

Joy
Psalm 5:11-12

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Alice Roosevelt Longworth (Teddy Roosevelt's oldest child) is credited with the saying, "He looks as though he was weaned on a pickle."
 - A. The phrase describes the person who is constantly frowning.
 - B. I'm a "people watcher" and many people do look like they were weaned on a pickle.
 - C. Most people in this world are like that because they are not truly happy; there is no real and lasting "joy" in their life.
2. Such is understandable when one considers the world without God; such a world is a dark, violent, and depressing place. But, sadly, many "Christians" also live a miserable, "joy-less" life.
 - A. It seems that instead of Christianity bringing them "joy," it only brings them misery.
 - B. A famous denominational "evangelist" once said, "The trouble with many men is that they have got just enough religion to make them miserable. If there is not joy in religion, you have got a leak in your religion." (Billy Sunday, New York, 1914).
3. **3** How about you?
 - A. Does your relationship with God bring you "joy" or misery?
 - B. Are you bearing the fruit of the Spirit in your life to the point you can join in hearty agreement with Paul and shout, "Rejoice in the LORD always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (**Phil. 4:4**)
4. The word "joy" comes from the Greek word *chara*:
 - A. Strong: "cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight"
 - B. Vine: "'joy, delight' (akin to *chairō*, 'to rejoice')"
 - C. TDNT: "*chara* means 'rejoicing,' 'joy,' 'merriness.'"
5. Notice what Paul said about "joy" and the Christian:
 - A. The experiencing of "joy" is characteristic of "the kingdom of God": **Rom. 14:17**: "*for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*"
 - B. "Joy" is part of the "fruit of the Spirit": **Gal. 5:22-23**: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*"
6. If we're not bearing the fruit of "joy" in our life, something is not right, something is wrong, something is "out of kilter" as we might say.
 - A. We may have the wrong impression about "joy."
 - B. "Joy" is not something that is given to us.
 - C. "Joy" (i.e., rejoicing, happiness, contentment) is something we choose to experience in our life.
 - (1) Abraham Lincoln said, "Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."
 - (2) Paul said: **I Tim 6:6**: "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*"
Phil. 4:11-13: "*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I 2 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*"
7. So we can't go through life waiting for the "joy" fairy to wave her magic wand and bestow "joy," happiness, and contentment on us!

- A. On the contrary, the experiencing of “joy” requires a conscious effort on our part, a CHOICE!
 - B. And amazingly, for the Christian, “joy” can be found in some very dark places.
8. **4** My goal in this lesson is not to make anyone feel guilty for not experiencing “joy” like they should!
- (1) There’s no “joy” in that!
 - (2) Rather, I want to encourage you by considering some things that bring true “joy” to Christians and encourage you to choose these things for our life.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **5** The Joy of Trials:

- A. Those of the world only experience “joy” when “good” things happen to them.
 - (1) However, a Christian can even find “joy” when the dark clouds of gloom gather.
 - (2) James says “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas. 1:2).

B. How can such be the case?

- (1) Because in the furnace of trials our faith is tested and refined:

1 Pet. 1:6-9: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”

- (a) Because of our hope, the Christian, unlike the person of the world, is equipped to put the trials of life into the proper perspective.

2 Cor. 4:16-5:1: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

- (b) What if cancer intrudes on our life? What if death intrudes? What if our spouse or closest friend betrays us? What if we lose our job? Lose our wealth? Problems in the church? (reiterate 1 Pet. 1:6, 8; 2 Cor. 4:17)

- (2) We can rejoice because trials give us the opportunity for our patience and faith to grow stronger! 1 Pet. 1:6-7a; **Jas. 1:2-3:** “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

- (a) We admire the patience of the great OT saint Job: **Jas. 5:11:** “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

- (b) We admire the fact Job didn’t let trials destroy his faith, but they built his faith up! **Job 1:20-22:** “Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”

- (c) When it comes to the application of 1 Pet. 1:6-9 and Jas. 1:2-3, Job is the very embodiment and personification of those passages!

(3) Why can awful things bring so much “joy” to us?

- (a) By enduring we are relying on God; we are exercising and deepening our faith as we put our trust in God and look beyond the “here and the now” to “*the things which are not seen*” for our happiness and joy. And that’s what faith is all about!

1 Pet. 1:6-9: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”

- (b) The Hebrew writer speaks of this in connection to Abraham:

Heb. 11:13-16: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

- (c) By enduring and trusting in God we develop the true Christian character that appreciates the exceeding greatness of our hope: **Rom. 5:3-5:** “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint,” (i.e., the “living hope” of 1 Pet. 1:3).

Psa. 126:5-6: “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

1 Pet. 4:12-13: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

- C. “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials”? Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

2. **6 The Joy of Persecution:**

- A. In a similar vein, Christians can find great “joy” in persecutions: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” (Matt. 5:11)
- B. Jesus is the ultimate example of turning persecution into an occasion for “joy”; how was He able to do that?!

Heb. 12:2: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

1 Pet. 2:23: “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed [entrusted himself, NIV] Himself to Him who judges righteously;”

- C. How will we overcome persecutions? In the very same way!

- (1) Jesus still suffered the most painful death possible, no amount of prayer could take that away! But He was able to turn it into an occasion of blessing and an avenue to experience “joy” by looking beyond to the reward! And so can we:

Lk. 6:22-23: “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For

indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

(a) Two thoughts are important here:

(i) We can take “joy” in persecutions for the very same reason Jesus was able to do so: “*for great is your reward in heaven*”; Pain? Yes! Sorrow? Yes! But God helps us through it! **(2 Cor. 4:17:** “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*”).

(ii) We also can take “joy” in persecutions for the company in which it places us: “*for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets*” (**Lk. 6:23**). Can you imagine your name being mentioned in the very same breath as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel?! It will happen if you rely on God to get you through persecution!

D. The apostles were a wonderful example of being able to turn persecution into an occasion for joy:

Acts 5:40-42: “*and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*”

E. We need to remember the Lord’s “cheering section” is urging us on to victory!

Heb. 12:1-2: “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

F. I’m confident Paul had similar thoughts on his mind when he said:

Acts 20:22-24: “*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the LORD Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*”

G. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you”? Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*”

3. **7** The Joy of Fellowship:

A. Paul told the Philippian brethren they had fulfilled his “joy” “*by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*” (Phil. 2:2)

B. Every congregation of the Lord’s people is worthy of the same praise when they are truly united “*in Christ.*”

(1) We should find an overflowing fountain of “joy” in that God has granted us as His children the honor and privilege of association with “*those who have obtained like precious faith*”! (2 Pet. 1:1)

C. Think for a moment how awful this world can be (just watch the “news” for a few minutes).

(1) Think for a moment about all the evil people in the world (i.e., criminals, corrupt politicians, liars, Planned Parenthood people selling baby body parts, etc.).

(2) Thinking about these things is depressing!

(3) Now think about your faithful brethren in Christ (they love you, they don’t abuse you or lie to you, they don’t steal from you, they don’t curse at you, instead they encourage you, help you, etc.). They can be totally relied upon; they totally have your best interests at heart at all times.

(4) Isn’t such fellowship precious and an occasion for “joy” and rejoicing?! Absolutely! **Phil. 4:4:**

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

D. We can also experience “joy” by having fellowship with gospel preachers.

(1) The church at Philippi had fellowship with Paul when they helped support him:

Phil. 4:14-16: “Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.”

(2) Paul briefly explains what their support meant to them:

Phil. 4:17: “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”

(3) In other words, their support of gospel preaching meant they were “laying up treasure in heaven.”

(4) When we lay up treasure in heaven it is a source of “joy”!

Phil. 1:4-5: “always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,”

E. Associating with faithful brethren and supporting sound gospel preaching are some of the most important things we can do as individual Christians and as a congregation of the Lord’s people!

F. Isn’t such fellowship precious and an occasion for joy and rejoicing?! Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

4. **8** The Joy of Obedience:

A. John praised the brethren for their obedience: **3 Jn. 3-4:** “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

B. Paul expressed similar thoughts:

(1) In the epistle to the Colossians: **Col. 1:9-10:** “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

(2) In the epistle to the Philippians: **Phil. 1:25-26:** “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

(3) In the epistle to the Thessalonians: **1 Thess. 1:6-7:** “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.”

C. As we consider our obedience we would be well-served to hold the words of the Psalmist close to our heart:

Psa. 119:111-112: “Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112 I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end.”

Psa. 119:131: “I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”

Psa. 119:162: “I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.”

D. Jesus said to the faithful church in Philadelphia: “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it;” (Rev. 3:8) Why did He say that? “For you...have kept My word, and have not denied My name.” (Rev. 3:8)

E. Drawing ourselves closer to God is always an occasion for joy! How?

Jn. 8:31: *"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.'"*

1 Jn. 2:5: *"But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."*

Jn. 14:21: *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."*

Jn. 14:23: *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'"*

F. Is "joy" to be found in obeying God's word? Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"*

5. **9** The Joy of Salvation:

A. The twelfth chapter of Isaiah so eloquently expresses this aspect of "joy": *"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."* (Isa. 12:2-3)

Hab. 3:18-19: *"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. I 9 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills."*

B. Free of charge God has solved our greatest problem (**Eph. 2:8-9:** *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."*).

(1) We are all in the same boat...lost! Rom. 3:23

(2) We are all doomed to an eternity in hell! Rom. 6:23

(3) Our most important possession is at risk! Matt. 16:26

C. But instead of being *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1) He has *"made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 2:5-6).

D. Perhaps we can better appreciate the "joy" of salvation by seeing heaven's response:

(1) Lk. 15:2-7: parable of the lost sheep (God and heaven rejoices over our salvation!).

(2) Lk. 15:8-10: parable of the lost coin (Joy in heaven when one lost sinner repents; it's the joy one feels when finding what was lost. My checkbook!)

(3) Lk. 15:11-32: parable of the lost son (Father made "merry" and was "glad" over the son who *"was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."*).

E. I think one of the best examples of one who experienced the "joy of salvation" was the Ethiopian eunuch:

Acts 8:38-40: *"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."*

(1) The eunuch's "joy" was an indicator of the great value he placed on Christ, on his own soul, and on the salvation that comes only through Him:

Matt. 13:44: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."*

(2) Until we see the unsurpassed value of salvation we will not experience the "joy of salvation":

Matt. 13:45-46: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."*

F. “and for joy over it [salvation] he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” Is salvation that important to you?! Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

6. **10** The Joy of Eternal Life:

A. Jesus said words to the two reliable stewards that every faithful Christian longs to hear on that Great Day of Judgment, “Well done good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your lord.” (Matt. 25:23)

B. What a joy it will be after fighting the good fight, after finishing the race, and keeping the faith that we too are presented with the glorious “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

1 Thess. 2:19-20: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.”

C. I would encourage you to read the article in this week’s Words of Life.

(1) It was written by Roger Shouse in response to Jeff Whittington’s death.

(2) It provides an eloquent glimpse into the “joy” awaiting the faithful on the other side of Jordan.

D. Do you spend any time contemplating the “joy” of heaven? You should!

(1) Imagine a place with no night, no darkness, no sin, no arguing, no controversy, no litter, no graffiti, etc.

(2) Think of the best day you’ve ever experienced, think of the most joyful moment of your life. Now magnify that a million, zillion times...and you still can’t compare it to the joy of heaven! Heaven will provide joy beyond your wildest dreams! (Bugatti Veyron, 1,000 bhp, set of tires costs \$25,000 and \$70,000 to mount them! 0-60 in 2.2 seconds, top speed 253.8 mph! P-51D Mustang, 1,740 hp, top speed 437 mph, service ceiling 41,900 ft)

Jn. 16:22: “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

Jude 24-25: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

(3) What joy it will be to experience no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain (Rev. 21:4). Think of the people you will meet there and/or be reunited with!

(4) The joy of eternal life? Absolutely! ****Phil. 4:4:** “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

III. CONCLUSION: **11**

1. Living the Christian life is the only way to experience true and lasting joy.

2. Even in the face of trials and persecution the Christian can know true joy!

Isa. 26:3-4: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.”

Psa. 5:11-12: “But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. 12 For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.”

Psa. 16:11: “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

3. Invitation: **Psa. 51:12:** “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”