

Full Joy in God

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Preacher: Daniel McGraw

[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! We will be considering all 11 verses. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. I have no good apart from you. As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply. Their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

[1 : 09] Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me.

I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand. I shall not be shaken. Therefore, therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

My flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption. You make known to me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy. And at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word. A number of months ago, I was in a home providing care.

[2 : 24] And on this particular day, I was having to ask a series of mood questions as a required part of my visit. Now as a disclaimer, I don't recommend these questions for actual use.

They're not that helpful and they're very generic. But I had to ask, over the last two weeks, have you had little interest or little pleasure in doing things?

And have you been feeling down, depressed, or hopeless? His answer struck me. He said, that's a complicated answer.

He graciously went on to explain. And he said, it just so happens that on this month that you asked me, on this month two years ago, my son died.

And so it is on this month, it's more pressing and at the forefront of our thoughts. And so yes, I am more down this month because of our loss.

[3 : 27] And he went on to explain how they also walk with the grief of the loss of another son and the loss of a grandchild. And so he says, it's complicated.

Life does not go according to plan. Circumstances, people, culture, relationships, they all change. We can be on the uphill part of the roller coaster, just sipping our sweet tea.

And all of a sudden, life drops. And we spiral down quickly. It can happen so fast and so hard, you don't know if you're upright or you're upside down.

Seasons of life can be bewildering. And then there are seasons where the seas are calm. And the wind is against your back. The only certainty in the circumstances of life is that they are all uncertain.

From our perspective, we can agree with this man. Life is complicated. David, the author of this psalm, is a man who knows that life is complicated.

[4 : 41] He had to run from his king. He went to war repeatedly. Faced all kinds of hardships, including the betrayal. And sudden death of one of his sons.

And yet, he says here, The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. My heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

How is that possible? How is it that David can say these things? I mean, there are times we can read this psalm and we can read about David's life.

And we can just start thinking, are you sure, David? Are you sure? Your lines, the lines of your life have fallen in pleasant places? And how about us?

How do you regard the boundary lines of your life? Do you regard them as more blessed or more broken? Are you content with your life?

[5 : 44] Are you at peace? Do you spend much of your time wishing it was different? Are you always looking to the next season?

Never content or at peace where you are right now. There are a lot of psalms that speak into specific seasons of our lives.

But this psalm meets us in the valleys of difficulty and trial. It meets us in the streets of our comings and goings in everyday life.

And it meets us on the mountaintop when life seems all as it should be. This psalm speaks into all seasons of life. Wherever you find yourself this morning, God has a word for you through this psalm.

The Father wants to reorient our gaze off from the things and the circumstances of this world and to fix our heart on the goodness and the grace of our Father.

[6 : 52] Where we hope to go and what we hope to see is this main point. Set your heart fully on the Lord who establishes the path of your life.

Set your heart fully on the Lord who establishes the path of your life. And we will break this out in three points. Point one, the confession.

The confession. David here opens up this psalm with an immediate prayer. Preserve me, O God. This is unlike other psalms of David where he will directly call upon the Lord for a very specific help and a specific trouble.

This psalm as a whole is a confession. That if he has not the Lord, then he has not life or hope.

And so he pleads to the Lord to preserve him in all of life and death. The word preserve has a meaning of watch over me, keep me, sustain me.

[8 : 03] This is a wonderful plea from David to the Lord to walk closely with him so that he receives help from the one who called them out of slavery.

Who had rescued them from the Egyptians and revealed his glory. This one David turns to and he is calling out for preserving grace.

Now look at the basis he makes his plea upon. Preserve me, O God. For in you I take refuge. David does not claim the Lord's preserving grace for any of his works, his abilities, his performances.

He does not say, preserve me, O God, for I have this. For I have done this. No, he says, and boldly cries out, that preserve me because I am hiding in you.

He is trusting only in the Lord and nothing within himself. He is placing his faith in God alone. David here is renouncing all self-sufficiency and is turning to the Lord who alone is sufficient.

[9 : 17] David in other Psalms, when asking the Lord to be his refuge, he would use the imagery as one hiding under the shadow of his wings, which would express a nearness to the Lord.

But here David says, in you I take refuge. David is saying, I do not want a settled version of God where he just gets sprinkled into the parts where I just feel my need for him or where he suits me in my life and is just relevant for me.

No, David is not even content with being around or near the Lord. He says, In you I hide. In you I take refuge.

I call out to you to wholly and completely cover me. And he builds on this in verse 2 when he says, You are my Lord.

I have no good apart from you. Another way you could read this is, You are my absolute highest good.

[10 : 29] My good is not beyond you. The use of this word good strikes the meaning of welfare, which gives the idea of God as David's only safety, his only happiness, his only well-being.

And the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs helps us here at this point. And he says, A soul that is capable of God and that was made for him, which is every person, we were all made for him, can be filled with nothing else.

A gracious heart can be filled by nothing in the world. It must only be God himself. If God gave you not only earth but heaven, that you should rule over sun, moon, and stars, and have the rule over the highest sons of men, it would not be enough to satisfy you unless you had God himself.

A little in the world will content the Christian for his passage, but all the world and 10,000 times more will not content a Christian for his portion.

For his portion. And so we see in verses 1 and 2, the rightful confession and plea of every believer for every season of life, whether on calm or raging seas, this is the posture of the life of the believer while we remain in this broken world and body of sin.

[12 : 14] For if I have a happy home filled with life, food, comfort, shelter, security, preserve me, O God.

Keep me from drifting in the ease and pleasures of this life. Watch over my affections. Comfort, yes, I have, but no good apart from you.

My good is not beyond you. Every good thing comes from you, and apart from you, everything ceases to be good. And for the one in the home of mourning and longing, for those who have suffered loss, stricken with grief, comfort abated, they too cry, preserve me, O God.

For you are the true and strong refuge in this ever-changing world. Whom have I in heaven but you and you alone?

My heart and my flesh fail, all around me gives way, but you are my strength and my refuge, my only God. Is this your plea?

[13 : 33] Is this your confession? Do you see God as the only good of your life? This is the posture of humble dependence on God, the only sure refuge in an uncertain world.

And once David has given his plea, and he has laid out his confession, he now deepens this confession of allegiance to God by drawing out a contrast of two camps.

Point two, the contrast. The first camp of people that David introduces are those who place their trust in God.

And the other camp are those chasing after other idols. David begins by building onto what he has already now declared. If God is my keeper, if he is my sustainer, who in him alone is all my life and my good, then I will set my eyes to his people.

Look at verse three. As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

[14 : 54] The word saints has the meaning of the holy ones or those set apart. And we see this use of the word in other areas like Deuteronomy 7, 6, where the Lord dedicates and sets apart a people to himself.

For it says, For you are a people, holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all peoples who are on the face of the earth.

David is drawing out a glorious understanding of God's economy. David realizes that since God is the highest good, the truest delight, who is all sufficient, lacking nothing, nor needing anything, then there is nothing he can give the Lord.

But knowing that the saints are God's treasured possession, all of his serving to the Lord is redirected by God to the saints.

As David's affections deepen to the Lord, so too his affections deepen for the believers. He deeply loves and delights in them, not because they offer something to him, not because they have similar likes and passions, but because God treasures them.

[16 : 27] How are our affections to the saints? What motivates you to move towards others? Or are you even moving towards others?

Do you see your relationship with God merely between you and him? Or do you see that you are part of an economy of God that isn't just you?

I believe by this text we can gauge the temperature of our affections for God by the measure of our love and affections for the saints. Our affinity to each other is not to be grounded in anything horizontally.

Schooling preferences, political views, hobbies, seasons of life. If this is only what motivates you as you move towards others, it reveals that though, yes, you may be moving outward, you in reality are only moving inward to serve self.

Our affinity is only to be all of grace, motivation by grace alone. For we have concluded this, that one has died for all so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

[17 : 47] 2 Corinthians 5 15. God's design for life and service in the kingdom was never meant to be drudgery or forced.

When it is, that is not from God but from our sinful corruption and twisting of God's good design. But when we see the one who with eternal love moves towards a people who had turned away from him, despised, and rejected him and yet he pursued them, he died for them and called them to himself, then service in the kingdom becomes joy, privilege, freedom.

No longer is it I have to, I ought to, I need to, I get to. I get the privilege of waking up at the crack of dawn on a Sunday morning to set up unseen all that you see now.

I get the privilege of serving in children's ministry. I get the privilege to bring a meal to a family walking through loss or disease. I get to pray for others.

As we move further into knowing and delighting in our God, we will move further into the lives of other peoples. If you do not know what this looks like, come here at 7am on a Sunday morning.

[19 : 18] See a joyful people serving the Lord. Watch conversations around you before, after the service as others point each other to Christ.

Plug in to a community group and witness others selflessly caring. If the Lord is my highest good, then to be serving and esteeming his people will be my business.

And now David turns to the second camp in verse 4. And David changes his tone negatively for the only time in this whole text.

And David pauses and takes a sober moment to give the second contrast. He says, the sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.

Those who take the drink offerings of blood and place them, their names on their lips. David here is referring to the surrounding followers of the pagan deities who would perform sacrificial blood offerings to other gods.

[20 : 30] gods. And this was their way of signifying their commitment to that god. Now, you may be thinking, this part doesn't apply to me.

Not on my top to-do list today when I go home. An idol, though, is not merely something that is just an object that we bowed down to.

An idol is anything that takes place of God's rightful ruling in our hearts and commitments and affections.

And so when David says, their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out, he is saying, I will not set my heart and commitments to anything besides God alone.

Those who do drink of the blood offerings are those who are banking everything on the things of this world, setting their hopes on this life and the treasures of this world and their sorrows will multiply as they hasten and run to these things.

[21 : 48] We can often know the idols of our heart by what we are running after. And the response of our heart in circumstances.

Is pain disproportionate to your circumstances? Are you restless at night, filled with racing thoughts from the comments of the day, worried by what people thought of you?

Are you more preoccupied with your abilities than God's sufficiency? Are you overly critical, easily annoyed by insignificant matters?

If we are honest, we all deal with idols in our hearts. As John Calvin said, the human heart is a factory of idols. David warns us that the path of self-pursuit leads to sorrow.

For in these things they will never satisfy. We will always be thirsty, always creating more idols in our hearts.

[23 : 01] Everyone is a worshiper. We are always worshipping something. But we were made not to worship the created, but the creator, God himself.

For David then breaks forth in verses 5 and 6 and he says, the Lord is my chosen portion. The Lord is my cup. You hold my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. David says that the cup that I will raise to my lips is the Lord.

He is my rightful cup. He is my beautiful inheritance. We can often think about our inheritances in God simply as a place, the inheritance of heaven.

But the inheritance of heaven is not summed up in a family reunion, a big mansion, perfect health. The inheritance of heaven is summed up in a person. Eternal life in the presence of God.

[24 : 10] knowing the one from whom all blessings flow. For Jesus said in John 17 3, this is eternal life, that they know the Father and they know the Son.

We do not have to wait till heaven to enjoy his presence. David does not say the Lord will be his portion. He is my portion and cup now.

He holds my lot now. the lines of my life have been placed in pleasant places now. I have a beautiful inheritance now.

A number of months ago, my wife had introduced me to a song titled Anywhere by the Grey Havens. And the writer of this song wrote this in a season of sudden grief, of loss, and while dealing with chronic pain.

And it left him lying on the ground thinking, oh, to be anywhere but here. His thoughts began to be consumed by wishing the lines of his life were different.

[25 : 26] His song strikes the note of tension, of sorrows in a broken world, but hope and peace in God himself. And he wrote, eyes wide, late night, windows sealed open, there's a shadow at my back saying everything is broken.

And so, I pointed to a star saying that's where I'm going, second to the right, straight till morning. That's him looking elsewhere, looking out. Praying in the dark, please, if you've got a moment, there's a shadow in my mind says, you're never going to notice that I've been dying inside.

I've been trying not to show it, but I never want to feel this way again, so take me anywhere, anywhere but here. I have been trying to keep the faith, I've been trying to trust the process.

It just feels like pain. it does not feel like progress. And it seems like a waste if I'm really being honest.

I have been trying to fly away, but I keep falling and never land keeps calling. So take me anywhere, anywhere but here.

[26 : 51] I don't care, I don't care, I don't care where, just anywhere but here. is that you?

No, I have. Does your life feel just like pain and not like progress? Does it just seem like one big waste filled with the shadows of what should have been?

Have circumstances of life left you crying out anywhere, anywhere but here? The writer concludes with this, I could spend my night staring at the sky, dream of ways to fly away, chasing happy thoughts for a better plot while I lose another day.

And what a tragedy to awake and see that I never learned to stay. So bring me to a place where I don't chase, escape.

Somewhere I could finally say, don't take me anywhere, anywhere but here. The Lord God is saying, I am that place that you can finally say, don't take me anywhere, anywhere but here.

[28 : 21] Everything horizontally that you see. It will never be enough. But I am more than enough. I am your portion and your inheritance.

I know you can't see what I'm doing. I know all that you see is loss, pain, suffering, but trust me because I am doing something far greater than you can see in your waiting.

I am with you. I will hold you. I will sustain you. I will carry you. I am enough. For in this light momentary affliction is preparing for you an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So don't hope in what you see. Hope in what you do not see for what is seen is transient. It's passing away but what is unseen is eternal.

eternal. The Lord would have us go to the boundary lines of our life and stop looking beyond but to turn your back against the boundary and to look out at all of God's portion and his inheritance that he has given you in Christ.

[29 : 44] point three the confidence in light of all that David has now concluded in these prior verses David can no longer contain himself and he bursts out saying I bless the Lord.

This is David praising God for all of who God is. Not only is the Lord his portion and inheritance he gives him counsel he gives him instruction David shows in verses 7 and 8 that God is the unshakable foundation of his path for the Lord gives counsel by day and provides instructions in the watches of the night of David's heart.

This shows that the Lord pursues us. He doesn't just leave us he chastens us with instruction he gives us counsel not as the world does with empty hope that leads to just more restless worry in the night but he gives us his counsel and his instruction that leaves us unshaken for his counsel and his help is always with us for David says I've set the Lord always always before me God God is with him guiding him it is not that with the Lord there's an absence of the night or the dark but it is the promise that God will guide him through the night and the dark the Lord is at his right hand as one who stands with another in trouble or confrontation the Lord the world says look within look within yourself and you will find your great help yourself good luck but David says here

I do not look inward but only upward and outward to the Lord for my life is hidden with him bound to him wholly his his counsel his will his instruction is to my will and my counsel Jeremiah Burroughs again helps us he says the contented Christian makes the providential will of God and the operative will of God to be his will too a Christian heart makes over his will to God now then if God's will is satisfied which it always is then I am satisfied for I have no will of my own it is melted into the will of

God the Christian sees that his good is more in God than in himself the good of my life and comfort and my happiness and my glory and my riches are more in God than in myself has your will melted into the will of God David then says therefore therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices my flesh dwells secure do you see that joy rejoicing security these are the fruit of the life and the passive God but don't miss the cause of the joy David is not selling some form of the prosperity gospel get God and get an easy life with your Mercedes Benz no his heart is not glad because a change in circumstance his heart is glad because he has seen the

[33 : 57] Lord he has seen that the Lord will never leave him the Lord will never forsake him for he says you will sheol which is the grave the pit of corruption and you will not let your holy one see corruption we must pause here and remember David wrote this prior to Christ but we who are on the other side of the cross and the grave we know the Old Testament prophecies and the teaching are fulfilled in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for is in these verses both Peter and Paul say that this was referring and fulfilled in Jesus Christ resurrection for after quoting these verses Peter says in Acts 2 30 and 31 he says

David being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption this Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses!

David's hope and confidence was not that he might be merely preserved from the grave but that he would be saved from the grave God the preserver of his soul made an oath a promise that one would come from David's line who would loose the pangs of death and be raised up by God according to his definite counsel and plan if David on the other side of the cross could live with such confidence in God how much more reason brothers and sisters how much more reason do we have to hope in life and death for we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that's imperishable undefiled unfading kept in heaven guarded by God's power 1 Peter 1 so what is your confidence and your hope in life or death is it a living hope or is it weighed under by the cares and the things of this world is it in the resurrected

Christ and his finished work at the cross for it is through the cross our greatest need has been met God's holy and just wrath has been poured out onto Christ so that now by faith instead of wrath we receive and know mercy and grace from the Lord this morning I was outside with one of my sons and we were outside looking at the sky and the sun was just starting to rise up filling the night sky with the dawn but the moon was still visible and my son asked dad how can we still see the moon and I replied well the moon is just merely a reflection of the light of the sun and so when the sun rises fully its light is so great you no longer see or need the light of the moon the moon is like the things of this world they have no light in and of themselves but only reflect a greater light they were never meant to be the sole light that we live by oh let the dawn awake and let the true sun rise up in your hearts the son of

God Jesus Christ the true light of the world the one who in himself are immeasurable riches the one in whose presence there is fullness of joy no longer live by lesser lights but dwell dwell in the true light of Jesus Christ oh by God's grace may we set our heart fully on the Lord who establishes the path of our lives let us pray Father preserve us oh God we come to you and we cry out to you that you would come and we would take refuge only in you help us Lord to cast our eyes off of ourselves and the things of this world and to cast ourselves fully on you trusting you with all of our lives for you alone are worthy you alone are trustworthy and so we cry out to you come help us we pray in your son's name amen visit us at [trinity grace athens dot com](https://trinitygraceathens.com)