

Joy in Salvation

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Date: 14 December 2025

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[0 : 00] Let me read for us, Ephesians chapter 1, verses 13, and I'll keep reading on. It says, In Him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed.

The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession to the praise of His glory. This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the mighty working of His strength.

He exercised this power in Christ by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens, far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

And He subjected everything under His feet and appointed Him as the head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way. This morning we're talking about the biblical concept of joy.

[1 : 21] And I will be brief, don't worry. I want you to understand the main thing that I want you to understand is that we as followers of Jesus, if you have placed your faith in Jesus, we have true lasting joy.

And I also want you to understand, like many messages you'll hear around the Christmas season, that joy is different from happiness. Happiness is focused on the circumstance, right?

You can be happy because of something that takes place in front of you, and then five minutes later you can be sad because of something that takes place in front of you. You can be happy because of something good, or you can be mad because of something bad.

Happiness is fleeting. And as we come into this Christmas season, as we near Christmas, I think it's really tempting to focus all of our attention on the things that make us happy.

But I want you to understand that Christmas is not about receiving gifts. And contrary to marketing schemes that I think are really smart, it's not about giving gifts. Christmas is about recognizing and finding joy in Jesus Christ, who came to earth to bring us salvation.

[2 : 35] In Matthew's gospel, when Joseph was worried, he was afraid, because he heard the news of Mary's pregnancy. By the way, just so you know, historically, they were betrothed, but they wouldn't have interacted with each other socially for a year during that engagement.

They wouldn't have even talked to each other. So someone came and reported to Joseph, hey, your fiancé is pregnant. Joseph was afraid until an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him, don't be afraid, because the child who was conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

And you will name him Jesus, because he will save the people, his people, from their sins. In the presence of chaos, in the presence of, you know, fear, the reality of Jesus brings us joy.

The person of Christ brings us joy. And it's not only Jesus, it's that Jesus came to be the Savior, the Savior of the world. So I read Ephesians chapter 1, and I have a pretty decent sermon typed up, but I want you to understand the key takeaways from it, because I can't get into everything else.

Here's why we have joy in our salvation. And this is what I hope you focus on as we near Christmas and even go through Christmas. Because here's the thing. If you find your joy in the people that you celebrate Christmas with, the sad reality is those people will pass away.

[3 : 56] And that Christmas season will become devastating. If you find your joy in the meal that you eat, your taste buds could change because you have COVID and you won't enjoy it anymore. If you find your joy in the gifts you receive, one day that will let you down.

It'll break. The car will run out of gas. By the way, I can't understand those Christmas commercials where the husband or wife walks outside and the other spouse has bought them a new car. Like, that would not be a joy-giving experience.

That would be a heart attack experience, I think. It would be like, what's the world just happened? The nice huge bow is cool. But anyways, don't place your joy in the Christmas season.

Don't place your joy in the Christmas experience. Place your joy in the person of Jesus Christ. So here are three reasons that we have joy in our salvation. Number one, we have joy because we are secure in Christ.

We are secure in Christ. We don't have to hold on to our salvation ourselves. Jesus does that for us. In him, you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. That word sealed, it's like when a letter was sent by a king and they stamp it with a signet ring.

[5 : 01] It's sealed. And that seal does two things. Number one, it secures the letter. It's not to be opened until it gets to the recipient. Number two, it authenticates the letter. And by God's grace, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we're justified.

That means we're made right with God. We've talked about that church word. But it also means that God's Holy Spirit dwells within us and seals us. We have a mark of authentication.

We are made known by the presence of the Holy Spirit. We can validate our salvation by the presence of God's Holy Spirit. We also are secure.

We don't have to hold on for ourselves. We don't have to keep asking God over and over to save us. If you struggle with questioning your salvation, I want you to either do one of two things. One, first thing, ask why you're struggling with that question.

And really ask the Lord to open your heart and open your eyes to understand. And two, if you come to a peace knowing that you trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then rest in his grace.

[6 : 03] Quit searching for some affirmation outside of the work of Christ that he's already done or outside of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Because if you believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then you are secure in your salvation.

Our joy is also not a temporary joy because of this security. We are secure in our salvation both on earth and when we die and go to heaven. We have an eternal joy, an eternal experience of joy because our salvation is secure.

I want you to understand that the Holy Spirit does a few things in our work of salvation based on these things. Number one, he provides our assurance. We can be certain of our salvation because of the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

I don't have time to turn there right now, but read Galatians chapter 5 because the Holy Spirit also produces the fruit of our salvation. Joy is one of those fruit, one of the fruits of salvation.

And then I want you to look ahead to verses 15 and forward where this third point comes from. The Holy Spirit illuminates our minds to understand more about our salvation.

[7 : 09] So we have a certain joy. We are secure in Christ. Number two, we see Christ. We see because of Christ. That is, we have joy in the revelation that God offers to us through his word.

It says, I'm going to stop right there and ask you a question.

How often do you pray for other believers in your lives that God would give them a spirit of revelation and wisdom in the knowledge of him? What a powerful prayer. How much more biblically literate could we be if we prayed for our fellow saints that we would grow in our knowledge of Christ, that we would come to understand in new ways the beauty of the work of Jesus?

Verse 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the mighty working of his strength.

We have joy in our salvation because we get to grow in our knowledge of what Christ has done. I hope that what you know today about salvation, what you know today about the work of Christ, is more deep and rich than what you knew when you gave your life to Jesus.

[8 : 40] And if it is, by the way, that's not a bad thing. That doesn't mean you weren't saved when you prayed to receive Christ. What it means is that you're growing in your walk with him, and you're being made revealed, you're having things revealed to you by the presence of God's Holy Spirit because God is constantly at work in you.

So I hope that your knowledge of Christ and your knowledge of salvation grows, and that in that growth you find joy, because that is available to us. Apart from Christ, the glorious realities of his power cannot be seen.

The enemy has blinded those who don't believe. 2 Corinthians 4, verses 3 and 4 says, But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

I'm just telling you, coming back from an Asian country that is just enveloped in idol worship, pagan idol worship, false gods everywhere, the enemy blinds those eyes.

So that they, when we share of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and what they hear is, yeah, another God to add to my collection. Instead of a recognition of their need for Christ.

[9 : 56] In fact, one of the things that Ben, the leader over there in Taiwan, shared with us that really stuck with me from the very beginning of our mission trip, was that the people in Taiwan, it's very comfortable there.

Like, it's a good place to live. It's safe. You can share the gospel with anybody you want. I mean, like, there's not persecution. People make good livings. They have a lot of money. It's a tropical place, I guess. Like, that's cool if you like that kind of thing.

But people are so comfortable that they fail to recognize their need for a Savior. I think that we also fail sometimes in our comfort to recognize our need for a Savior. The enemy blinds the eyes of those who do not believe.

But we have a great joy in Christ. If you do believe in Jesus, if you have put your faith in Jesus, and are growing in Christ, then what a joy that is. What a joy that is.

Not only has he saved us, but the closer we grow to him, the more we understand of his great work. The Spirit opens our spiritual eyes. Enlightens our hearts to understand. The third thing I want you to understand about our joy in salvation is that we have joy because we worship the sovereign, supreme Lord of the universe.

[11 : 09] The supremacy of Christ gives us joy. Ephesians 1, 20-23 says, He, the Father, exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens.

Far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion and title given, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

That same, the greatness of his power, verse 19, the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, that same power is the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead. In other words, the resurrection power of God, the power to raise dead hearts, to give new life to dead people, that power is at work in those who believe.

And that same power is who put Jesus Christ on his throne. And now we, at Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation, the coming of Christ. And we find great joy in the fact that God took on flesh and dwelt among us.

[12 : 16] And we should. But we have this glorious hope and this glorious joy of a reality that's coming. And we look forward.

Advent means to wait. We wait. We anticipate. We look forward with joy and gladness that the same Lord who took on flesh will return and redeem all things and bring all of his saints to himself. We have a hope that Christ will come back. And we have that hope and we can trust that hope with confidence because he is sovereign. He is supreme. He is on his throne above every single ruler, every power.

These people who offer prayers to false gods, they're offering prayers that are meaningless because there is one God. He is over all. And so this Christmas, you know, this Christmas season, what I'm going to challenge you to do is focus your joy not on the things that you get or the experiences you have or the places you go, but focus your joy on the person of Jesus Christ, his

work on the cross, the fact that he took on flesh, and then he died on the cross to give you life. Rest in the hope and the joy that we have in him, not in the things of this world. This joy of salvation, by the way, is available to you today.

[13:37] I'm going to share one quick story. How am I doing on time? What are we? I can't read those kind of clocks. I'm kidding. I can. I can. How are we doing?

10.30? I've got time for a story. All right. The joy of salvation is available to you today.

If you have not put your faith in Jesus Christ. And I want you to understand something that I already mentioned, but that I realized in a powerful way. I've had this realization before, and I trust this realization, but God reminded me of it, that he is at work in all places.

He's at work in our hearts, in the human heart all over the world. Okay? So, Mason came with us on this mission trip. Just so you know, a prerequisite to go on a mission trip is that you're a believer. But Mason came on this mission trip and truly thought that he was a Christian. Grew up in the church. Walked the aisle when he was five, right? Was baptized in the church. But as he grew older, he recognized that he, in your words, in his words, had never repented or surrendered his life to Jesus.

[14:47] And so, on the last day that we were there, Wednesday morning, right before Chris got on his flight and left without us. Chris left early. I told the deacons earlier that we sent him home, but it was planned.

Actually, we didn't send him home. But that morning, we were on the bus, on the van, on the way to the school that we were going to share at, present at that morning. And I was talking with Mason, and he expressed this to me.

And so, I think the question that I asked him was pretty simple. He said he had never repented or surrendered to Jesus. I said, well, what's stopping you from doing that right now? And he was like, no one's ever asked.

Here's the thing. You don't have to travel to Taiwan for God to open your heart and open your eyes to realize your need for a Savior. I thank God that Mason came on that trip and that you as a church were praying for us and supporting us to go.

Because Mason is eternally secure in Christ because God used going and hearing this story over and over to open his eyes to see his need for a Savior.

[15:50] All of that to say, you can be sitting right here, and if God has made it clear to you that you do not have a relationship with him through Christ, don't go to Taiwan. Pray to receive Christ right now.

What is preventing you from doing that right now, from repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus? That's the biblical mandate. That's the biblical method for salvation. Repent of your sins and trust in Jesus.

Because God is at work. God will save by his grace. God will save by his grace. It's grace through faith. It's not a matter of works. It's not a matter of doing things. You can't offer enough. If you do that, you'll never find joy.

But if you trust in Jesus, if you repent and believe in him, then the joy of salvation, eternal salvation, a life transformed for eternity is available to you today.

God offers it to you freely. So if you hear God calling you, if you feel God leading you, then come and talk with me right now. And we'll pray together. You'll pray and give your life to Christ.

[16:47] Let me pray for us. And Eric's going to lead us in a song. Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for your great work of salvation. We thank you that we have joy in you.

Thank you that you love us and that you call us to yourself. God, I thank you for your Holy Spirit who lives within us, who seals us in our salvation, who guarantees our inheritance, who opens our spiritual eyes, enlightens our hearts to understand more of your work of salvation.

Lord Jesus, I pray for everyone in this room that throughout this hectic holiday season, each of them would rest in the joy of their salvation. And if that joy is not present because there is no salvation, Lord Jesus, I pray right now that you would open hearts to receive your message of truth, your gospel message, your life-giving message right now.

Lord, we trust you. And I pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.