



## **1 Peter 1:8-9**

***“Though you have not seen him,  
you love him. Though you do not  
now see him, you believe in him  
and rejoice with joy that is  
inexpressible and filled with glory,  
obtaining the outcome of your  
faith, the salvation of your souls.”***



# THE JOY OF GOD'S LOVE

## VIOLA'S STORY

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—  
Ephesians 2:4-5***

It is thought that often what moves us most is some reminiscence of a far-off memory of childhood when the joy unspeakable that flooded our soul was that of spending time with family members at special celebrations, or snuggling sweetly on the lap of a grandmother while being held by her well-worn arms, totally wrapped in a state of rapture resulting from the warmth of her unparalleled love that radiated to the very core of our being.

Thus, when facing difficult circumstances as adults in our prime, we might pose the question, "If it were possible to return to those precious memories of childhood, would our current feelings of turmoil and staleness be refreshed to their original state of happiness? If only.....then things would work out!"

However, as the winter season of life is upon us, an internalization of the fact occurs that not only are there cycles in all nature, including that of man, but more importantly that if rebirth is to occur it always has been preceded by the death of a seed. Thus, when the reflection in the mirror is that of a face distinctly showing the wrinkles of time, the Scripture from John

**12:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit," offers clarity to the aging process.**

In other words, rebirth first began for those giving their lives to Christ and dying to self; an acceptance of God's grace and forgiveness with the reward being that of eternal life. However, having committed our lives to Christ, it is imperative to internalize the fact that, as His children, our journey will not be carefree, but during times of turmoil His wisdom and courage will be offered through our Counselor, the Holy Spirit.

Then, when we see the reflection of our face that has become mature in appearance, rather than feeling despair that we are now old, it should be a wonderful sign of wonder and great anticipation for all those having faith in God's promise of eternal life. Above all, assurance that the Father's presence will be with us from the beginning of life until our last breath should produce joy unspeakable within our hearts and minds. Folks, just like the seed, our physical temple must die before the rebirth into our new and perfect body becomes a reality.

Consequently, each of us has the free choice at this point on our earthly journey of spending the remaining moments displaying emotions of bitterness and regret, and earning the label of being "old and crotchety", or looking toward the future with assurance that the Almighty's plan for our resurrection will mirror the same path set before us by that of our Savior, following His death on the cross. Therefore, by sowing seeds on our journey of life that will multiply and produce fruit, they must be rich in joy and love for our Savior.

Ladies and gentlemen, it was due to observing the behavior of Viola, a sweet resident in the nursing home, whose actions served as an inspiration for the above words that you are now getting ready to read her story. And...the only one about someone still living.

One day, during a concert of hymns performed for the residents, this writer's attention was drawn to the face of this lovely lady because of the joy that seemed to exude from her entire countenance. She was not only singing with gusto, but wore an accompanying smile that reached all the way to her eyes. Although wheelchair bound, she appeared to be elevated as if transported toward heaven.

Feeling drawn toward her, the writer was mesmerized by the angelic sound of her voice as the beautiful notes to the hymn she was so thoroughly enjoying filled the air all around. However, the most notable part of her behavior was simply that she was in the moment so much that it was obvious she was giving glory to God through song.

Then, after watching this unfold, it became apparent to everyone in her presence that this was her usual behavior when she took part in anything pretraining to God. Viola appeared so "crazy in love" with her Lord that the writer felt led to hear how this all came about.

Although most people would say, "She must have experienced a very happy life, or be almost perfect in her actions," they will soon find out this was not the case. Others might contribute,

**“If she had to deal with the sorrows I have dwelt with on my journey, she wouldn’t be acting like that”, will soon discover this way of thinking does not apply either.**

**Folks, hear now Viola’s story and learn how she faced the pain, sorrow, and adversities of life with such great faith that it will touch your own heart to its very core. Above all, her story of joy and trust in her Heavenly Father has been so strong that it has carried her through times of pain possessing the ability to survive with such grace that it is almost unimaginable.**

### **Viola’s Story**

**Viola had a firm foundation of faith in God that was established by a long line of family members that reached deep throughout generations of relatives; meaning even her grandfather had been a minister. Given the fact that both her mother and father were spiritual people, morning prayer and evening Bible study were considered the most important part of each day; habits that, in Viola’s mind, provided the foundation for facing hardships and life’s disappointments.**

**Since her father was a traveling salesman and sold products from house to house, he incorporated his belief in God by witnessing to others along the way. Given his need to be away from home, Viola’s mother had to assume the role of raising a family that consisted of two boys and three girls; Viola being the oldest.**

**Unfortunately, however, Viola’s mother died when the youngest child of the family was only seven days old; leaving a father to raise the five children ranging in ages of seven days to seven years. Then, as the remaining family members were in the process of bearing an almost insurmountable grief of losing a wife and mother, two grandparents passed away within 6 weeks of each other.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, are you feeling the burden Viola’s father was faced with at this point in life? Given the reality in his mind that the five hungry mouths had to be fed, he knew it was imperative that he resume his work as a salesman as soon as possible. Thus, he hired local housekeepers to care for the sweet little children he cherished so much; a job that required the individual to reside in the home that was located out in the country. Given the task at hand, most housekeepers lasted only a short period of time; causing the family to go through 37 different employees over a period of time. Although a lot of the housework fell on Viola’s little shoulders, it still did not prevent the high turnover of staff.**

**Thus, in an effort to improve the situation, Viola’s father became involved in the lumber industry that caused the family to move all the way across country to the state of Oregon. Given the fact that movement was a requirement for her father’s career path, it was a natural thing to hear the words, “Kiddies, it is time to move again.” Additionally, it also meant that for 2 ½ years, while in Oregon, the younger children had to be placed in a local childcare institution during the week because of the amount of care they required. However, every weekend, her father would bring them home to celebrate the sabbath with the family.**

In addition to all the adjustments within the home, are you picturing the number of times the children had to enroll in different schools? When Viola looks back at all the changes they were required to endure, the one thing that anchored them was their father's teaching that all people were from God and were to be treated with equal respect. Therefore, disagreements among themselves or with classmates were simply not a part of their way of life.

Finally, when Viola's father remarried, it was to a woman she recalls as being a wonderful mother to the children; a situation that provided the stability the family needed so badly.

Since obtaining an education was considered extremely important in the mind of Viola's father, her progress in school was exemplary and, thus, was encouraged by him to become a teacher. Although Viola had her heart set on nursing as a career, she followed her father's wishes and agreed to try it for at least one year. However, at the conclusion of a year, the passion she felt in her heart for becoming a nurse never wavered; prompting her to enroll in nursing school immediately.

Thus, feeling on top of the world, Viola entered nurses' training with her usual enthusiasm and took to it like a duck to water. Unfortunately, as she studied, the vision in one eye became an issue; so much that her left eye ball protruded to the point of touching her glasses. Wasting no time, her father took her to Mayo Clinic for an appointment with the best optometrist available to receive the news that a malignant growth was located in the optic nerve that required immediate surgery. Not only was the entire optic nerve removed, but the following prognosis that accompanied it was even more startling: "I HAVE DONE EVERYTHING I KNOW TO DO AS A PHYSICIAN. UNLESS A HIGHER POWER INTERCEDES, IN 6 WEEKS, YOUR DAUGHTER WILL BE BLIND IN BOTH EYES AND HAS ONLY 6 MONTHS TO LIVE."

At this point, Viola's father elected to keep the diagnosis to himself and encouraged his daughter to continue her training as a nurse. However, being aware of the probability that Viola would probably not be graduating with the others at the prearranged date, the hospital conducted the ceremony earlier than usual just so she could participate.

Ladies and gentlemen, the diagnosis delivered to Viola over 68 years ago that never became a reality, propelled this sweet resident of a nursing home, now in the winter season of her life, to fall so deeply in love with her Heavenly Father that she constantly proclaims, "God must have something left for me to do." Fully cognizant that she is here on earth for her Creator's purpose and His pleasure, the joy she exudes fills the entire room when she enters.

Then, wearing a mischievous grin, she concluded this experience in life by recounting the expressions on the faces of the nurses that attended a class reunion many years later when seeing her enter the room. One finally commented, "Is it you, Viola? I thought you were dead!"

At this point, given the fact that Viola had to endure this type of pain and suffering which left her blind in one eye for the remainder of her life, some thought the rest of her journey would

be smooth sailing. Since God had healed her of a disease that, in the minds of mere humans, was fatal, only good things waited to unfold ahead. However, this was not to be the case.

Although Viola moved forward with her career and became an incredibly successful surgical nurse, she would have to face the disappointing reality that a husband she thought would be kind, physically abused every member of her little family; meaning herself and the two sweet children. After realizing the situation was not going to improve, Viola courageously protected her children by facing the world as a single parent; a move that was not considered proper at the time because society expected women to stay in the home, regardless of the circumstances. In spite of this tragedy, Viola eventually married a man that was both a wonderful husband and father to her children; an individual they both viewed as dad.

Today, as this beautiful lady looks back at her life, she will tell you God's fingerprints are all over it. First, the fact that she is still here lets her know that something wonderful will occur within the time she has left on this earth. She will look at you with intense determination and say, "Death? Am I afraid of dying? No! The fact that I am here now, right this very minute; alive since 1950 with the diagnosis I was given? Afraid? Why should I be afraid to die when God is on my side? I belong to him. Am I perfect? Oh, no. I still make my share of mistakes. But...through faith, joy and singing, I must continue to show others I am in His daily care."

As a farewell to all of you, Viola wanted to send the following message:

*"Can you earn your way to heaven?"*

*"How can you say you are not going to make it if you have put your faith in God? There is no way God is going to tap you on the shoulder and say, "Well, I guess you have done pretty good so I will let you come in." No, you have to accept him as your Savior and be so in love with him that you want to spend your life working for him. Being led by God is so much more satisfying than trying to figure out things for yourself. Trying to save yourself doesn't work! Since Christ is our great arbitrator, we don't have to worry. We are human and make mistakes. But because he died on the cross in our place, if we accept that and ask for forgiveness, we belong to Him. No matter how much Satan keeps grabbing at you, trying to get you off course, don't be fooled by him. Keep holding on to the hand of God. Although our God is a loving God and wants you to believe in Him, he will never force you. He gave you freewill to accept Him or not.*

*God is a just God and has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you. So, believe that it means not only every day of your earthly life, but also when you go before the throne of judgement. If you are centered on Christ, you have nothing to worry about. Just because you are unable to see him with your eyes, doesn't indicate his absence. He is more alive and present than the things you can touch, feel, and see in the world. However, all those things will be eventually gone, but not our Father.*

*The yearning in our heart is really what makes us live. We all have a longing for God; thus, it is just a matter of filling the space with Him, rather than the things of this world that can never be satisfying."*

**Viola's words about the winter season of life:**

*"Now that I am in the winter season of life, when I go to sleep each night and wake up each morning, my perspective is totally different. My main prayer is Lord, keep me this day. But if you are through with me, then I am ready to go. However, if there is still something left for me to do, show me what it is. And...invariably, he will put something in front of me. Or else, I will hear Him say, "Wait! We will talk it over."*

*After saying this, Viola laughed and said, "A lot of people say to me, "You talk to God?" I say, "Absolutely, how do you think I got this far?"*

*"Sometimes, they ask me what heaven will be like. Christ has told us what it will be like in Scripture. So, if we believe in Him, then, we also believe in God. If we have those two entities combined....and they are combined.... what else do we need? If I say I have God in my heart is one thing, but if I live as if I have God in my heart, then I am showing the world that I have something that they need and I can show them how to get it. There is only one place you can go where you can obtain this feeling of contentment. Heaven means total contentment to me. I can't see heaven visually in my mind. If I look forward to being there in any capacity at all, it would be the joy of being reunited with the loved ones that have gone on before me. Since I am the only one of the 5 children still alive, God has something for me to do. We must all release the things of this world that try to sway our mind as it relates to our last moments in our earthly journey. We must keep our faith and fight the good fight Christ has in store for us until we no longer breathe. When I breathe my last breath of earthly air, I believe there will be a peace that passes all understanding. My spirit will immediately go back to God as my Creator. There is no other way for it to go as long as I am in His care. I believe He will be there right with me and take me home on the wings of glory. It is important for all of us to realize how much God loves us. Talk to him through prayer. As my papa always said, "That is your telephone to God."*

### Viola's Prayer for You

*"Dear and all wise heavenly father,*

*I thank you that you have given me the privilege to internalize that all the years you have been on the throne, and that regardless of age or condition, we are never too old to open our hearts to you. I just ask that you be with each and every one that hears this message. Help them understand that without you nothing is possible, but with you in our hearts and minds there is nothing that is impossible because you give us the strength and knowledge to portray your love and mercy to all those, we come in contact with in life. I thank you for that! In Jesus' name. Amen!"*

