

A CALL FOR THE RETURN OF SALVATION'S JOY.

Congregation of the Lord,

Have you ever been depressed?

It is no fun; it is not nice for yourself, and it is not nice for those around you.

There are several causes that can bring on depression, according to the experts.

The cause can be physical ... there is a chemical deficiency in your body – or your hormones are out of whack, which in turn, can bring on depression.

In such a case, you need to see your doctor.

The cause can be circumstantial ... circumstances in your life are such that make you depressed – and there are a whole range of circumstances that could make you depressed ... poor health, a bad marriage, the loss of a job, even the prospect of retirement can make some people depressed.

In such a case, it can be helpful to consult your pastor, or in serious cases of depression, to consult a professional counselor.

The cause can also be spiritual ... there is un-confessed sin in your life.

The joy of salvation is missing with you, and depression has taken its place.

In such a case, you must consult your Bible.

Psalm 51, in your Bible, deals with this sort of depression – spiritual depression ... and what can be done about it.

As we look at our text, I wish to declare God's Word by the following theme and division ...

A CALL FOR THE RETURN OF SALVATION'S JOY

- 1. The Absence Of This Joy**
- 2. The Desirability Of This Joy**
- 3. The Practice Of This Joy**

Congregation,

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David, King of Israel.

He composed it after one of his darkest, gloomiest, and saddest periods of his life.

You can read of it in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12.

The Prophet Nathan has just departed from the palace and has left a very disturbing and distressing message with David.

God is angry with David, so Nathan has boldly asserted.

God is angry because some terrible sins have been committed by David ... the sins of adultery and theft and deceit and murder ... and on top of all them, the sin of not repenting of them.

You know the story, I trust.

David had taken Bathsheba, another man's wife, for himself; he had Bathsheba's husband Uriah killed, so that he, David, could get his sinful way and keep Bathsheba.

Now, it is true that the kings of other nations often did this sort of thing ... stealing other men's wives and then killing the men.

But the kings of Israel were not allowed to do such things.

God had strictly forbidden this in His laws.

But David, described in the Bible as a man beloved of God, actually did fall into such a sin.

It is a sad reality, but believers can fall into sin, and when they do, they often pay dearly for it.

We see this clearly in the life of David.

He committed murder; he committed adultery; he committed theft ... sins against the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments.

It is all recorded in 2 Samuel 11, and a blacker chapter in the life of a believer can hardly be found in the Bible. And had David gone to God immediately in repentance and sorrow of sins; had he gone to God immediately for pardon, for forgiveness and for cleansing ... but no, he added sin upon sin.

How?

By letting God wait; by not going to God on his own initiative and confess his sins.

David left his sins un-confessed.

And this, in turn, left him in a pathetic state.

You can read of this in Psalm 32 ... his bones aged because of inward groaning and moaning; day and night God's hand was heavy upon him.

In other words, He became depressed.

His moisture turned into the drought of summer.

In other words, he literally dried up, both physically and spiritually.

Dear people! Un-confessed sins can leave you in a sad state of depression.

It can wear you down and make you old before your time.

It can rob you of your strength and beauty; it can wither you away and dry you up, and turn you into a bitter complainer.

The joy of God's salvation will then be noticeably absent.

Obviously, David has also complained bitterly about his feelings, but at the same time, he has remained stubbornly silent in confessing his sins.

He has bemoaned his state; he has pitied himself because of the condition he found himself in.

But he has refused to bring it in prayer of confession before God.

Congregation! Do not let un-confessed sins rob you of the chances of salvation or of the joy of salvation.

If you have cause for groaning, let it be heard at the right and proper place ... that is, before God in prayer.

But do not resort to self-pity and make a public display of your depressed depravity.

Perhaps you are depressed due to some sin in your life, and you feel that you miss the joy of salvation.

If this is the case with you, this Psalm 51 and my text have an answer for you, because here is a man who is in the same bind as you are, and by means of a servant of God he could come to confession of sin and ultimately pray for the return of the joy of God's salvation.

This Psalm is actually a map by which any of us may come to the joy of God's salvation, because it shows how to confess sins, and how to find forgiveness.

Let's look at this Psalm a little more closely.

It is known as a Psalm of repentance.

This means that this Psalm rises up out of the depths of human sin and misery, and cries out to God for deliverance.

In it, we hear David confess his sin, and he searches as it were for the best way to describe it, as he speaks of *"transgression," "iniquity," "evil," "blood-guiltiness."*

David means here to be quite specific in his confession; and indeed, there is nothing vague about it.

We can learn therefore from David, to be specific in our confession of sin.

Then also this ... David prays with urgency for forgiveness.

He prays that God would remove the sin from him, and again he searches for the best words to say it ... *"blot out," "wash me," "cleanse me," "purge me."*

And it is only after all this that David dares to ask about the joy of salvation, which has been absent from him.

My friend! I do not know how it is with you.

But I know for myself that committing a sin does not leave me with pleasant feelings; and leaving such a sin unconfessed has that tendency to wear me down and depress me.

Perhaps you know something about this too.

Let us then not stubbornly stay unconfessed and make it necessary for God to send one of His servants to us who has to point the finger at us and say “You are the man.”

Let such a thing not be necessary for us before we will finally break down and confess.

David’s great fear was that, because of his sin, he would be cast away from God’s presence – that God would take His Holy Spirit from him; that God would leave him utterly alone and to himself.

Perhaps you have that sort of fear too that in the end, God will have nothing to do with you.

If so, let us learn a little bit more from David, because not only did he have a keen sense of the absence of salvation’s joy in him, but he also has a keen sense, as we must consider in the second place, of The Desirability Of This Joy ...

II

There are people in some circles of the Reformed faith who feel that the joy of God’s salvation is not something to be had or to be desired in this life, but is reserved for them in the hereafter.

They are, generally speaking, a sober people – serious people – but who are very restrained in showing or expressing any sort of spiritual joy.

I am sure they mean well ... and yet, I believe that the Bible itself differs with their view.

A true believer not only may, but should desire after and pursue spiritual joy in this life.

In other words, it is Biblical to speak about the desirability of salvation’s joy.

Why?

Because the joy of salvation brings glory and praise to God’s name.

It should not escape our attention that here in Psalm 51, where we have such a descriptive confession of sin, and where we have such a strong pleading-prayer for God’s forgiving mercies, that precisely in this Psalm we also find such great desires expressed for the return of joy.

Look at verse 8, “*Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*”

Look at verse 12, “*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*”

Look at verse 14, “*My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*”

Look at verse 15, “*O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*”

You see, the Bible itself lays stress on the desirability of joy.

Believers may have to go through dark times in this life, which threaten to depress them and rob them of the joy of salvation.

Whatever the reason might be for those dark times ... it is certain that in such occasions believers are more vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one, than at other times.

In such times it will seem that the devil speaks louder and more persuasive than the Word of God.

But those are the times, when depression sets in, that prayers must rise up to God for restoring the joy of His salvation.

What kind of joy is this, which is called in our text the Joy of God's Salvation?

Well, it is not just any kind of joy, but a very specific kind of joy.

It is not a joy of the world, because that ultimately is based on fairy tales.

It is not the joy of success, because such joy will eventually come to an end.

But it is a joy that is generated by the Holy Spirit and a joy that has a direct tie to the sense and assurance of God's salvation.

It is a joy that is deeply spiritual and relies heavily on a clear conscience, and on close communication with God.

It is a joy that has eternal dimensions and will grow and abound when the perfection of eternal life is achieved.

If we only stay with the Psalms, we find enough evidence of it already.

Psalm 9:2, *"I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High."*

Psalm 147:1, *"Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely."*

From the beginning to the end, the Psalms express the joy of God's salvation.

Its desirability is very Biblical.

My friend! Is this kind of joy also your desire?

Wouldn't you also want to live by the praises of God's name; to wake up in the morning and be able to rejoice as it says in Psalm 19:5 to rejoice *"as a strong man to run a race"*?

(Perhaps not physically, but spiritually)

Wouldn't you want to lay down and rest at night with sweet and comforting thoughts of God, who, as it says in Psalm 42:8 ... who can be your song even in the night?

The joy of God's salvation.

Can there be anything more encouraging than to have this kind of joy?

Young people; boys and girls! I am sure that you would not want to miss out on the possibility of true joy.

To have a desire for joy in life is not wrong or sinful.

But the joy worth desiring and having is a joy that the world cannot give, no matter where you look.

The joy of the world might seem attractive and alluring.

But it is a hollow joy; it does not last, and it will leave you bitterly disappointed sooner or later.

I recommend therefore the joy of God's salvation.

This joy is by far the best joy around.

Jesus said something quite striking about being a believer and being part of Him.

You can read of it in John 15:11, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

Such joy is the beauty part of God's salvation, and such joy of God's salvation looks good on youthful faces.

Dear people! Let the joy of God's salvation be a desirable thing to have, and let it be found through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ.

And if there is such joy of God's salvation, it will not remain hidden, but will come out in practice, as we will consider in the last place, *The Practice Of This Joy ...*

III

Closely tied in with the prayer that the Joy of God's salvation be restored in him, David prays, "*and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*" (Psalms 51:12-13)

How will the joy of God's salvation come out in practice?

Primarily by leading others to the Saviour and to His salvation.

The best way in which any of us can show our spiritual joy is by living so as to attract others to the Lord's salvation.

The best testimony of such joy is a desire to see others saved as well as yourself ... *“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”*

Dear people! The religious excitement that is sometimes seen on television, or heard about from some charismatic groups, is said to be the excitement of the joy of salvation.

Such excitement is usually marked with much shouting and chanting – with waving of arms and clapping of hands.

I cannot judge the sincerity of such joy, but I know that the Biblical evidence of the joy of salvation is what is described here in our text, when you will see men and women, young people, busy, showing others the ways of God and of His Word.

Such salvation-joy-activity is not only done from the pulpit and in the sanctuary and in the meeting rooms of a church, but such activity will also be evident when a father takes time to lead his family in family devotions, instructing those for whom he is responsible as to what the Bible teaches.

Such salvation-joy-activity will be evident, when mother, in her kind and simple ways, shows her children the goodness and beauty of serving the Lord.

Such activity will be seen when brothers and sisters can get together with rejoicing in the singing of Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs.

Such salvation-joy-activity will even be evident, when a man or a woman can pleasantly and un-offending-ly spread something of their joy in the Lord, while in their place of employment.

Dear people! If you know Christ and His salvation by experience, ask the Lord not only for the joy of salvation, but ask Him also how to make it evident in your life.

I believe it would please God the most when we express our joy of salvation, by being sincere and loving and compassionate and kind towards others.

Let us learn to become, as the Apostle Paul calls it, “Living letters of recommendation” of what it means to be saved.

Let us learn to handle transgressors and sinners, as our text calls them, in a Biblical way ... by not being snobby towards them, or looking down on them ... but showing them by our conduct that the life of faith in Christ is a life that is worth living.

Let us learn to let the joy of salvation radiate from us so that unbelievers may see what a treasure it is to be forgiven and saved.

Let us not be ashamed to show such joy; even if the world rejects it.

Let our Savior Jesus Christ be our great example and inspiration, of whom it was said in Hebrews 12:2, *“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”*

He is the Source and Fountain of our salvation, but also the Source and Fountain of the joy of salvation.

He paid the price of His life's blood for it, and now, by His Holy Spirit, He can work such joy into your heart and life.

In our text David prays ... *"Uphold me with thy free spirit"* which could be interpreted as, "Let a willing spirit support me" in making evident to all, the joy of salvation.

The Holy Spirit will activate our spirit to be free and liberal and generous in expressing the joy of salvation.

My friend, if you do not know Jesus Christ the Savior yet, I asks you to consider the things you have heard this hour.

In your pursuit of joy, (which is a legitimate pursuit), turn to Jesus Christ.

His salvation will bring true joy – everlasting joy; joy of heart and joy of life, and a joy that will have no bounds once you enter eternity.

Therefore, look to Christ, believe on Him.

Put His mercy to the test by putting your whole self at His mercy.

And ask Him to give you His salvation, and the joy of His salvation.

You will never regret having done so.

My fellow believer! Watch yourself that you do not rob yourself of the joy of salvation ... and if it is missing, you know what needs to be done ... let not depression of any sort get the better of you ... our text has laid it out for you ... and it is God's Word for you ... *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."*

Amen.