

Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Theme: Joy 2.

From within our studies in John 16 we have stepped out to briefly consider the important subject of Christian joy. I am touching on 4 areas, for there are many biblical references to joy, delight, rejoice in and we could easily spend much time considering the subject. Last time we looked at the area of **false ideas of this joy** and contrasted spiritual joy with legitimate earthly joys. This morning we will see: **Joy and its origin.**

The joy the Bible speaks of is an emotion, a feeling, but is much more than that. It is not some transient, fleeting, passing thing that shrivels up in the heat of affliction or dries up in a bitter experience. It is a solid joy, a lasting joy, a deep joy, a joy no one can take from us. It is more than a feeling of happiness and contentment because we feel good and are going through good things.

This joy is a confident delight in the certainty of spiritual realities, truths - it means we have an understanding, an awareness that there is a God who we have come to know, trust and have a delight in Him, His work, ways and we realise He is the true reality above and beyond this world's scene and events. It is worth repeating - this joy is the confident delight of knowing the reality of spiritual realities. It looks beyond the pleasures or pains; the triumphs or tragedies of life and sees the reality and certainties of the spiritual realm.

As such it is an **intelligent joy** - not mindless, based upon our up-and-down feelings, but based on certainties that do not change even when our circumstances in life change, because it is based on the unchanging realities of God, His Being and work. Even though it is a feeling, an emotion which can decrease or increase and we can feel and experience it most intensely (1 Peter 1:8 "*Though you*

have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy". It is to be experienced and not to remain as a cold theological, biblical statement. It is living Bible truth possessing our souls, hearts, minds and lives.

Joy in the Bible is always based on a reality. In John 16 Jesus speaks of the joy of the disciples and it is based on the 2nd little while experience - when they shall see Him by the work of the Holy Spirit (v16ff). Biblical joy is a response to spiritual realities and is dependent upon things that never change.

Our appreciation, enjoyment of the joy which arises from these spiritual realities will vary in our experiences - from one person to the other and even within our own individual lives, because we will be affected by various factors - our personalities, our tiredness, physical and mental health, as well as our walk with God. Yet the realities upon which this joy is to be anchored never changes. Let's go on and see in more detail **the origin of this joy**.

Scholars, as they've researched people, have shown that happy people like themselves, have self-control, are self-confident and outgoing. They are the typical extrovert. Yet Christian joy is vastly different to being a happy, confident person. Christianity and the gospel strike at the very basis of such people. They may like themselves, but the Bible says we are sinners before God and lost; that we are not in control of ourselves, but are controlled, manipulated by the real devil and our fallen nature; the Bible shows us that outside of Christ, we can have no confidence in our abilities, or what we have done or can do and even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The Christian is encouraged to be meek in spirit, gentle and quiet.

The gospel strikes through all that would make people confident, happy and joyful. Many Christians typify the sad caricature and picture the world has of Christianity. Yet the Christian is to be full of joy, know joy, even glorious and inexpressible joy (1 Peter 1:8). This being so, it a joy far removed from our personalities and personal circumstances and so we see it is:

1. Joy in God.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks “*What is the chief end of man?*” and answers “*Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*” How do we do that? The way we learn how to glorify God and enjoy Him is shown us in the word of God i.e. the Bible. Through this God-provided resource, we learn there has to be this God glorifying joy in Him. We are to delight ourselves in the Lord - the holy, triune, Almighty God. Do we realise that God, as God, delights and rejoices in all He is and all He does? He never does that which displeases Him, but does all things after His good pleasure, His will and He has an infinite delight and pleasure in that.

I heard, long ago, a preacher saying “*The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy Him!*” It may sound strange, but it is true - all God does is for His own glory and it is done out of His good pleasure, delight and joy. God is the most God centred Being in the whole of Creation. God does all things for His glory - Creation, election, calling a people to Himself, rescuing them from Egypt, Babylon, sending the Saviour and our salvation; also the future return of the Lord Jesus and all that will bring. All are His for His glory.

It may seem strange to us for God to seek His own glory - we would call it pride, self-centredness if a person did this, but God is God and is the best in the whole of Creation and yet He is moved **by love for us to seek His own glory!** We want to do and give

our best for our children. We may have many limitations, but if we could, knowing it was good for them, we would give them anything and everything. God can give us anything and He gives us what is the best for us and our good - for He gives us Himself - to be loved, obeyed, treasured and enjoyed. He wants us to enjoy and delight in Him; be consumed in our love and joy of and for Him and so we praise Him. He is right to glorify Himself - it is the best thing for us to see and enjoy His glory.

God wants us to be partakers of His own joy at His being God – this is the reality of the universe. The joy of having this God is to be our passion in everything we do, say or think. It is joy in God as God. It involves us thinking, chewing over, dwelling on who God is and what He is like. Romans 5:11 says “*we also rejoice in God*” (NIV) or in KJV “*we also joy in God*”. There is to be a conscious delighting in who God is and what He is like. We will not go into this in detail at the moment, but it will do us good to consider the self-existence of God - not created - He is the eternal God; this eternal God does not change – no ups or downs; no change of mind - He is ever the same in every aspect of His infinite being; He is without measure or comparison. He is the God who is the One God yet known in 3 persons - perfect unity; He knows all things about the past, present and future - of the universe, of the world, of us as individuals - He has always done so! He is good, perfectly good. He has love, mercy, long-suffering. He is perfectly holy - no fault or blemish; no weakness. It is a righteous holiness He has and He maintains Himself and does so in accordance with His Holiness. He has all power (omnipotent) and is everywhere in all His Being at same time (omnipresent.)

This is the God we are to delight in. He is not a little or shallow person, but the infinitely glorious and Almighty God - the unchanging reality. It means we need to know of Him, need to know and love Him. Yet without His work and help, we can have

no joy in Him - for He is awesome, terrifying in all His magnificent raw majesty, holiness and power. Yet we are commanded to delight ourselves in the Lord, to joy, rejoice in God - which is only possible because of:

2. The joy of God.

How can we little creatures of dust, feeble and frail, dare presume we can have uninterrupted joy in God? We are sinners - lost and condemned; we would rightly be in terror, agony in His presence and know no joy at all; yet we have the joy of the Lord given to us - this ability to delight in God, this attraction to God. This happens to us through the work of the Holy Spirit - which ties us into John 16, as He brings us to faith and new life in Christ through whom we have reconciliation (Romans 5:11), as we are made new creatures in Christ. The joy of the Lord begins in the work of salvation, regeneration in our lives. The joy of God centres upon the Lord Jesus' person and work - these are unchanging spiritual realities - never mind how we feel!

Our Saviour took our sin, it's guilt and it's deserved punishment totally upon Himself. We were made and then declared sin and guilt free the very moment we believed - we were justified by faith and have everlasting peace with God. We were made, then declared sin and guilt free - as such the verdict was made in heaven and it stands there for ever! It means our past has been dealt with; as is our present and our future is secure! We are now God's child, at peace with Him, in a relationship with Him. These things are true, real and need to be understood, so we delightfully appreciate the reality of spiritual realities!

There are many other realities associated with our justification - adoption as God's child, freedom from the dominion of sin, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, a renewed mind, eyes to see and understand the privilege of prayer and our position in Christ.

Now we recognise God is caring, has been caring for us and will care for us - it's His providence, His Guardian care and now we can read, say, sing and fully appreciate and mean Psalm 23:1ff. We are to think about these realities - joy in God, the joy of God in our lives and this will lead on to be known in:

3. The joy of our salvation.

As we consciously delight in the reality of these spiritual realities – the unchanging spiritual realities which are ours in Christ, we will know more of the effect, the power, the experience of these realities, truths. It is one thing to say *“Yes my sins are forgiven, I'm clean before God.”* - as wonderful as that truth is, but it's another thing to be able to delight in from the heart that wonder, to have it passed from our minds into our hearts and it comes out as *“My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, but in part but the whole, is nailed to His cross and I bare it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord oh my soul!”* To have a realisation there is now **NO condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus - which includes us personally; that we are justified, we have peace with God for eternity through the Lord Jesus, we have been made an heir, a joint heir with God and have a home in heaven!

To have these and many other realities more and more impressed upon our minds and hearts; to be moved by them, to love our God and Saviour more, to rejoice in Him, to have greater peace, to be more patient with people, also showing more kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - and we will realise we are growing in grace and showing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

There is such a thing as the joy of our salvation and it can certainly be linked with the assurance that we belong to Jesus and He belongs to us. As Joseph Hart said *“True religion is more than a notion. Something must be **known and felt.**”* To know **of** the

things of God, is not to be compared **to knowing God** in Christ. To have the assurance, the joyful assurance that all our sin is dealt with, we are at peace with God, He with us and also knowing the peace of God ruling in our hearts and lives is something most wonderful.

This joy and assurance are not a one-off experience, but as we shall consider next time, it is to continue to grow, to be known in a greater intensity as we learn more about our God and Saviour and intense experiences of God's love and presence can be known. This joy needs to be fed and nurtured.

Yet there are times when we don't seem to have this joy, let alone a joy inexpressible in full of glory. I hope to touch on this next time - **maintaining or regaining our joy**. There are no slick, shortcut ways, yet we are able to maintain and even regain this joy of our salvation.

Part of the joy of our salvation should be to hear the gospel being preached, to be able to tell it ourselves by witnessing, by teaching children, young and older people. The gospel message should thrill us and we should never miss a meeting because "*It's only a gospel meeting*"! What was it that had the power to save the likes of you and me? It was the gospel applied by God's Spirit! Probably most of us were converted through being under the preaching of the gospel. It should thrill us to hear of our Saviour, all He has done for us. By that I do not mean just a different text, with the same message-type-gospel meeting, but as God's word is opened up and we see again the applications of the gospel to our lives, we are to be reminded what Jesus has done for us, to see its out workings in our life - that is centred on the Lord Jesus and all He has accomplished for us.

A gospel message should always glorify the Saviour and not dwell how we will be better people, feel better or enjoy life more! The joy of our salvation is rooted deep in certain realities - gospel truths. We are to consciously delight in all that lays ahead of us. This life will bring its ups and downs, joys and sorrows, triumph and trials. Yet we have true, real, certain hopes set before us - Romans 12:12 says we are to be joyful in hope. What hope? Heaven! As God's child, we have, a home in heaven, an inheritance reserved for us which can never spoil, fade or perish (1 Peter 1:4). It's a promised to us from our great heavenly Father in His word and He cannot lie!

Such a joy of salvation, the joy of the Lord, joy in the Lord and we will find others will catch it - other believers will learn from our example; we will find that as we delight in the things of God, in God Himself, that our problems are set in context; we will want to care for others and tell them of our lovely Saviour; Christian joy is not a self-centred goal or experience, but as we glorify God and enjoy Him, it will involve us in personal cost as it works out through our lives.

God willing next time, I'm going to try and finish the subject of joy as we look at the degrees of joy that can be known - including how to maintain and regain this joy, but also that it is a costly joy!