

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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Joy

Today I want to talk to you about the Joy that comes from serving the Lord. Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Gal.5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith..." Phil. 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice." Joy is expressed in the N.T. by a wealth of synonymous terms, the most common being "joy" "delight" "rejoice" "joyous" "be glad" "gladness" etc. The joy spoken of in the N.T. is not simply an emotion (clapping hands, artificial grins, "amens," or "hallelujahs" etc.,) but rather a quality--that naturally expresses itself--grounded in God and derived from His word. Psa. 16:11 "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psa. 35:5 "And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord, it shall rejoice in His salvation." Rom. 5:11 "And not only so, but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." The joy experienced by those who serve God is wholesome, unvarying and permanent, occupying itself with the object of its source. It is not a byproduct as demonstrated by the fact that we are constantly commanded to cultivate it. We live in an age of uncertainty, unrest, and turmoil. Often people get "down in the dumps" even melancholy and sad. The circumstances of life seem to rob us of any real joy or happiness. If I could bottle or package joy and happiness, I would soon be rich. Everyone wants to be happy, and even though it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or even stolen, it is within the reach of everyone. The Lord wants his people to be happy: Mt.5:12 "Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven..." Psa.144:15 "Happy is that people, that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Is it possible for people who serve the Lord to enjoy life more than those who live in sin? Let us notice

I. The Joy of Serving God Contrasted With the Joy of Serving Satan.

A. The Pleasures of Sin--Heb.11:24-25 "...choosing rather to suffer affliction than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The NASV "the passing pleasures of sin..." Pleasure means lit. "enjoyment."

1. There is joy or pleasure in sin. It is folly to deny it. But this joy is temporary, based on gratifications prohibited by God. 1John 2:15-17 And condemned by our conscience, It is hard to enjoy sin, when we know we are sinning. 2. This is a transient joy, boisterous mirth, and temporary because it is the gratification of carnal desires.

B. Rejoice With Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory. 1Peter 1:8 "...you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." ("unable to be told out, inexpressible) Phil.2:17-18 "Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink-offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me." Paul was willing to make his life a sacrifice to God. If that happened, it would be all joy. And he calls on the Philippians not to mourn at that prospect but to rejoice. To him

every call for sacrifice was a call to his love for Christ; and therefore he met it, not with sadness, but with joy. 1. We learn that the basis for "joy unspeakable" is Christ. Phil. 3:1 "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Phil. 3:3 "...rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always..." Phil. 4:10 "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly..." The fullness of the gospel is the only thing that satisfies man's basic desires. Rom.6:17 "But God be thanked that though you were the slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered, and being set free from sin, ye became slaves of righteousness." Titus 2:11-14 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath....looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people zealous for good works." The Christian life is not gloomy and depressing, nor is it artificial. It makes life happy in spite of the conditions around us.

II. Joy Is A Command Of God.

1 Thess. 5:16 "Rejoice always." Phil. 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice."

A. The command is enforced by the example of early saints.

Acts 2:46 "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and"

Phil. 2:17 "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." 1. In trials and persecutions: The early Christians, in the face of great trouble, persecution and tribulation maintained a joy that helped them carry the gospel to all men, in spite of their problems. What was the source of their Joy? Was it special? Was it only for them? No. The source of their joy was and is today a gift of God. "To the man who pleases him God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy." Eccl. 2:26

2 Cor. 6:10 "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things." 2 Tim. 3:12 "Yea and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer..." 2. In prosperity, or adversity, health or sickness, among friends or behind bars, we should be exceedingly happy and thankful for so many privileges and blessings. 3. Troubles all around us, in the home, the church, the community will not make us murmur, dwell in self-pity or possess a martyr complex, as we joy in the Lord.

III. Why Joy Is An Integral Part Of The Christian Life.

A. The coming of Jesus to earth, is always associated with Joy.

Mary said to Elizabeth "when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy." When the wise men saw the guiding star they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Angels who brought the greeting to shepherds proclaimed "I bring you greetings of great joy." "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

B. The Confidence That We Have Been Forgiven of Sin.

The early Christians, in the face of great trouble, persecution and tribulation maintained a joy that helped them carry the gospel to all men. The Gospel brought deliverance, forgiveness, salvation, freedom from guilt etc. Col. 1:13-14 "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin."

C. We Have The Blessing of Being A Part of a Dedicated Fellowship, a Family of

Brothers and Sisters. 1John 1:3-4 "We proclaim to you, so you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the father and his son Jesus Christ. We write this that our joy might be complete." We often complain about the church. The weakness or downfall of other Christians. Yet, what would we do without them?

D. We Have a right To Be Happy Because of God's Preventing Grace. Isaac Walton

"Every misery that I miss is a new mercy. I see people with problems I don't have, I don't have strength to endure. And I know, there but for the Grace of God, go I."

Today upon a bus I saw a lovely maid with golden hair

I envied her, she seemed so gay, and I wished I were so fair,

When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the isle

She had one foot, and wore a crutch, and when she passed a smile

O God forgive me when I whine, I have two feet, the world is mine.

And then I stopped to buy some sweets, the lad who sold them had such charm

He said "Its nice to talk with folk like you, you see, I'm blind."

O, God forgive me when I whine I have two eyes, the world is mine.

Then walking down the street I saw a child with eyes of blue

He stood and watched the others play, he knew not what to do

I stopped a moment, then I said "why don't you join the others dear?"

He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew he could not hear.

O, God forgive me when I whine I have two ears the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I go, with eyes to see the sunset's glow

With ears to hear what I would know

O, God forgive me when I whine, I'm blessed indeed, the world is mine.

E. We Have A Happiness That Comes, Not From An Absence of Trouble, But From The Presence of God. I've seen some people suffer with problems I can't imagine, but still have joy. I've also seen people with everything this world can offer, live lives of misery.

Deacon--had a terminal illness. He was in great pain and suffering. But he was always happy. Someone asked him why? How? "This has been the greatest experience of my life. I've learned what is important and what is not. This illness saved my soul. What is 20-25 years if I can live forever with God? There can be joy in hardships: James 1:2 "Count it all joy, when you meet various trials." Prov.17:22 "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones." Don't you enjoy a cheerful person?

Abhor a downcast individual? The joy of serving the Lord extends to all areas of life, for we are always in His presence and under His watchful eye. It extends to all eternity James 1:2 "My brethren count it all joy when you fall into various temptations."

2Cor.7:4 "Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." The world cannot give it or take it away. Health cannot give it, sickness cannot take it away. Money cannot give it, poverty cannot take it away. Things cannot give it, their absence take it away.

Are you in Christ? If not, where is your Joy? If you are in Christ, rejoice in the loving kindness of the Lord.