

The Enduring Nature of Christian Joy

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[0 : 0 0] In this you rejoice for now for a little while if necessary you have been! grieved by various trials so the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes! though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ though you have not seen him you love him though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls and so on now last time we are together we are considering the important subject of christian joy and we noted the importance of christian joy and having communion with god and we refer to john piper's comments with regard to john owen that he was very intentional about his commune with god and that he saw jesus as the friend that he met with often and did so not just in times of emergency but was a person who was familiar with jesus in every step of life's way so in that letter the way john had the great purpose of writing so that they would share in his joy the joy that he and the other apostles had and we saw the way in which john was writing to our people who were struggling because of false teaching who were struggling because of various divisions among them and who were struggling with their understanding of the passion of the lord jesus christ when we come to this letter peter is writing perhaps to the different people in a different situation and the letter begins to remind us and them that they are exiles they sense that they are away from home and there are people who are away from home and being away from home they are suffering in this world and because they are suffering in the world and being away from home they are beginning to question the very grace of god itself and peter is writing to them to give to them perhaps a heavenly perspective of life in this world and we all need that kind of perspective of life as we journey on through this world believing in the lord jesus christ and i want us to look at these verses this evening from verse 6 onwards and to to to think of joy once more and this time to think of the enduring nature of christian joy that is christian joy is not designed to be something that we have and lose it's designed by god to be something that we enjoy constantly once notice first of all that we have here the presence of joy and that's where verse 6 begins in this you rejoice and the whole image behind the idea of rejoicing if you're going to take it literally would be basically leaping around and dancing for joy it's something that really changes and transforms the way that we're feeling and the way that we're behaving it works from within to stir us up with that sense of joy and of excitement and we think of that joy especially as a joy that belongs to god's promised salvation in the news of mary being being pregnant with with jesus the child john leapt in the womb of his mother and here is a sense of leaping for joy because of the good news of god's promise salvation now arriving so it's a joy that is in god's salvation and

in the promises of god and simply here peter says in this you rejoice and what is he referring to well he's reminding us of where the joy originates and where it is rooted and this refers to all that has gone before and especially others gone from verse 3 onwards he is the god and father of our lord jesus christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope in this we rejoice we're rejoicing in the new birth through the resurrection of jesus christ from the dead rejoicing in the new birth because it is based on the resurrection of jesus after having died for our sins on calvary's cross and this we rejoice and he goes on from there to show the way in which as well as rejoicing in all that jesus done and all god has done with his holy spirit in our lives that they are also rejoicing in the promises of god because there is the inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you and again who by god's power are being guarded through faith for our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time in this you rejoice it's a present joy it is rooted firmly in the mercy and in the grace of god in general terms we can see that this christian joy is present in them because of the already no aspect of god's salvation what god has already done in their lives and for you and i this evening and not just this evening as we as we journey on through life in this we rejoice if we are the children of god supposing we do feel away from home and suffering in the world we rejoice because of all of this and if we're if we're not doing so it begs the question of our understanding of what god has done our appreciation of what god has done and really a a question about our understanding of the promises of god as they are in christ jesus as a whole and and tonight we must ask ourselves and the question do we have this christian joy that peter is referring to that god is saying we should have because of a relationship with jesus christ it is a present joy it's a joy that makes us leap in our hearts and when i say that i recognize myself that i need to ask myself the question how often do i sense that that leaping of my heart because of joy but the bible is telling me and god's word is telling me that that's the kind of joy that the believer should have it's a present joy secondly there is the persistence of joy there's a resilience about joy joy that means that joy continues no matter what and peter goes on to to show the way in which that is true in this you rejoice though now for a little while if necessary you have been grieved by various trials there is a necessity in god's plan that they must suffer in order for their faith to be purified and cleansed that there's a process that they have to go through in order for god to bring them to maturity and for them to understand in a deeper way the sense of christian joy and we we see that when he's referring to that he is speaking about the way in which they are grieved in this you rejoice but yet at the same time there is sorrow and he is speaking to people who were

genuinely suffering for their faith who felt lost and lonely in the world and because of their suffering they are sorrowful he recognizes that that's the case and he wants them to understand that that process is there because it is god's intention to cleanse and to purify to remove the impurities from their faith it is god's intention to make their faith shine to show its genuineness to be strengthened and confirmed in their own experience and to be sure in the eyes of god god is doing the testing and the proving and not that god doesn't know that their faith is genuine but god takes delight and seeing that the genuineness of the faith finds further expression through the testing and through the trial and we know of course that that in their trials and in our temptations that that satan has the design and purpose to destroy us to destroy us but god has the great design and purpose to purify claims to to bring us to maturity so that we grow up and because of this salvation being kept by the power of god and to salvation because of god's plan and his protection the devil is not going to destroy but instead god is going to bring his people forward in their experience and closer to him and learning more and more to trust in him and the key thing at this stage is to recognize that whilst they have joy that at times they will have sorrow and i guess for ourselves very often we can be more conscious of sorrow than of joy we can be more conscious of of grief than we are of celebrating our our salvation and celebrating the work of god in our hearts and lives sorrow and grief can dominate our thinking to the very exclusion of the joy that god has designed for us to have because of the grace that he has revealed to us in christ jesus grief and sorrow and when we think of that i want us tonight to to consider the coexistence of joy and of sorrow in other words when sorrow comes in it doesn't drive joy out what peter is saying here and what we learn from the word of god is that joy and sorrow co-exist together and when the trial comes and and the pain comes there is that sense of being filled with with sorrow and i know for myself as i'm sure you know for yourself that when circumstances change and when god does something that we do not expect and when we're rattled in our kind of books of comfort soon when god does something like that then we become sorrowful and joy seems to go out the door and joy as sorrow has then swamped our joy and we've driven joy away and we've gone away not rejoicing but being sorrowful and we need to understand that joy and sorrow co-exist because they are based on different realities my joy in my savior which is constant and and which is resilient and which persists

is a joy that is rooted in the reality of what god has done for me in christ jesus in his death and in his resurrection and which he has now applied to me to give me the status of being the child of god that's the reality in which my joy is rooted and where it originates and because it's there that reality never changes it's the reality of the unchangeableness of the love of god and because of that the unchangeableness of that reality my joy does not change my joy should not change but my sorrow is based on another reality and another reality and it can be changing circumstances it can be providence what happens in life around me it is based on realities that change from day to day but there are separate realities from the reality of my relationship with jesus christ as my savior and this reality from which my my sorrow arises and where where it originates it changes it can disappear for a while it returns sometimes with greater venom and strength but it's a reality that changes and it's not forever and for that reason as the people of god we have joy and sorrow working together and john piper gives an illustration to to help explain this he says picture joy as a great boulder on the shore of life it's got the solid base and the foundation of the sovereignty of god it's got the solid base of forgiveness of sin and the preciousness of jesus christ and the providence of god god is in charge whatever happens and then shake and a shake of a boulder of joy is what we have in our hearts no matter what nothing he says can dislodge this boulder nothing can cause it to be broken nothing can cause it to be carried out into the sea it's fixed it's lodged it's on the foundation of jesus christ and it cannot ever be moved and it cannot ever change the reality from which my my sorrow arises is like the like the house built on the sand it vanishes it disappears it appears and it's so glorious and so powerful but it's washed away and it changes and tomorrow it might be something very different but the thing for us to understand is that joy is ours forever constantly and if we are letting our sorrow and our grief dislodge and displace our joy then we are not living our faith as god has designed us so to do we cannot and we should not let the the overlapping of these realities and an experience actually displace and replace our joy with nothing but overwhelming sorrow and i think if we learn to appreciate that and understand that i think it will change our lives and yes we're all human yes we all have our feelings and the tsunami comes with something and gone is my joy and i have nothing left but but sorrow and grief i can give two illustrations and i don't usually say anything personal but but i remember myself being laid out in a bed in the southern general hospital as it was then i was in pain and and i couldn't move

[illegible]

[19 : 11] Peter saw the Lord Jesus he could go into the experience of of Jesus telling his disciples that he was going away he could he had experienced the pain of that departure and and feeling to understand it but he had seen Jesus with his physical eyes when he was here on this earth but he knows they haven't and we don't know if he considered having seen him with his with the naked eye or something that was an advantage or not it was a great privilege but you have not seen him and because we have faith we cannot help ourselves from creating images in our minds but what Jesus looks like what he did look like what he looked like in the manger what he looked like in the garden of Gethsemane what he looked like on the cross what he looked like when he was raised from the dead we cannot help but imagine that we have not seen him he is invisible to us but because we are rooted in him and in his work though we have not seen him you love him it's that sense of the deep expression of a relationship with Christ it's that sense that goes beyond even the emotional ties that we have in the world it's something that goes into the warmth of a relationship with our Lord Jesus because of the warmth of his relationship with us it's something that brings us into to respond to Christ great love for us by by loving him in return you have not seen him but you love him we love him says John because he first loved us and tonight surely we say that together we harmonize in the sense of of coming to this place that we love the Lord Jesus greater love us has no one on this that he should lay down his life for his friends you are my friends if you do would have commanded you we don't yet see him but we love him though you do not see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy and speakable and inexpressible and filled with glory we love and we believe and because of that we're back to this joy there's leaping for joy why because of what's already happened not this time it's a different focus altogether we rejoice with the joy that is the joy that is in expressible we cannot put words on it we cannot put words in it because it is not of human origin and we cannot define it as something that is human it's something that goes beyond the words that we could bring forward and could compose together to to describe this joy and for sure it's something that is something that is better felt than tell it because it's something that we cannot describe it's not of human origin it's not of human origin Paul says in first Corinthians 2 I has not seen nor has he had heard nor has it come into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him

and expressible joy we can explore and try and explore the mystery but we cannot grasp the detail the fullness even the generalities of it we cannot grasp them because they are beyond us and the generalities of it's joy that is the joy that is the joy that is the joy that recognizes the reality there and the reality to which and for which God is preparing us for the ■ It's the constancy of joy.

It's filled with glory from one day for the rest of their lives. It's filled with glory. What does that mean? How is it filled with glory?

It's filled with glory because as far as this joy is concerned, it is based on that reality. And there is that sense of pipeline that brings that whole sense of glory into our hearts here in this world.

And because that pipeline is there and that connection is there, that being filled with glory, it's something that fuels our joy. It's filled with glory.

[24 : 54] The glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. The outcome, the goal, God's purpose, the salvation of your souls.

In other words, your complete salvation. Jesus is telling the disciples to rejoice and to lift up their heads because their redemption is drawing near.

What did he mean by that? It's the sense of the encouragement that comes from the final second coming of Christ.

When all will be revealed and when we shall enter in to glory to be with him. It's inexpressible and it's filled with glory.

It's a foretaste of the glorious future that awaits us as the people of God. And that's the perspective that needs to come into our experience and into our thinking and our understanding along with our experience of the grace of God and salvation.

[26 : 06] And then from these two powerful, unchangeable sources, our joy is fuelled. And we'll learn to cope with sorrow and to cope with grief and to cope with changing circumstances because we know that God has prepared a better place for those who love him.

And may God help us tonight to think of Christian joy as something that is enduring and thinking about it, understanding why it should be enduring.

And in our everyday lives, living, recognizing the realities on which it is based and living with our minds filled with a sense of these two things and forming our experience, our affections and our willing in life.

And how transformed we will be. And we always face the challenge of the sin that we carry in our hearts, where the joy is, where the spirit of God is, the spirit which has as its fruit love and joy and peace and so on.

The battle is there. And as so often the case, it comes down to who we are going to listen to. And the devil, that serpent, Satan, he loves to rob us of our joy.

[27 : 35] And he will work as hard as he can to make sure that we don't have it. But we have the word of God to respond to his desire and his strategy to rob us of this joy.

And let's ensure that that's where our experience is based. And let's be encouraged together in the Lord and to have this leaping for joy in our hearts because of God's already now salvation and the not yet that we will at last experience together by the grace of God.

May God bless these thoughts to us. So we're now going to close by singing in Psalm.