

"Rejoice in the Lord"

Many want happiness, but there's something better than happiness! What's better? Joy! Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore the joy we have in Christ.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know God is wise and good. He will always lead us into the path that brings us joy and peace, so we turn to His Word, the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

If you ask people what makes them happy, they'll usually speak about all the things they like and want in their lives. They might speak of ideal houses, cars, or jobs, thinking they can find happiness in possessions or position. They might consider the satisfaction of their fleshly desires or the accomplishment of some goal in life that that will bring them happiness. Many discipline themselves to gain riches, fame, education, or maybe to set a record. These things, however, belong to this life; they're only temporal. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1 and verse 14, "behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind." What really matters? What lasts beyond this life?

The Lord Jesus told this parable in Luke 12 verses 16 to 21, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I'll do this: I'll tear down my barns, I'll build larger ones, and there I'll store all my grain and all my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." My friends, have you laid up treasures in heaven? Is God an important part of your life?

Now if you want to study more about joy, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free online at www.searchtv.org.

Well the Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Philippians 4, 4 to 7, and we'll explore the joy we have in Christ Jesus!

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Philippians, chapter 4, verses 4 through 7. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." That's a precious reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful for Jesus, and we rejoice that He was willing to suffer and die for our sins. And Father help us to love You, to serve You with every fiber of our being. And may Your will be done on earth as it is heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Every person you meet is hungry for joy. Joy is true pleasure and satisfaction over a blessing or a positive relationship. The joy that we have in Christ is a mindset of delight and well being that comes from knowing and serving God. This joy arises from all the blessings and promises that are grounded in what God has done for us in Christ. It comes from knowing God is our Father, that Jesus is our Savior and Lord. You can have no greater blessing than a personal relationship with the God who created you and can give you an abundant life here on earth and eternal life with Him in heaven. It's no wonder

that Scripture urges us to “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4 and verse 4).

Now joy and our relationship with God are unchangeably joined. When we are right with the One who created us, who loves us, who sustains us daily, and who sent His Son Jesus to give us eternal life, then our joy is multiplied with peace, hope and gratitude. Day by day God is good and He takes care of us. Every blessing, the answer to every prayer, the forgiveness of all our sins, and the love of brethren are good reasons to rejoice in the Lord always!

Christianity is more than a faith or a religion; it's a relationship with our Father in heaven. The Lord taught us to pray to Him and to be obedient to Him. In prayer we can pour out our hearts and our requests. Now God has given us His Scriptures, the Bible, to guide us and to lead us in the right path. Now both prayer and following God's teachings are matters of love and blessing. The Lord Jesus said in John 15 verses 9 to 11, “Just as the Father has loved Me (He said), I have also loved you; abide in My love. And if you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (And He said) These things I've spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” When people love each other and maintain a right relationship, well joy just grows and grows.

From the time that Jesus entered this world, He's brought joy and hope to mankind. Everything about Him speaks of an abundant life filled with joy, peace and promise! When Jesus was born an angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds out in the field as they were watching over their sheep. And the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. Luke 2 verses 10 and 11 says, “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’” Truly the beginning of the greatest joy in all history was the day that Jesus Christ came into the world.

Can you imagine all the joy that Jesus caused people as He forgave sinners, as He preached the gospel of the kingdom, as He healed everyone who came to Him? The blind could see, the deaf could hear, the lame could walk, the lepers were cleansed, and those who were maimed were made whole. Jesus fed the multitudes, cast out demons, stilled the terrifying storms, raised the dead, and welcomed tax collectors and sinners. You see people's lives were changed for the better for having known Jesus. And He brought true joy everywhere He went.

Luke 15 contains three stories of joy, where something is lost and then found. A shepherd who'd lost one of his sheep searched until he found it. And with joy he calls together his neighbors and friends and asks them to rejoice with him. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 15 verse 7, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” Repentance is a reason to rejoice. In the second story, a woman lost a coin. Searching diligently, she finds it and calls to her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.

In the third story, there is a younger son who causes himself to be lost in sin by wandering off to a far country and wasting his inheritance. Well you remember a famine caused him to be destitute and hungry. And when he came to his senses, he came home acknowledging his sin, but the father rejoiced over his repentant son. With hugs and kisses, the father put the best robe on him, shoes on his feet, a ring on his finger. And he said in Luke 15 verses 23 and 24, “bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.” God loves to forgive people; He rejoices when people repent and

turn their lives around. And we too should rejoice when we see people turn their hearts toward God to follow and serve Him.

Now Jesus knew that He would die on the cross, and it caused Him great sorrow, to the point of death He said. Even those who went to the garden with Him sorrowed; Luke 22 and verse 45 says that Jesus found them "sleeping from sorrow." Well when He was speaking of His resurrection, Jesus said in John 16 and verse 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." Though Jesus suffered through a painful trial and bore an agonizing cross, Jesus could see joy even in His suffering. Hebrews 12 and verse 2 reminds us to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." What could possibly be joyful in the cross?

Well the joy of the cross was not in the pain of the suffering or the shame that the Jews heaped upon Him as they mocked Him. No. The "joy set before Jesus" that allowed Him to endure the cross came from what He was dying for. He died to save people, people who would follow Him in this life and live with Him forever. Acts 20 and verse 28 says that He purchased the church with His own blood. He was willing to sacrifice Himself on the cross, because He loved us. And He knew that in dying, we would come to understand just how far He was willing to go to demonstrate His love and to save us from our sins. He knew that His death would make a difference in our lives. And so He rejoiced every time a sinner repents and comes to Him. That's the joy that's set before Him.

When the women came to the tomb, after the resurrection, they came of course wanting to anoint the body of Jesus early on the first day of the week, and they saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. Well a severe earthquake had occurred, and the angel rolled away the stone. And the guards it says shook for fear of Him and became like dead men. Matthew 28 verses 5 to 8 says, that "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.'" And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and they ran to report it to His disciples." My friends, Jesus conquered the grave, and we can rejoice in the promise that He gives to us that one day we will rise from the dead.

Now you may be going through a tough time right now. You might not have much to rejoice about or to be thankful for. But even in our heartache, the Lord Jesus can bless us. James 1 verses 2 to 4 says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Your struggles may be the very thing that allows you to grow and become the person that God wants you to be. So rejoice even in your trials. Like Paul, we can say: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8 and verse 18). You know if all we see is the suffering, we may miss what great things God has in store for us.

Christians find their joy not only in what the Lord has done in the past by forgiving their sins but also in the future. Paul spoke of "Rejoicing in hope" in Romans 12 and verse 12. We have a living hope in Christ that cannot be taken from us. 1 Peter 1 verses 3 to 5 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable

and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Now salvation and a home in heaven are certainly great reasons for joy. And in fact, verses 6 to 9 say, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you’ve been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 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, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

Yes, Christians will suffer various trials and tests; but when Christians face trials, their faith sustains them. God sees the proof of their faith and blesses them for it. Though we’ve never seen Jesus, we love Him. Though we do not see Him now, we expect to see Him when He comes again. And so we rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible, because we know that we have a place reserved in heaven just for us. And nothing can take the joy that comes with a living hope.

God proved His love for us by sending Jesus to us, and Jesus proved His love for us by dying upon the cross. When we demonstrate our faith and love for Him, our faith becomes more precious than gold. Our faith will result in praise and glory and honor from the Father. One day the Lord will reward those who remain faithful. Paul proclaimed in 2 Timothy 4 verses 6 to 8, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I’ve fought the good fight, I’ve finished the course, I’ve kept the faith; and in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Oh my friends, do you love His appearing? Do you love the Lord? Do you rejoice in all that He has done for you? And do you have that hope and that promise deeply in your heart and soul? If not, I hope you’ll consider the things that we’ve talked about. Let’s pray together. Father help us to love You with all our heart and soul, and to do Your will. Father we rejoice for the forgiveness of our sins and for the hope of eternal life. And Father we know that You have a place prepared for us. May our hearts and our lives be set upon doing Your will on earth, just as it’s done in heaven. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord and Savior, Amen!

Let me repeat: everyone hungers for joy. You do, and I do. Now the joy that we want and need is more than a temporary happiness that perishes. We want a joy that can never fade, a joy that lasts forever. There can be no greater joy than this, to know that we are forgiven, to know that we are walking in the truth, to know that we’re right with the living God, and to know that He hears our prayers, to know that He watches over us, and to know that He has prepared an eternal home in heaven for us. Now lasting joy, which is so much better than a temporary happiness comes only from Christ!

The wonderful thing about the joy of Christ is that the more you share it, the more you have. Paul wished everyone was a Christian, and so do we. We rejoice when we hear of people repenting, we rejoice when we hear souls forgiven by the Lord, or our fervent prayers being answered causes great joy. We rejoice when people are baptized into Christ Jesus so that they may become children of God, and we rejoice when saints are called home to be with Jesus. Indeed, the joy of the Lord is our strength (as Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 8 and verse 10).

Now I’m, asking you, do you have the joy of the Lord in your heart? Do you have the joy of your salvation? Are you at peace with God, knowing that God has forgiven you your sins? Now if you have

unresolved sin in your life, if you have strayed from the straight and narrow road, or if you're a prodigal son or daughter, you're missing the joy that God wants for you. Give your heart and your life to God.

To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus and His words with all your heart, then repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). When you're baptized God will wash away your sins (Acts 22 and verse 16). You remember after the Eunuch was baptized in Acts 8 verses 38 and 39, the Bible says that he went on his way rejoicing. And my friend, you can too, when your obedient to the will of God.

Well, we hope that today's study about joy has stirred you to draw close to the Lord Jesus. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area on the website. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you contact us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you to get to heaven.

So we ask that you please, please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program, and urge them to watch it. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.