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**The Joy of My Salvation**

**By Joyce C. Lock**

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During a church revival, I came under conviction and asked many questions, on the way home. I remember the fear of not wanting to go to hell.

It was my father that came into my bedroom, which was kind of odd, being that dad and I had never talked about much of anything. But, mom wasn't saved, yet, herself. So, she reneged on this one.

Though, it wasn't bad at all ... our first meaningful conversation. Dad brought a kitchen chair into my bedroom, I sat on the bed, and we talked. He explained several things and led me as to how to ask Jesus into my heart.

It has been said that I began carrying my Bible everywhere and that I went to every house, in the neighborhood, to tell others about Jesus (also with Bible in hand). I have no idea how I might have used that Bible, if called upon to do so. But, carrying it seemed the Christian thing to do.

Though, I wish I could remember that, the Joy of My Salvation. But, instead, I was sort of robbed.

There were many preachers and evangelists at the church, this week. They had come for the revival. And, they all wanted to meet me. My parents did ask if I would agree to the meeting, for which I did. But, still, it was a bit intimidating, having to answer to all those giants.

You see, they didn't believe I was yet at the age of accountability. They thought I was too young and said that it was almost unheard of. Their concern was that I wouldn't understand what I was doing.

I may have only been six years old. But, they were wrong.

Then, once mom got saved, her and dad began mission work. Today, it's called 'church planting' and, of course, laborers were few. Thus, new converts were often my teachers. It was the era (error) of Hell, Fire, and Brimstone preaching and that was the only God these new converts knew.

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This was also the age when it was, yet, the common and expected thing to do ~ to go to the altar, seeking forgiveness. It didn't help to not even have a memory of the Joy of My Salvation. So, there were times I questioned if I had been saved at all.

One of our preachers even testified that he had been called to preach, but had not yet done so ~ and that God told him He could even take his children if he didn't agree.

Thus, my concept of God gradually developed to envision a monster that couldn't wait for me to mess up, so He could hit me over the head. And, I was sure that is what happened when my marriage turned into an abusive nightmare.

Truly, there was much deliberation between 'kill or be killed', as there didn't appear to be another out.

To 'take my chances with God' didn't seem to be a viable option. Only, with death or prison the only other solutions ~ with the support of family and a team of officers, I took a flying leap into the unknown, escaped, and filed for divorce.

In my training, divorce fit right up there with the unpardonable sin. Even though he had also been unfaithful, I was more than shocked that God didn't strike me dead.

There had been no prior training to be anything other than the virtuous woman. A child had been conceived in rape, which was my only hope of not living my remainder years alone. Another marriage wasn't within options God allowed, or so I thought. I hadn't prepared to be the breadwinner. Really, I thought my life was over ... and I was only 18 years old.

For three days, I sat in a trance while listening to the record "Like a Bridge Over Troubled Waters". Only, the song had never been explained to me. I thought I was that sinking bridge, as I just couldn't be that strength anymore.

Books on overcoming the effects of abuse had not yet been written. The only answer I could come up with was this ... if I just did all the right things, I would never have to live like that again. In such thinking, I began to adopt the lifestyle of legalism.

Still cold and dead inside, none would be the wiser. Only, God knows what service is from the heart ... and I didn't have one. If I didn't feel, no one could ever hurt me like that again.

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In time, I did remarry and, eventually, a miracle child was conceived ... and I was sure this was the child God would take.

Labor did not produce birth and, with each contraction, the baby's heart rate diminished. Hour after hour, doctors deliberated as to whether or not to do a c-section, then still did nothing. This was the beginning of the new (barbaric) era of natural child birth.

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Only, there was no doubt, death was imminent; mine, the baby's, or both. Unknown to anything else, mom said she had felt it, too ~ and she was miles away.

Fully understanding that I deserved for this baby to die, I was prepared to accept it. But, this was my husband's only biological child and he would not understand why God would do this to him.

Thus, I asked God to preserve the relationship between Him and my husband. The baby didn't yet know me. So, she would not know to suffer my loss, as was my thinking. I was prepared to go, even if in her place. Only, I had another child that really needed me and there was no other answer for that.

All considerations were in love and I was ready to live, die, or whatever God decided. Maybe that was a good thing, that I had opened my heart to love again.

Though, once I had finished talking with God, I began to make a scene. Nurses had said that, if the mother became under stress, the doctors would then act. So, I behaved very badly (on purpose) and they couldn't get me into surgery fast enough.

It was then that peace came. It would be alright, now, whatever that meant.

Anesthetics kept me asleep for most of the first 24 hours. Though, between each spurt of alertness, I watched people, carefully, trying to determine if they were telling me the truth. Finally, I pinned a nurse down and asked, straight forward, "Why won't you bring my baby to me?"

The nurse promised that, as soon as I could stay awake (so as to not accidentally injury the baby), they would bring her to my room. Except for being in an incubator the first days, precautionary being that she was so small, all appeared to be well; with no heart problems either.

Only, a hard year followed. Baby and I took turns at being ill. A year later and my strength was, still, at the stage of crawling to get up the stairs.

Finally, I determined that Satan was never going to allow us health to go to church, again, and I knew just the thing for that. If neither of us were running a temperature, we were going ~ no matter how bad we looked or felt.

It was then that things started improving. Within six months, baby and I were able to attend church regularly and I joined our church choir.

My piano teacher had, once, taught me how to feel the music when I'd play and I had used those same tools to spiritually go there, to imagine and feel whatever I was singing.

Then, one day, while participating in the choir, in the middle of a song, God said, "You know how to feel it. Now, I want you to see it."

I thought, "Ok. But, I have no clue how to do that."

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God said, "Find a spot on the wall and focus. Envision seeing Jesus."

"But, all we have are pictures. I don't know what he looks like."

"Whatever you envision him to look like will be fine. Do you see it?"

..... "Yes, I see it."

"What is he doing?"

"He's suppose to be doing something? I don't know."

"Well, look."

I looked up, at that picture of Jesus, and studied it for a few seconds, to see whatever I might see. Honestly, I had no idea what I was suppose to be looking for. But, God had said to look.

Keep in mind, we were still standing in the choir ~ singing. Then, suddenly, I noticed Jesus changed from a portrait to a full body image, making him appear farther away. He was holding something. But, I couldn't make out what it was. So, I watched closely.

Now, keep in mind, I was on live television, in that choir. I have no idea if I kept singing or not. But, the image gradually came closer and closer.

I thought, maybe Jesus was carrying a lamb. Yes ... it's ... it's a lamb. Ok. But, wait. The image is a little fuzzy. Something is happening. It's transforming. What is it? I studied carefully ... until ... Oh, no! Oh, NO! It was my baby!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I do not know if or how I maintained composer. I must have done ok, being that I didn't get scolded for messing up the televised program. But, my knees felt so weak that I don't know how I even remained standing.

Jesus had my baby in his arms and he was giving her back to me. Tears rolled and flowed, and must have turned into an avalanche. Jesus, JESUS, ... JESUS had become My Lamb and I will never be the same again!

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My God is not a God of Hell, Fire, and Brimstone. He is a God of Love. Love is who He is.

He has saved us. He continues to save us. And, He will save us. And, now, I have the memory of a true salvation experience. I pray God grants me the mental capacity to always remember the Joy of My Salvation!

And, now that I 'know' God's love, I love God enough to live for Him and, through hard times and all, I

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can be a bridge that won't fall ~ because, the joy of the Lord is my strength.

Yet, each Christmas, all else aside, one of my favorite places is to return to Bethlehem, to envision caring for God's baby.

God gave an even greater love than Himself. He gave His Son. It's the least we can do, to love him, too.

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Joyce C. Lock is a published author, poet, and columnist. In addition, she founded and maintains the e-mail ministries "Heavenly Inspirations" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HeavenlyInspirations/> and "Share a Smile" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/smilesparing/>. Joyce's writings encourage us in our relationship with God and each other.

### **Joy Of The Lord**

**By Valerie Garner**

The word means different things to different people. Is it simply an emotion or feeling? Do we only feel joy when life seems to be going good, when our circumstances are favorable? Or is there something more? I'd like to explore what the Word of God says about this topic.

Psalm 16:11 says "Thou will show me the path of life, in Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Psalm 43:4 says "Then will I go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy...."

Nehemiah 8:10 says ...."the joy of the Lord is my strength".

What these scriptures say is that God Himself is the source of our joy. And that joy gives us strength. Have you ever noticed when you're feeling blue, that you tend to feel weak and tired too?

Here are some promises God offers us concerning joy:

Psalm 30:5...."weeping may endure for a night, but joy

comes in the morning."

Isaiah 35:10 "And the ransomed of the Lord (His children) shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

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Isaiah 61:3 says "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for

mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."

Joy is also one of the fruits of the Spirit. He WANTS to give us joy! Sometimes we think of God as heavy handed wanting to give us a hard time anytime we mess up, but that's not His heart at all, He wants to give us joy. But will we receive Him in order to receive the joy He offers us?

Isaiah 12:3 says "therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Psalms 51:12: "Restore unto me, the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit."

In salvation (the term used when we ask Jesus to be our God, our savior) there is joy. I found this true as well. As soon as I prayed and gave my life to Him, I felt real joy for the first time in my life. It was like coming home. It is beyond description!

Hebrews 12:2 says "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This one blows my mind! Jesus had joy in the midst of

facing being crucified, one of the most painful deaths one could endure. His crucifixion was right ahead, he knew it, and he was joyful! Why? Because He saw beyond the cross, what it would accomplish. It would accomplish the right for ANY person to be His child and go to heaven if they want. He did it for us because He loved us so much and wants to give us so much, if only we will receive Him.

Here's some other really awesome thoughts of how God views us:

Zephaniah 3:17 says, "The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

God sings joyfully over us?! That's what He says. Have you ever thought that we could make Him happy? All He

wants is our Love, because He loved us first.

In closing one more view of God, Luke 15:4–7 says, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lost one of them, would not leave the 99 in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls

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together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. I (Jesus) say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over the 99 which need no repentance."

Jesus cares so much He seeks out to find the ones who are lost, and it gives Him great joy when He finds that one. Even all of heaven throws a party! If you don't know this loving, kind and joyful Jesus of Nazareth, I'd encourage you to simply ask Him into your heart. Receive everything He so wants to give you. Eternal life, joy, and the peace of knowing you're right with God. Just a simple prayer to Him anywhere of what's on your heart will do, and watch the joy flood your soul! And know also that you've given Him great joy too.

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Joy Of The Lord  
The Rock  
Share the Joy  
Neither Is There Healing In Any Other Name  
Rejoice!

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