

## JOYS THAT ARE OURS IN CHRIST

*Jude 24-25*

*24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory WITH GREAT JOY, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

### WE GLORIFY GOD BEST WHEN WE'RE JOYFUL

- Each of us in this room has been created by God for one great purpose: to glorify God
- You and I have been created for the purpose of glorifying God during the course of our earthly life ... and throughout the ages of eternity
- We're created to enable others to see some of the glorious characteristics of our glorious God
- God intends that our lives reflect aspects of His glorious nature .... Rays of light in a dark world .... Rays of light that are reflections of His glorious character
- Just as God created the moon to reflect the sun's light in the dark of night, He created us to reflect His light in this spiritually dark world
- We have a job to do throughout our lives ....to enable others to visibly see something of the invisible God
- There's one essential to doing our job ...
- UNLESS WE EXPERIENCE AND REFLECT THE JOY OF CHRIST NO ONE WILL SEE MUCH OF THE INVISIBLE GOD WE LOVE AND SERVE
- Let me digress for a moment .... C.J. Mahaney says that he has never had an original thought .... Everything that he speaks, he's learned from someone else
- I'm like C.J. .... I've never had an original thought .... I take in the thoughts of men who have gone before me .... I learn from them
- I have many mentors, but one of the best is John Piper
- John has brought to our generation the understanding of America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards
- Jonathan Edwards and John Piper have a life message:
- We've been created to glorify God and God is most glorified in us when we enjoy God

- When we live in the joy that is ours in Christ, God will be most glorified in our lives
- Listen again this morning to John Piper, for I stand upon his shoulders and bring to you his thinking and his words which are far better, far more impacting, and far more useful to you than any words of mine:

*"If we don't join God in advancing the purpose for which He created the universe, we waste our lives and we oppose our Creator."<sup>1</sup>*

*"Joy is in the center of what it means for God to be God and for what it means for me to be God-exalting."*

*"Joy is as close to the absolute essence of God as you can get. God's joy in being God is part of what God is."*

*"God is glorified not only in His glories being seen but by its being rejoiced in."*

- When we rejoice in God ....when we find our joy in loving and serving God ...others cannot but see some aspect of the glorious nature of God
- The Christian life is a life of joy ...but the Christian life is a fight for joy
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the senior minister at Westminster Chapel in London from 1943 to 1968 was a renowned preacher who many say followed in the footsteps of Charles Spurgeon
- A series of his messages were published in one his most helpful and popular books in 1964 under the title of *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures*
- He writes

*...the greatest need of the hour is a revived and joyful Church....Nothing is more important...than that we should be delivered from a condition which gives other people looking at us, the impression that to be a Christian means to be unhappy, to be sad, to be morbid, and that the Christian is one who scorns delights and lives laborious days' ...*

*Christian people too often seem to be perpetually in the doldrums and too often give the appearance of unhappiness and lack of freedom and of absence of joy. There is no question at all but that this is the main reason why large numbers of people have ceased to be interested in Christianity. <sup>2</sup>*

- The writer of Psalm 42 writes of this all too common condition:

*Psalm 42:5-6*

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<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965) 5, 11-12

*5Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. ...*

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones continues:

*Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?*

*Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc.*

*Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he (the Psalmist, Psalm 42) starts talking to himself. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, "Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you."<sup>3</sup>*

- We must speak to ourselves of the joy that is ours through the gospel
- We must remind ourselves that Jesus promised us fullness of joy
- We must fight with ourselves for the joy of the gospel

#### WE HAVE JOY BECAUSE OF CHRIST

- The fight for joy is a fight to fully grasp the power and the promises of the gospel
- John Piper has a great illustration .....
- Apart from the gospel we would all be living our lives as passengers aboard the Titanic
- We'd seek all pleasures offered on the cruise
- We'd enjoy the drinking, the dining, the merriment....and not realizing what lies ahead
- We'd not realize that just ahead in the dark of night the unsinkable Titanic would be torn open by an unanticipated iceberg
- We'd not realize that soon the icy waters of death would summon us
- We'd not realize that those icy waters would be the entrance into the eternal fires and torment of hell

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 20

- Apart from the gospel, we would all be doomed for destruction
- Apart from the gospel, temporary merriment in this life would become eternal torment in hell
- Jesus once spoke a parable about a master who had a good and faithful servant
- The Master said to the servant,

*Matthew 25:23*

*.... 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'*

- Jesus walks the decks of the Titanic and asks, "Who will come to Me to escape the doom that lies ahead? Who will come to Me and receive the fullness of everlasting joy?"
- Who desires eternal glory?
- Who will receive the joy and glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

#### JOY AND GLORY IS OURS THROUGH CHRIST

- On the night before His death, Jesus made an incredible promise to His disciples:

*John 15:11*

*11These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

- This incredible promise was a covenant that Jesus would soon sign in His own blood
- As if the promise of God's own joy were not enough, Jesus adds something else to that promise
- He declares that He gives His glory as well as His joy

*John 17: 22-23*

*22The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

- Is He speaking of the glorified bodies we will have in heaven?
- Yes, but consider carefully what He's saying
- He shares His glory with us even now so the world may know Christ and the love of the Father

- Jesus gives us His joy and His glory
- I didn't look too glorious when I awoke this morning, and you wouldn't say that I look glorious now
- And though you all look good, you don't appear to be physically glorious
- But you and I have the glory of Christ within us because He has given us His own glorious Spirit
- The Spirit of God, who is all-glorious and all-joyful has come to dwell within us
- It is He who enables us to experience the joy of Christ; it is He who enables us to reflect the glories of Christ to others and proclaim the gospel to them
- Soon we'll share one of the two sacraments of the church: communion
- We'll not be performing a religious ritual
- We'll be reminding ourselves of the covenant that Christ signed with His own blood
- We'll remember that He suffered that we might experience fullness of His joy
- We'll remember that His death purchased our glory
- We'll remind ourselves that His death purchased our joy
- We'll remind ourselves, and we'll remind each other that we have been included in the covenant Christ signed with His own blood
- Once again we will celebrate the gospel!
- The gospel is the power of God that will one day open heaven's gates that we may behold the glory of our Eternal God
- But the gospel is the power of God to enable us to live in the fullness of God's joy in the here and now
- And the gospel is the power of God to enable us to reflect God's glory in a sinfully dark world
- If we're passive about the gospel, we'll have little joy .... There will be little glory in our lives .... No light shining out
- Lloyd-Jones gets specific and he gets tough:

*The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself ...*

*You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: "Hope thou in God" – instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way, and then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and .... What God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note:*

*Defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world and say with this man: "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God."<sup>4</sup>*

- When we preach the gospel to ourselves we are speaking to all voices that steal our joy and render us unable to reflect the glory of God to others

#### JUSTIFICATION IS THE FOUNDATION OF JOY

- It is the gospel that makes us joyful because true joy can only be experienced when we are in a right relationship with God
- The biblical term for being right with God is "justified"
- To be "justified" means that God has declared us to be right with Himself
- There is only one way that God declares us to be right with Himself
- Through faith in Jesus Christ .... Through the gospel
- Let me again climb up upon the shoulders of John Piper and speak his words to you:

*The doctrine of justification says that the remedy for my alienation from God is first a legal one, and only then a moral one. First, I have to be legally absolved of guilt and credited with a righteousness that I don't have. That is, I have to be declared righteous in the courtroom of heaven, where God sits as judge, and where I stand condemned by his law.*

*That's what the word justify means; not to make just, but to DECLARE just...<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965), 21

<sup>5</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God – How to Fight for Joy*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 82

*To make a way for us to be saved, God sent Christ to live a perfect divine-human life and die an obedient death. In this way Christ became both the substitute punishment for our sins...and the substitute performer of our righteousness.... Therefore, in the courtroom of God, my guilt for sin is removed by Christ's blood ....; and my title to heaven is provided by Christ's obedience. I am declared just - freed from the punishment of sin and now possessing a title to heaven. This is what is meant by justification.<sup>6</sup>*

- JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH GRACE ALONE .....BY FAITH ALONE..... IN CHRIST ALONE
- Justification never depends on our righteousness ... it all depends on Christ's perfect righteousness

*Romans 3:28*

*28For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

- There are only two ways to try to get right with God: one is to try to be good enough to deserve God's acceptance which is the basis of every other religion that exists in this world .... You must work their way to heaven
- God's way is to accept by faith the work that Jesus Christ has done

*Romans 4:4-5*

*4Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

- THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD .....IT'S THE ONLY WAY BECAUSE IT'S GOD'S ONLY WAY
- And there's only way to have joy ....when we're right with God

#### WE LOSE JOY WHEN WE FORGET THE GOSPEL

- Whenever we forget that God has declared us righteous by grace through faith in Jesus Christ we lose our joy
- We forfeit joy when we forget the gospel
- We destroy joy when we forget that God has declared us to be righteous through the gospel
- We lose joy when we do not preach the gospel to ourselves
- We cannot experience the joy of Christ if we set aside the work of Christ

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 83

- It is through the cross that we have joy .... It is through the cross that we experience the glory of Christ
- Confuse sanctification with justification ....and you'll lose your joy
- Justification is instantaneous; sanctification is the lifelong work of God whereby we become who we already are
- Metamorphosis is the process by which the ordinary earthly caterpillar becomes the magnificent heavenly butterfly
- Metamorphosis is a God-designed miracle in the insect world that pictures the supernatural transformation that is ours in Christ
- The Christian life is a life of becoming who we already are in Christ
- We are sanctified by degrees:

*2 Corinthians 3:16-18*

*16But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

- This verse speaks of both justification and sanctification .... God causes us to turn to Himself and He removes the veil .... He declares us right with Himself and there is freedom because we've been justified
- And yet we're still "unveiled" ... and as we behold the glory of the Lord we're being transformed from one degree of glory to another
- Justification occurred in an instant when the legal issue was settled by God Himself ....
- Through faith alone .... By grace alone .... We have been declared forever forgiven and forever righteous

*Philippians 3:9*

*... not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—*

- In the courtroom of heaven, God Himself declared you and me to be forgiven, and He declared us to be righteous in His sight
- Our legal standing before God was settled in heaven in an instant

- But now, for the duration of our earthly life, the Spirit of God is causing us to become what we are declared to be .... By degrees
- NEVER, NEVER, NEVER confuse the two .... If you do not separate these two acts of God, one instantaneous and one over the entire course of your lifetime ....
- If you forget that they are separate actions, you will merge them together and you will consider your relationship with God to be based upon your own performance
- The gospel .... God's free gift to you ...received by faith alone ....declared you to be righteous
- God's ongoing work of sanctification ....by the Spirit.... By degree ....occurs over a lifetime and is the process of our becoming who we already are
- All butterflies began as caterpillars
- God declares us to be what we yet are not .... He doesn't remake caterpillars, He creates butterflies .... They just happen to continue to look like caterpillars
- God declares us to be finished ... righteous .... when we see ourselves as only a sinful work yet in progress
- God declares us to be saints when we know that we're yet sinners
- GOD SAYS "CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE WHAT I CONSIDER YOU TO BE"
- God says that WE DIED WITH CHRIST; therefore we can CONSIDER OURSELVES TO BE DEAD TO SIN

***Romans 6:5-6***

*5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

***Romans 6:11***

*11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

- When Christ was crucified, my old self was crucified with Him
- God declares that we ARE HOLY because He has chosen us; therefore WE CAN BE HOLY in all our conduct

***Colossians 3:12***

*12Put on then, as God's chosen ones, HOLY AND BELOVED, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,*

***1 Peter 1:15***

*15but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*

- Jesus said that WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; therefore WE CAN LET OUR LIGHT SHINE

*Matthew 5:14*

*14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

*Matthew 5:16*

*16In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

- Listen to John Piper:

*...live as a justified sinner. Don't make peace with sin in your life. If you make peace with sin and settle down with it as an accepted long-term partner, you show that you are not united with Christ. In union with Christ two things happen; His righteousness is imputed to us, and, because of that, a new impulse is given to become what we are. The great gospel weapon in the fight for joy is the rock-solid reality that we are counted righteous in Christ by faith alone. This imputed righteousness is because of his performance alone, not ours. By our behavior we gradually become what we are in him and because of him.*

*The gospel weapon is powerful only to the degree we keep the basis of our justification free from our own performances. God accepts us on the basis of Christ's righteousness, not ours. To be sure, our progressive sanctification - our all-to-slow growth in Christ-likeness --- matters. It is the necessary evidence that our faith is real. But, oh, what a difference it makes to be assured, in the discouraging darkness of our own perfection, that we have a perfect righteousness - namely, Christ's<sup>7</sup>*

- This is the truth that we must continually preach to ourselves: WE'RE FIGHTING TO BECOME WHAT WE ALREADY ARE
- Jesus Christ willed that we would live in His joy and that we would obtain His glory
- Because of the Cross of Christ and His Resurrection, the glorious Spirit of God NOW LIVES WITHIN US
- WE ALREADY HAVE THE JOY AND THE GLORY OF GOD LIVING WITHIN US
- We may look like a caterpillar, but there is a monarch butterfly within
- I know I don't look glorious, but there is God's glory within me because God's Spirit lives within me and God's Spirit is the fullness of glory

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<sup>7</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God – How to Fight for Joy*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 85

- You look good, but you don't look glorious, but there is glory within you because God's Spirit lives within you and God's Spirit is the fullness of glory
- We have fullness of joy because we have been declared righteous and we have God's Spirit living within us
- So when we lose our joy, we must, as John Piper says, "fight like a justified sinner"
- We must pick up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God
- LET ME CLOSE BY LEADING YOU IN YOUR FIGHT FOR JOY

### CLOSING

#### ***Jesus Christ Is A Great Savior From Everything That Destroys Joy*<sup>8</sup>**

##### **Is there wrath and curse hanging over us?**

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— (Galatians 3:13)*

##### **Is there condemnation against us in the courtroom of heaven?**

*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:33-34)*

##### **Are there innumerable trespasses mounting up against us?**

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ... (Ephesians 1:7)*

##### **Is righteousness required that we cannot produce?**

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21) For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)*

##### **Are we cut off from eternal life?**

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

##### **Are we trapped in the dominion of sin that ruins our lives?**

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24) ...and he died for all, that*

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<sup>8</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God – How to Fight for Joy*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 72,73

*those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:15)*

**Will all the follies and failures of our past drag us down with irrevocable, destructive consequences?**

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

**Have we lost all the good things God planned for His children?**

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)*

**Is there any hope that sinners like us could spend an all-satisfying eternity with God? Can I ever come home to God?**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit ... (1 Peter 3:18)*

***Jude 24-25***

***24Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.***