine Christians, if they are not careful to focus upon Who God is and what He has promised, can be unsettled by doubts. They can be *distracted* from what is truly important— “the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” They can fall prey to *discontentment* that fosters the greed to get more instead of the grace to give more. They can languish in *discouragement* when their self-effort fails to measure up to what they know they should be and what they should do. They can grow *disillusioned* when some who profess to be Christians seem to be self-serving and worldly-minded. They can be *defeated* by giving in to temptation that leads to a downward spiral of catering to their flesh, or living as a hypocrite.

First John is written to believers in an effort to protect them against error and to enable them to know the joy that comes with being rooted and steadfast in the faith.¹ John offers several things that should characterize the lives of those who are trusting entirely and exclusively in Christ as their Savior. They are *not* a series of “dos and don’ts” that serve as a religious checklist that can be temporarily imitated for the purpose of soothing one’s conscience or fooling one’s companions. They describe several traits that should be lasting evidences genuine conversion. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, true Christians demonstrate

God’s work in them.² Any Christian can become dulled to the things of God, and thereby open himself or herself up to complacency, carelessness or carnality that leads to sin. If left unchecked and unconfessed, sin will quench “that calm delight and gladness” that the Bible calls joy.³ Weighed down by his sin, David prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.*”⁴

God-given joy involves the intellect, emotion and will. Joyless people often view themselves as “victims of circumstance” who see “fate,” “bad luck,” the actions of others, or even the providence of God as keeping them from having all that they deserve. They rarely if ever have experienced the settled joy of knowing that God is in control of everything from the time of their conception to the time and manner of their death.⁵ When a person places faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Spirit indwells him or her. A Spirit-controlled mind studies and values God’s truth. A Spirit-controlled heart produces love, gratitude and compassion. A Spirit-controlled will obeys the words of Christ for God’s glory and the eternal good of others. The resulting personal joy and settled assurance surpasses the ability of believers to explain and of unbelievers to experience. In spite of personal weaknesses and failures to always think, do and say that which brings glory to God, true Christians rejoice in His unconditional love and marvel at His long-suffering, grace and mercy that is willing to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is cause for true rejoicing that flows from the assurance that Christ is mine and I am His.

Joy grounded in the Word!

1 I John 1:4; 2:1-29 2 Philippians 2:12; James 2:14-20 3 Strong’s Greek Dictionary 4 Psalm 51:7-12 5 Psalm 139