

Where does joy truly come from?

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[0 : 00] The reading is from Romans chapter 5 verses 1 to 11 which you'll find on page 1135 of the Bibles. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

[1 : 27] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Thanks very much for reading.

May I add my warm welcome to Bruce. My name is Benji. I'm one of the assistant pastors here. And it's a privilege to be giving this sermon on the last of our mini Easter series in these verses.

Why don't I lead us in prayer as we start. Father, the tomb is empty. Jesus Christ has risen. And thank you so much, Father, that you conquered the grave.

That because of your Son's resurrection from the dead, we can have eternal life and joy in you. Amen. I would encourage you, if you have a handout, just to look on the back of that.

There'll be an outline on there. And that will help us kind of have our bearings with where we're going. The question I want us to think about this morning is where does joy truly come from?

[2 : 30] Where does joy truly come from? And I think this should be a question that we all care about the answer. The world, as we look around, is a place that actually seems to lack a lot of joy.

We keep hearing about mental health crises in young people. Our brothers and sisters from places like Hong Kong and Ukraine are having to flee their homes. We're seeing that yet, despite the fact that there's a huge amount of material wealth, people don't seem to be getting happier.

Where does joy truly come from? And by joy, I simply mean a settled contentment in what we're pursuing and what we have. Where does joy truly come from?

Now, I want to tell you a story about a girl called Jess. Jess was about 15, 16 years old. She was a Christian, but she was struggling with her faith. And her mum was a little bit worried about Jess. Jess, she thought, Jess seems to know all the right answers in Sunday school, that it's always Jesus. But she doesn't seem to have any joy. So she went to her pastor and said, Pastor, please, can you speak to Jess?

[3 : 30] Because I think Jess is struggling with her faith. So the pastor said, OK, I'll meet with Jess. And they started to meet with one another once a week. And the pastor thought maybe a good approach to help Jess would be, we'll do an exercise in thanksgiving.

It's always a good thing to do. And we'll think about all the things that we have in the gospel. We'll thank God for them. And hopefully that will help Jess feel more joy in her Christian walk.

So they began to list the kind of things that you have. So you have eternal life. Isn't that wonderful, Jess? You have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You're loved. You're known. You're secure. And Jess said, yes, I know, I know, I know.

Classic teenagers grunting. And as each of these weeks kept going past, the pastor kept getting more and more exasperated, thinking, what do I have to say to Jess to get across that eternal life is hers and joy and love and security and identity?

And Jess stopped him and said, what good is that if no boy at school will look twice at me? What good is that if no boy at school will look twice at me?

[4 : 31] Now, some of you might be laughing. I personally almost cried when I heard that because I thought she doesn't care about those truths. They're intellectually up here. But what good is that if no boy will look twice at me at school?

Where does she find joy? Where does Jess find joy? Well, she finds it in the opinion of the opposite sex at school. Now, you might be thinking that joy is a weird place for us to be.

Simon gave me the brief of I want you to do a talk on the implications of the resurrection, to which I thought, flip, that's we're going to be spending all of eternity thinking about the implications of the resurrection.

And I'm to do it in 20 to 25 minutes. So I thought we'll settle with one facet, which is joy. But just to persuade you that this passage really is all about joy. Have a look with me at verse two. Through him, we've also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

On verse three, not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings. And finally, verse 11, the great summation of these precious verses. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've now received reconciliation.

[5 : 47] This is a passage about joy and where joy is found. Now, as you're going to see this morning, I essentially I have one claim. I have only one claim.

And with all good claims, you need proof. And the Bible is not opposed to proof. So we have a proof and then a consequence. And those are just going to be my three points. The claim, the proof, the consequence.

And you'll see those three things on the back of your handout. So I'd encourage you to follow along with them. So we're going to begin with my first point, the claim. The claim is that Christian joy is through peace with God.

Christian joy is through peace with God. Have a look with me at verses one and two. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, past tense, we have peace with God, present tense, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[6 : 51] The claim is that peace with God is what leads to joy. And I can imagine that for the Christian, these are precious words. We have peace with God. But I can imagine someone who doesn't have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ thinking, so what?

So what? Why would I want peace with God? Why would that be something that I desire? Well, luckily, this passage gives us an answer. And it's because we are enemies of God.

Enemies of God. I wonder if you spotted that. Have a look with me at verse six. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Verse eight. But God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And verse 10. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more that we are now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?

It's because we're enemies that we need peace with God. Now, again, this is all presupposing, isn't it, that Christianity is true. And if you're not a Christian here today, I want you to kind of suspend your incredulity at this stage.

[8 : 03] And just have a think with me about how the Christian worldview lays out the fact that we are enemies of God. The Christian makes a claim that all of us are made in his image.

We're made for a relationship with him. We're made to bring him glory. In fact, the Christian worldview even says that the breath that we are breathing now is a gift from him. And I suppose it begs the question then, how do we think God feels if we've lived our entire life ignoring his existence?

How do we think God feels? How do we think he feels? I was trying to think of a way to illustrate this, and I suppose this will have to suffice. I want you to imagine, okay, that you're a musician.

You can choose whatever instrument you like. It can be the DJ thing. It can be the bassoon. I met a professional bassoon player once. Amazing. And I want you to imagine, you know, you're self-employed, so you have to do your own tax returns.

Okay, presumably, I've never done a tax return, but I think you have to do your own tax returns. And I want you to imagine that you think, I don't want to do my tax returns. I don't want to pay the man. I'm not going to pay the man. I'm not doing my tax returns. And you imagine your brother walks in, or your sister, and notices that you've not done your tax returns.

[9:10] And you think, I don't really care. I don't really care. My brother knows I haven't done my tax returns. No consequences. Move on. Let's say that your mother or father walks in, sees that you haven't done your tax returns.

Do we care a bit more? Maybe. And we might want our father or our mother to think a bit better than us, right? So we think, gosh, all right, I'm still not doing them, but now I feel a little bit bad. But then imagine that you get a knock on the door.

You open the door, and there is Boris Johnson in all of his finery. And he looks at you and says, you owe me money. Immediately, the implications of that are going to be more significant.

And you might think, there's no way I'm giving money to Boris. But certainly, Boris has a claim. He has a claim on our money. In the same way that the Lord God who made us has a claim on everything about us.

Absolutely everything. And if we've lived our entire life in rejection of him, the one who made us and knows us and loves us, and gave his son for us, well, you can be absolutely sure we are his enemy.

[10:10] We are his enemy. But I want us to notice that for the Christian, this is in the past tense. Did you guys notice that? Verse 5, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

The Christian can say, I used to be an enemy of God. I used to be. The non-Christian cannot. So that is the claim. Point number one, peace with God.

The second point is the proof of the claim. Christ died for enemies. Christ died for enemies. Verse 6 to 10. Have a look with me at verse 6.

For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we've now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

[11:14] For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Now it's true, I think, isn't it, that sometimes people might die for a cause that they think is greater than themselves. I'm sure some of us will remember having to study that really depressing poem, *Dolce et Decorum Est*, in our GCSE English.

Was that just me? It was just me. Anyway, the term means it's an honour to die for your country.

And it's a very famous term, and it's used in war chants and all sorts of things. And for many different countries and nations, that is true.

People have been willing to die for things that they think are greater than themselves. But never has someone died for something like an enemy. And certainly, no one has ever given their most precious son to die for their enemy.

And that is the proof that we're given here. Now this is really significant because often when I talk to my non-Christian friends, they have a real kind of weird idea of what Christians mean by faith and truth.

[12:20] They genuinely think that we have a blind faith, that we've made a blind leap, that there's no basis for our beliefs whatsoever. In fact, I was hosting a one-year-old's birthday party last week, which was a delight.

Lots of babies. It was great. And I met a lovely girl there called Charmaine. She's very intelligent. But she's going through this process that she calls deconstruction, which effectively just means questioning and dismantling all of her beliefs.

So she was a Christian. She wouldn't call herself a Christian anymore. And we got to chatting because, obviously, I'm pretty fascinated by that. And she was very open, which was wonderful.

And the reason she said that she decided to deconstruct was that she couldn't tell anybody else, if your worldview gives you joy, I can't tell you you're wrong.

If your worldview gives you joy, I can't tell you you're wrong. And immediately you think, gosh, that is such a significant claim, isn't it? Because that means that the atheist who says that my worldview gives me joy and meaning is fine.

And the Christian who says my worldview gives me joy and meaning, also fine. Crack on. The only problem with that, and I hope that we can see, is that those two worldviews are diametrically opposed to one another.

[13 : 34] They can't both be true. They can't both be true. We need proof, in other words. We don't want to live a lie. Yes, it's true that men might die for country and nation.

But the claim of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ died for his enemies. And when I say died, I don't mean in a metaphysical sense. I don't mean in a metaphorical sense.

I don't mean he sort of was a good teacher and spoke about giving your life for your enemies in some kind of vague simile. I mean that the Lord Jesus Christ in history came, was actually crucified, actually died, and actually rose in history.

And it's wonderful in terms of sharing our faith because it means I only have to talk about one thing. And I will only talk about one thing. If you're not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have no interest in talking to you about marriage.

No interest in talking to you about identity and transgender issues and seven-day creationism and evolution and everything else besides. I just need to talk to you about the Lord Jesus Christ because he died and he rose.

[14 : 41] And that is proof that we can have peace with God. And it is, friends, I think, the most beautiful yet most crushing truth of the Christian faith, isn't it, that Christ died and rose for sinners.

It is the most beautiful and the most crushing truth that Christ died for sinners. It's beautiful because it means that you are valuable. It means that you are loved.

It means that all the deep longings of human beings, the things that they strive for, meaning, purpose, security, direction, well, you can look at the cross and find amen to every single one of those questions.

Am I loved? Look at the cross. Do I have peace in this life? Look at the cross. What's the point of my life? Look at the cross. Do I have certainty in the face of death? Look at the cross.

But it's also, isn't it, the most crushing truth. Because what does it say about you and I that we need the most infinitely precious son to die on our behalf? What does it say about you and I that we need someone to die in our place?

[15 : 48] We are infinitely loved, but we need peace with God. And the proof of that is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This brings me on to my final and third point.

So we've seen the claim that we can have peace with God and that leads to Christian joy. We've seen the proof. Christ died and rose for his enemies.

And now finally we see the consequence. Eternal joy for all who believe. Verse 11. Have a look with me. And this is the great summation of this argument. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've now received reconciliation.

I want us to return to my friend Charmaine's deconstruction. And I want us to really basically take this and take us to its logical conclusion.

Because Charmaine says that truth doesn't matter, is basically what she's saying. That if your worldview gives you joy, if the thing that you're pursuing, maybe it's the holiday abroad, maybe it's the family, maybe it's the workplace.

[16 : 58] If that gives you joy, crack on. The only problem with that is that every single thing that you choose, well it's subjective, isn't it, number one? And number two, it will ultimately fail you.

Let's actually play that out. Your career. Many of us here will be tempted to find our joy in our career, which means that retirement will crush us.

Many of us here might try to find our joy in the opinion of others, which means that any criticism, well it's going to be devastating, isn't it? Many of us here might try and find our identity, particularly if you're still at school, in our academic achievements.

Which means that we always think we need to be good enough, and we always struggle with failure. But more particularly, I want us to really narrow in, what if we come back to Jess, and Jess is saying, what good is the truth of the New Testament if a boy won't look at me twice at school? What is Jess saying about how she's loved? Well she's saying, unless somebody else loves me, another human being, I'm not worth anything. What is Jess saying about her identity?

[18 : 05] Well she's saying, unless I can get another person to be attracted to me, what good is the identity that Jesus gives me? And what about Jess's security in the face of mortality and death?

Well your relationship with your partner, it has absolutely no bearing on where we go into eternity. You see the problem with Charmaine's worldview, and the problem with Jess's worldview, is that ultimately these things are completely empty, aren't they?

They're completely empty. And as soon as we try to rest our certainty and our joy on any of these things, they fall apart. They fall apart.

But instead I want us to compare that to the Christian. I want us to compare that to the Christian. The Christian can make an objective claim about where joy and peace in this life comes from. I have certainty in the face of death as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he's died and risen. I know that I'm loved, because the Son of God died for me on a tree.

[19 : 06] I know that I'm valuable, because Jesus went and paid the ultimate price for me. I know that my life has meaning and purpose, because I live to bring the one true God glory and honor and praise.

Yes, the Christian has a firm foundation for where joy in this life is found. And so I suppose as we close and as we think about Easter and as we think about that first resurrection and that first Easter Sunday, the question I want us to leave us this morning, Christian and non-Christian alike, is simply this.

What are you going to do with the Lord Jesus Christ? What are you going to do with the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose in history for every single man and woman?

Because in Jesus, you have the amen to all of your deepest longings. You have eternal joy and peace in him. But I promise you that in Charmaine's worldview, where truth is relative, all we have is flimsy wind.

So this Easter, as we think about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want us to think on him. What do we have in him? What is certainly ours? And how should that affect how we live for him?

[20 : 23] Why don't I close us in prayer? Dear Lord, I thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose.

I thank you that in him we have eternal life and joy. Please, Father, would you enlarge the Lord Jesus in our minds? Would you warm our hearts towards him and help us to love him with our whole hearts?

Amen. Amen. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. Goodbye. Bye. Happy to see you next time.ums explain and see you next time. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye.