

# Christian Joy and Communion With God

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Date: 25 September 2024

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Father and with the Son Jesus Christ and we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete and so on down to the rest of this chapter. C.S. Lewis wrote a book a great book called Surprised by Joy and I guess a sequel to that book could quite easily be surprised by how soon joy is lost and if we're honest with ourselves this evening I'm sure we would all share the sense of why do I have so little joy in the Lord and why have I lost the rejoicing that I found in our God and we look at the way in which there is a focus in these verses in verse 4 we see that John is writing so that joy may be complete. It's a wonderful desire that he is writing to them in the midst of the crisis that they are facing with regard to the doctrine and the teaching around them with regard to the way in which people are living their lives in the world regarding the way in which people aren't loving them one another the way that they should write into that crisis as well as saying to them in chapter 5 that he's writing to them that they may know they are the children of God really important that we have that assurance but here writing for the purpose that they will have joy. The first question in the shorted catechism is very simple as all is familiar to us all what is the chief end of man man man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. When you read that catechism along with what the Bible says we understand that God does want us to have joy and that's God's purpose for us we want to think tonight about why is it that we have lost the joy and what is it that we can do in order to restore that joy into our lives and in looking at this passage you want to think especially of Christian joy and communion with God. The first thing that we do see or want to see in the passages that there is a purpose and the purpose is to have that very communion. That which we have seen and heard and we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us. John wants them to share it's something that he himself is sharing in and to correct myself he is wanting them to share an oppression with whom he has a close relationship. It's not it's not fellowship in a thing that he's talking about it's fellowship with oppression and he wants them to join with him in that joy reminding us that the very joy that John himself has found in the revelation of

Jesus and the the gospel that he was privileged to receive from Christ and know to write about that in in that very gospel what he has received he wants it to pass it on to them so that they will participate with him. In other words he wants them to have the fellowship the communion that belongs to the Christian church and this evening as we as we think of our own Christian joy we see that John's purpose and God's purpose is that all of the people of God will share and all that the message of the gospel brings and discover the joy that the people of God have in their hearts because God wants them to to have that and to have that sense of of sharing and of belonging and of participating in that sense of communion and therefore in that sense of joy. And we want to to think tonight of ourselves becoming part of of being restored to the enjoyment of of that very joy which comes from that communion that John is referring to. And he is referring to communion in a particular way.

He is not in the first place referring to the communion that you and I can have with each other the fellowship that we can have with each other in the gospel. He is rather referring to an experience of a relationship with God.

He wants them to come to the very near center of their relationship with God as their Savior. What is the kind of fellowship that he is wanting them to enjoy to to participate in and to rediscover their joy? What is the kind of fellowship that John has discovered their joy? It is a fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 4 4 ] And there is a great depth and a great breadth in that whole expression that John uses here. But we can simplify and summarize the focus that John has here by thinking first of all of the fellowship with the Father as the God who is the God of love that John describes in chapter 4

himself.

We think of love and we think of the fact that God is love and that love is from God. And he wants them to participate in such a relationship with God that they will share constantly in the great love of God, which God's Spirit pours out into their hearts, and to live in that sense of the wonder of the love of God.

And in chapter 3, at the beginning, John speaks about the wonder. What kind of love is this with which God has loved us? He wants them to live and to participate in that love.

He wants them to be filled with the wonder of seeing more and more of that love. And he wants them to feel a sense of that love in their own hearts.

And that brings us to think of the experience of the child of God. And to think of the way in which our journey of faith should take our experience into the depths of the love of God himself.

[ 7 : 16 ] And instead of moving along slowly on the very surface of the ocean of the redeeming love of God, that through communion with them, through sharing in this love, our experience of God and of God's love deepens and is enriched.

And the more it is, the more our joy is inspired. And that depth of experience gives to us the fountainhead of our joy that enables us to live as the children of God.

And there is the fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ. And Paul in 2 Corinthians 13, and in his benediction, he speaks of that God would bless the people of God.

And he speaks of the love of God, the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to summarize and to capture that, Paul says in that same letter in chapter number 8, We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.

Communion in the grace of Christ that we see in the Christ who is full of grace and truth. The grace that brought him to Calvary's cross where he died in our place.

[ 8 : 46 ] And where we see the love of God who gave his Son coming to its greatest revelation, as Jesus laid down his life for his friends.

Fellowship in his Son, Jesus Christ. That's where we ought to live. That's the environment that belongs to us.

As the children of God to live in that place where the love of God comes through the passion of Jesus to the full enjoyment of the grace of Christ in our hearts day by day.

The joy of peace with God. The joy of forgiveness of sin. The joy of being the children of God. God participating in that. Descending into the riches of the grace of God as it is in Christ Jesus.

And although John does not include the Holy Spirit, we cannot exclude communion of the Holy Spirit himself.

[ 9 : 54 ] Sent out by Christ into our hearts to minister to our needs, to shine a light on the passion of Jesus. And to have that kind of communion with the Holy Spirit through which that light is always shining.

Through which that connection is never broken. Through which that channel is never blocked. But that we may have that communion with the Holy Spirit.

That binds everything together. And that gives us to live a life of joy. In the peace of God. In the blessing of the love of God.

And in the grace of Jesus Christ. And is that not where we want to be as the children of God tonight? Taken from wherever we are.

And taken in to where God has purpose that we should be. And in that moment. The experience of the love of God.

[ 10 : 58 ] The grace of Christ will be what will energize us. And what will inspire us. And what will give us to know. The power. The love of God.

And the readiness. To be the kind of people that God wants us to be. The purpose. God wants us to have joy. And the only way to have joy.

Is to have that close living relationship. With God the Father. God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit. But how are they now going to achieve that?

What is required of you and of me. In order for us to have that joy. In order to live that life. And to be immersed in all that God is.

That brings me to the second point. Which is the pattern. That John gives to them. And gives to us here. And we have the pattern.

[ 11 : 59 ] By focusing first of all. On the part of the person. With whom we are going to have communion. In verse number five. God is light.

And in him is no darkness at all. It's that great image of God. The Old Testament never says that God is light. The Old Testament speaks about.

God being the light of our salvation. And it's connecting very much. With God's relationship with his people. It speaks about that covenant relationship. But here. John focuses on the fact that.

God is light. And we think of the light of God. At Mount Sinai. When God came down. We think of the light of God.

Shining in Isaiah chapter six. Which we read. And we think of the light of the glory of God. Which is the radiance of the holiness of his character.

[ 12 : 58 ] And that immediately alerts us to the fact. That this is no ordinary oppression. That we are going to walk with. And have communion with. Here is the holy God.

Who shines in the brightness of his glory. And whose brightness is blinding. And that blinding brightness. Which saw.

Isaiah himself in that moment. Coming face to face. With his own sinfulness. With his own lostness. And with a sense of the fact that he could not live.

Within the context. And the environment. Of the light of the glory of God. And.

Sometimes. We are guilty of. Bringing God down to our own level. And. And seeking to.

[ 13 : 58 ] To personalize. And to. To give that sense of. Our personal relationship with him. That. That he becomes like somebody else. And he becomes a friend. In the wrong way.

And he. Becomes a friend. By. Leaving behind. The very truths. That define his character. And when we think of the pattern this evening.

We remind ourselves. Of. Who God is. And the kind of God. That he is. Here is. A loving God. He is the holy God.

Who shines in. All the radiance. Of his holiness. And of his beauty. And we. We know as we come into the New Testament. That. That. Jesus is.

Is. The brightness of the glory of God. The revelation of Jesus. Gives to us. A revelation of God. And John speaks in chapter one. Of seeing the glory of God. And.

[ 14 : 57 ] John speaks later on. Chapter 12. Of. Of. Isaiah. Seeing. His own glory. The glory of Jesus. In the temple. That's the partner.

With whom. You and I. Are going to have communion. And for that. To take place. There is a condition.

And the condition is simple. It's a condition that speaks about. Your life and mine. It's about. It's about lifestyle. It's about.

Behavior. It's about. The things that we do. And the things that we. Don't do. He goes on to say. In version number. Seven. Seven. But if we walk in the light. As he is in the light. We have fellowship. With one another. And the blood of Jesus.

[ 15 : 55 ] Son. Cleanses us. From all sin. If we walk. In. The light. If we're going to. Have this joy.

We're going to walk. With God. We read in Amos. Chapter three. Can any. Can any two. Walk together. Unless they are agreed. It's not going to happen. We follow it.

With people. And we can't follow it. With people. We go our separate ways. That's. The end of a relationship. We can no longer. Walk together. They cease to be a friend. That's something.

Of what Amos. Is referring to. With regard to the people. Of God. They have turned their backs. Upon him. And he is no longer. With them. Can two walk together. Unless they agree. No.

It is impossible. We think back. To the book of Genesis. And we. Read about Enoch. Who. Walked with God. And.

[ 16 : 51 ] Was not. Because God. Took him. Here are the two. Options. We have. The children of Israel.

Not walking with God. Because they have disagreed with God. And God has turned his back. Upon them. We have Enoch. Walking with God. He is the friend of God. As Abraham was. And because of that.

He walks on his way. To be with God forever. Walking. In the light. As he is. In. The light. Not such. A challenge. Jesus speaks about. If you abide in my word. If you abide in my love. If you abide in the truth.

If you make it your living. And if you make it your home. To abide in my love. And in my truth. And in my commands.

[ 17 : 50 ] Then you will be my people. It's all about consistency of life. And of lifestyle. A life that is consistent with the word of God.

A life that is filled. With a sense of. Arriving upon God. And a sense of. Recognizing.

Our great need of God. It's a. Relationship. Walking within. With him. Where we. Discover all that it means. To be the children of God. And as we.

Think of. All that it means. And it means so much. There are two things in particular. That I want to think about. And that is. First of all. What we have here.

The blood of Jesus. And cleanses. From all sin. And there is no greater joy. Than to know that my sins are forgiven. And as I walk with God.

[ 18 : 50 ] And discover my sin. Which is always with me. As I say I discovered. And to discover the forgiveness of God. Then. There is my joy.

And no matter what else is true. What else is happening around me. If I have the joy of my sins being forgiven. I'm surprised by joy every day.

And I'm filled with a sense. The great love of God. And of the grace of God. There is. That joy that comes. From knowing.

Ongoing. Forgiveness. Ongoing. Ongoing. And along with that. There is. The joy that fuels my desire to serve.

That's what happened to Isaiah. Whom shall I send? He says to Isaiah. Who will go for us? The instant response. Here am I.

[ 19 : 48 ] Send me. Send me. And we see that. Therefore. What. Communion with God. In its living lively sense.

In the depths of our everyday experience. Can do for us. Can transform our. Personal experience. Can fill us with. With. Ongoing joy in the Lord.

And can. Fuel us. With a real desire. To serve God. And how much that would.

Transform our own lives. We all want. Joy. In the Lord. We all want. To serve the Lord.

When we want to serve the Lord. We find so many. Excuses. As to why we cannot. But when we have. Communion with God. And know the joy of.

[ 20 : 45 ] Forgiveness with God. And peace with God. The excuses vanish. And. The call to serve the Lord. Becomes something. That's. Not only.

Persuasive. It's. Irresistible. And I can't do nothing else. And if tonight. For all of us. If we. Came into.

This. Arena. Environment. Of. Walking with God. In this way. How much. It would. Transform us. Individually. And personally. And how much.

It would. Impact upon. The work of the gospel. In our desire to serve. And how much. It would impact upon. The community. Around us. And sensing.

That here. Are a people. Who walk with God. Who have come. From that walk. And to go. And to serve. And to shine.

[ 21 : 41 ] As lights. For him. John Piper. Has written a book. About 21.

People. Who. Had joy. In their lives. And he follows. The story. Of different people. And he comes. To the. Story of John Owen. And he speaks.

About the way. In which. He had great joy. In the Lord. And this is what he says. About John Owen. John Owen. Was very intentional. About his.

Commune with God. He said. Friendship is most. Maintained. And kept. By visits. And these. The more free. And less occasioned. By urgent business.

In other words. In the midst. Of all this. Academic. Political. And ecclesiastical. Labour. He made many visits. To his friend. Jesus Christ. And when he went.

[ 22 : 38 ] He didn't just go. With petitions. For things. Or even for deliverance. In his many hardships. He went to see. His glorious friend. And to contemplate.

His greatness. There are so many. Letters to be learned. From that. As we close. And one of them. Is to ask the question. How much.

Do we see Jesus. As a real friend. To see. The kind of friend. That. We can live without. And make contact. With him occasionally. To. To kind of loosely.

Maintain that friendship. Or is he a friend. That we must. See and hear. And speak with. Every day. It's a simple. Practical thing.

In our everyday lives. We have. Variety. A variety of friends. And. Some closer than others. And because. Of. That. That variety. We don't.

[ 23 : 35 ] Have the same. Regular contact. With all of them. Some are more special. Than others. Where is Jesus. As a friend. Tonight. How close is he. And must we.

Talk with him. And listen to him. Every day of our lives. And the second thing is. What is it. That sends us. To Jesus.

John Piper. Makes the distinction. Between. Going to Jesus. Because he's my friend. Or. Because. Going to Jesus. Because I'm in a crisis.

And I speak to myself. And I say. I wonder. Is it the case. That we go to Jesus. When we're in a crisis. And we really go to him.

Because. We want to hear. And talk with our friend. And for sure. That the crisis. Will push us. And God. Works like that. To. To awaken us.

[ 24 : 34 ] And to drive us. Back to the Lord. The crisis. Does that. And God. Sends him. For a purpose. But as we close. Let's think about that.

As we journey on. Seeking communion with God. Seeking Christian. Joy. Seeking. To serve the Lord. What is it.

That sends me to Jesus. Is it. Because. He truly is my friend. And when I have no sense of need. I want to speak to my friend.

Every day. To keep the relationship. Warm. And ongoing. And living. What is it. I can live without him. Until the crisis comes.

And in that kind of situation. There is a drifting. That. Can only be. Reversed. And rescued. By.

[ 25 : 29 ] Many of the things. That John goes on to say. In this passage. Let's ensure that. We don't let our lives drift. Let's ensure that we. Walk in the light.

Rediscover our joy. And keep our joy. And let's ensure that. The kind of friend we have in Jesus. Is one. That we cannot live without.

Every moment. Of every day. And every day of our lives. May God bless these. Thoughts to us. We are never going to sing. In Psalm N climbing 51.

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