

Reference: VARIOUS

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The Joy of the LORD

Purpose: To meditate upon Christian joy - to show its desirability and to encourage hearers to seek more and more of this joy

1. Introduction

An important subject for us to consider
Can't remember when I last heard of it
Seems to be in very short supply today
Among some, it is absent altogether and distrusted
Among others it is fabricated by human means
But among very few is it richly present
Yet it should be a characteristic of every true believer
Also, possession of joy a great help in Christian walk
Will look at some aspects of joy as the Bible shows it to us

2. What is Christian joy?

Consider the following passages

Psalm 35:9 And my **soul** shall **rejoice** in the LORD; It shall **exult** in His salvation.

Isaiah 61:10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My **soul** will **exult** in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Zephaniah 3:14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O Israel! **Rejoice and exult with all your heart**, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Luke 1:46 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, And my **spirit has rejoiced** in God my Savior."

Psalm 119:32 I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will **enlarge my heart**.

2.1. *It is spiritual in nature:*

Heart, soul, spirit

Rejoice, exult, enlarge

Rejoicing is an activity of the soul, of the spirit

1 Peter 1:8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with **joy inexpressible and full of glory**,

This joy is inexpressible
Words cannot begin to describe it
The only way to know what it is like is to experience it first hand
It is full of glory – heavenly joy

2.2. *It is spiritual in focus*

Note from these passages

It has God and His blessings and benefits as its focus

In the Lord, His promises, His salvation

In the assurance of His love toward us

In the hope of glory that we have

2.3. *It is spiritual in its source*

Where does this joy come from?

It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

The second fruit the Holy Spirit produces in us!

Seems to indicate something of its importance

How strange that we so often overlook it!

This is Christian joy

Can best sum this up in the words of an old theologian:

"Spiritual joy is a delightful motion of the soul, generated by the Holy Spirit in the heart of believers, whereby He convinces them of the felicity of their state, causes them to enjoy the benefits of the covenant of grace, and assures them of their future felicity."

3. Why is it important that we be joyful?

3.1. *An evidence that we are truly Christ's*

If this is a fruit of the Spirit and all believers have the Spirit

Then all believers should have this fruit

To varying degrees, perhaps

But it must be there

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paul expected his readers to understand this

One part of being in God's kingdom is this joy

3.2. It is our duty to be joyful

We are commanded to be joyful – rejoice in the Lord!

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

It is something we can do!

Otherwise the command would make no sense

God does not command us and not give us the means to obey.

It is something we must do!

Rejoice in the Lord

3.3. It is our strength

Saw this in our text

The law had been read

The people were convicted of their many sins

They began to weep but they are prevented

Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

There is a time for mourning over our sins

But we must rejoice in Him who has saved us from them

We must exult in the Savior who bought us

We must glory in our hope – especially on a Holy day

And as we do so, we gain strength How?

How is the joy of the Lord our strength?

Joy oils the wheels of obedience – no burden to obey One who so delights our souls!

Arms us to fight spiritual enemies – assured of our interest in God – who can be against us?

Gives us a distaste for worldly pleasures – what are they in comparison?

Helps us look beyond the here and now to our final joy

4. How do we grow stronger in joy?

4.1. Meditate on spiritual things,

Our Lord, His character, on His beauty

Think on all His mighty works

Consider the way He has dealt with you

Not as your sins deserved but according to His grace

Ponder the deep love of Christ for you

Eternal love – everlasting love, unchanging love

Contemplate all the promises He has made to you in His word

Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose

I will not, I will not desert to its foes

That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake

I'll never, no never, no never forsake

Turn your eyes heavenwards to see your true country

That is where you are really a citizen

You don't belong here – just a stranger and a pilgrim

Think of the joy set before you

4.2. Refrain from sin

Sin grieves the indwelling Spirit, the joy-giver

If we grieve Him away, our joy goes too

Psalms 51:11-12 Do not cast me away from Your presence And **do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation** And sustain me with a willing spirit.

So we maintain our joy by not sinning or grieving the Spirit

Or – by growing in obedience and holiness

Which our joy strengthens us to do!

This is the upward spiral

Joy, strength, obedience, more joy

Opposite of sin, lack of joy, weakness, more sin

5. Joy Indestructible

This joy cannot be destroyed by outward circumstances –

It is produced in us by the Holy Spirit

It focuses on eternal, unchanging things

It has an eye to heaven – the joy set before us

So we can rejoice in trials, persecutions, afflictions

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

They prove that we are the Lord's – He was persecuted too

How did He endure? For the joy set before Him!

Apostles rejoiced they were counted worthy
Knowing we are Christ's in this way gives us assurance
That leads to more joy!

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

What did they greatly rejoice in through these trials?

Their inheritance, kept in Heaven for them!

We are to be joyful all the time

2 Corinthians 6:10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Nothing that can happen to us in this world can take away our joy

It doesn't have it's foundation and source in this world!

We can sorrow (over sin in ourselves & the world), yet rejoice

We can hurt and yet rejoice - We can rejoice always

Nothing that can come upon us here can take away this joy.

John 16:22 "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

What did they know when they saw the risen Christ?

That He is God and had overcome death

That heaven was theirs through His victory

No wonder they rejoiced!

6. Do you know this Joy?

Let's apply this to ourselves

6.1. *Unbeliever*

You have never known this joy, this glory

And you never will while you cling to your sins

Don't be fooled because you enjoy church services

And approve of the morality taught in scripture

And admire true Christians – these don't make you a believer

All you can know is the pale reflection of this joy

Joy in the things of this world, not God

Happiness that comes and goes

No strength to face the trials of life

You should turn that kind of joy into mourning!

Turn from the sins that will take your soul to eternal misery!

Why will you reject such a God

Deny yourself such liberty and such joy?

Confess your sins against this Holy God

Trust in Christ to save you – as only He can

Look to Him to bear your punishment

Lean on Him for the righteousness you need

Then this joy will be yours. Do it now!

6.2. *Christian*

Can you see how important this is

How foolish we are to let the world rob us of this!

Can you see why this joy cannot be manufactured?

Not the froth we often hear of in churches today

Can you see why there are no valid substitutes?

Nor the intellectual thrill of a doctrinal system

Nor the adulation of a preacher (Spurgeon story)

Nor the history and conformity of a denomination

Nor the comfort of a building or certain ways of doing things

True joy is in the Lord, His salvation, Glory

Can you see this is not the same as happiness?

Happiness comes and goes with our feelings and circumstances

Happiness is more outward, temporal

This joy is inward, inexpressible, full of glory

Can you see that this cannot be found in the world?

Not rooted in the here and now

Don't settle for anything less!

What will it be to go to heaven? Pure joy! Unalloyed joy!

Matthew 25:21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Stir yourself up to rejoice in Christ now

Is it so hard? Is He so unlovely, His salvation so ordinary

You can find no joy in them?

Rejoice! Shout for joy! Obey the command and rejoice!

Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.