

Joyfulness

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. Rhetorical questions
 - i. Is joy something that characterizes our life?
 - ii. Are we a church that is joyful?
 - iii. Do people at work know you as someone who is joyful, or are you pessimistic, antagonistic, and self-absorbed?
- b. The Joyful Christian
 - i. If there is anything that the Christian should be known as, it is joyfulness. More than anyone else in the world, the believer in Jesus has a deep and profound reason for being joyful. We who have been given and forgiven so much, joy should radiate from who we are. Joyfulness isn't a personality trait; it is a characteristic of the true believer who is actively walking in the Holy Spirit of God. Whether you are outgoing or quiet, an extravert or introvert, you should radiate the joy of Christ.
 1. If joy is something that should be present in our life, why is that so many of us do not have active joy in our life?
 2. Joy can be one of our most powerful tools of sharing Christ with unbelievers.
 - ii. Joy is not dependent upon our circumstances. If joy is true joy, than no matter the circumstance, our joy cannot be robbed from us. Joy is often misunderstood with just being happy. Happiness is a state that is dependent upon certain immediate circumstances and is usually emotional in nature. You feel happy so you are happy. Joyfulness by contrast can be emotion, but is much deeper than that. It is an inner peace and happiness that cannot be taken from you no matter what happens.
 1. Do we have that kind of joy in our life? How do we pursue that kind of unquenchable joy?
- c. Paul's testimony
 - i. History tells us of a man who was on the road to success. He was young and gifted, and held political and religious influence and position. He was a brilliant scholar, educated by some of the finest scholars the world had to offer, and was well versed in the cultures, languages, and economics of the world. He was on the road to becoming a powerful leader in his nation. He held the confidence and trust of men, and was trusted to important tasks.
 - ii. And yet, right in the middle of his career, he gave it all up. None of his companions saw this coming. He left his position and benefits; he left his place of power in the urban world, and departed for some years into the desert, and we have scarce record as to what happened during these silent years of his life.
 - iii. After some years of absence, he returns and is living a life that is completely different from the life that he lived before. He no longer sought political and religious power. He no longer served the religious and political establishment that was for so long the source of his power. He left everything he knew for a life that was very different than the one he lived before.
 - iv. As a result of this change of life, he endured great hardship. There were times he was starved and hungry. There were times when he wondered if he would live to see the next day. He was beaten, persecuted, left for dead, and rejected by men. He was forsaken by fellow men, betrayed by fellow workers, and was arrested and abused on multiple occasions. He was slandered, scoffed, and lied to. He had physical ailments that were a source of pain and frustration, and he no doubt had scars all over his body from the numerous scourging and whippings by those who

hated him. If all of this wasn't enough, he was shipwrecked on several different occasions. Towards the end of his life he was imprisoned and held in the lower dungeons of a tyrannical dictator. Then one day, without any trial, hearing, or any system of fair justice, he was beheaded and his body discarded or burned in some unknown place.

1. Towards the end of his life he wrote these powerful words, a testimony that this man was living for something far beyond human comprehension:
 - a. **Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"**
2. It was of course, the Apostle Paul whose life was just described. How was it that he was able to make such a confident statement when everything in life just seemed to be going wrong? When there was nothing to be joyful about, what gave him this joy that was so powerful that even as we read the book of Philippians, one cannot but feel the depth and passion of his steadfastness in joy.
3. Let take a look at Philippians.

II. A Confession of Joy (Paul's testimony of joy)

a. Philippians

- i. **Philippians 1:3-5**, ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray **with joy** ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
- ii. **Philippians 1:12-21**, ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard ^a and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ^b ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. **And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,** ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ^c ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- iii. **Philippians 1:25-26**, ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again **your joy** in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.
- iv. **Philippians 2:17-18**, ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, **I am glad and rejoice with all of you.** **¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.**
- v. **Philippians 3:14**, But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- vi. **Philippians 3:20**, ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven.
- vii. **Philippians 4:1**, Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, **my joy** and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

- viii. Philippians 4:4-7,⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - ix. Philippians 4:11,¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.
 - x. Philippians 4:13,¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
- b. Paul in prison
 - i. Does this sound like a guy writing from prison? He went through such hardships that most of us in this room cannot comprehend their severity. Paul's letter exudes a fragrance of unshakeable joy and hope!
 - c. The heart and passion of Paul's joy and hope.
 - i. Philippians 3:7-11,⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
 - 1. Paul had an unshakeable faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He considered all things but loss for the sake of knowing Him.
 - 2. All of his personal desires, preferences, and dreams were all forsaken for the joy of pursuing Christ in every area of his life.
 - d. Paul a preacher of the centrality of Christ.
 - i. A theology of joy must begin with the centrality of Christ in all things because only from Christ is true joy derived.
 - ii. You do not have to read very far in Paul's writings to realize that Christ was everything to Paul.
 - 1. If there is anything we need more of in the church today is that we need more Christ centered teaching. Teaching that Christ is the beginning and the end of all things. Teaching that Christ must be our first love.
 - 2. Remember that Christ himself admonished the church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:4) that they had left their first love.
 - 3. In our world today we are consumed with everything, except Jesus Christ. Here the cry this morning that is not just about claiming joy, but it is about claiming joy in Christ who is able to supply everything we need from now until all eternity!
 - 4. When you hear me preach, you will hear a lot about the centrality of Christ because I believe that as Colossians teaches, Christ is the center of all things.
 - 5. In the church today, we have forgotten the role of Christ as the central life giving focus of our being.
 - a. Douglas Webster on the church today
 - i. Biblical preaching was God centered, sin exposing, self-convicting and life challenging – the direct opposite of today's light, informal sermons that Christianize self-help and

entertain better than they convict. There are so many illustrations in today's market sensitive sermons that the hearer forgets the biblical truth that is being illustrated; so many personal anecdotes that the hearer knows the pastor better than he knows Christ; so many human-interest stories that listening to the sermon is easier than reading the Sunday paper; so practical that there is hardly anything to practice. It is no wonder that nominal Christians leave church feeling upbeat. Their self-esteem intact. Their minds have been sparked and soothed with sound-bite theology, Christian maxims and a few practical pointers dealing with self-esteem, kids or work. But the question remains: has the Word of God been effectively and faithfully proclaimed, penetrating comfort zones and the veneer of self-satisfaction with the truth of Jesus Christ?

- b. Charles H Spurgeon
 - i. Dear friends, this name, this faith, these are our message. Our only business here is to cry, "Behold the Lamb." Are any of you sent of God with a different message? It cannot be. The one message which God has given to his people to proclaim is salvation through the Lamb – salvation by the blood of Jesus...To tell of Jesus is our occupation, we have nothing to say which is not comprised in the revelation made to us by God in Jesus Christ. He who is our comfort is our one theme.
- e. Paul was a student of scripture.
 - i. Paul didn't learn these truths in a vacuum, nor were they truths that were wholly new.
 - ii. Paul was a man of scripture, and he would have known the Old Testament scriptures intimately. He knew them so intimately that scripture tells us that Paul argued eloquently in the synagogues proving that Jesus was the Christ (**Acts 9:22**).
- f. Paul learned lessons of a God centered life from King David, the ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. **A Psalm of Joy (Practical lessons in joy from King David)**

- a. Psalm 16
 - i. Paul undergirded his joy with scriptural principles that guided his passionate pursuit of Christ.
 - ii. Pursuit of Christ is a central to true joy. Paul had true joy in all things learning to be content in every circumstance because he learned to put Christ in the center of his life.
- b. The centrality of God
 - i. ² **I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."**
 1. This statement is not restricted to religious affairs; this statement is all-inclusive that there is nothing in all of life that is good without the Lord being in it. God is therefore central to everything that is done.
 2. Recognition of the centrality of God in all things makes every task a unique responsibility and endowment of God, therefore everything in life can be joy, no matter the vocation, job, task, or routine.
 - a. The puritans and the founding fathers incorporated this into their total life desiring to bring God glory in everything that was done, from law and government to art and ordinary vocation.

- b. With God, everything can be done for his glory. This can bring a profound sense of joy to everything that we do. Genuine joy is not relegated to only one facet of life, but is inclusive of everything that is in life. No matter the circumstance.
 - c. Warnings against that which quenches true joy.
 - i. ⁴ **The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.**
 - 1. One of the reasons that you do not have joy in your life may simply be because you love other gods more than the God of heaven.
 - a. Sin quenches joy.
 - b. Divided loyalties quenches joy.
 - 2. If we love the god of success, the god of entertainment, the god of relationships and popularity, or anything else that might take precedence in our life to the God of heaven, has the potential to rob of us of our joy.
 - a. Nominality robs us of our joy. You may not be beset by any specific sin, and on the whole you live a pretty good life. You are comfortable and not necessarily excited nor desirous to unpack the riches in Christ (This characterizes many Christians).
 - b. But the absence of forward motion in the pursuit of God will rob of us of our joy. In order to experience the profound joy that Paul experienced, we must actively pursue Christ at the center of everything we do. As surely as movement is directly related to energy, the pursuit of Christ is directly related to joy.
 - i. **The larger the object moving at increasing speed carries a greater amount of energy. The larger the desire to know Christ and the passion at which is pursued is directly related to our joy in Christ.**
 - 3. Perhaps you are so weary from fighting the battle, that you just don't believe that kind of joy is possible for you. You don't believe that God cares for you that much. God WANTS you to find satisfaction in Him. God loves you, and he wants you to love him more than you love your sin. Don't listen to the lies of Satan that says that your sin is more pleasurable.
 - d. Instructed by the heart of God
 - i. ⁷ **I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**
 - 1. The psalmist is so consumed in his desire to know God; even at night the meditations of his heart are focused on God. He has set the Lord before him in all things, being instructed from his word and a relationship in prayer.
 - 2. Not again the universal statement that the Lord has been set before him in all things. Remember that this is a king writing this psalm. The Lord has been set before him in all things political, economic, militaristic, and religious. He has invited God to be a part of his total life, not just his life on Sunday morning or when you see someone from church.
 - a. Unpacking the potential of creation
 - 3. Because God has been set before him in everything, why should he fear? If there is no fear, joy has fertile ground in which to sprout.
 - e. The result: Joy
 - i. ⁹ **Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,**
 - 1. Because God has been made central to all things, including the center of all pursuits, his heart is glad and his tongue rejoices.
 - f. Inexhaustible Riches

- i. ¹¹ You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.
 - 1. As the Psalmist has submitted himself to God in all things, God now fills him with a divine joy that begins to open up the riches of eternity to him.
 - 2. Can we fathom the depths of God or the infinity of Christ?
 - 3. Can we comprehend the joys in Him that await us that will continually be revealed for the rest of eternity?
 - 4. Only Christ is the center of all joy, and all of eternity is not long enough to discover the infinity of joys that await us in him.

IV. A Christ Centered Eternal Joy (Christ, the object of eternal exaltation)

- a. Revelation 7:9-12⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

- ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

- i. If all of heaven and the mighty angels and the four creatures and the Godhead himself finds eternal joy in Christ, why do we think it is any less for us?
 - 1. Christ considered ultimate suffering a joy for you, and for me. For the sake of redeeming of sinners and the exaltation of His name, Christ endured the cross.
 - 2. Have we forgotten what was paid for us? Have we forgotten the depths of love that was bestowed to us at the cross? Have we no joy simply because we have been blinded by what God has done for us and what he wants to do in you?
- ii. What does the joy of heaven look like? What does the joy in Christ look like?
 - 1. Mark Zook (Missionaries to Papua New Guinea to the Mohk people)
 - a. It took 2 months of teaching God’s word before they even mentioned Jesus Christ. The entire village (310 people) gathered every day, 5 days a week, 2 times a day, for three months.
 - b. The celebration went on for two and a half hours as they shouted “EE TAOW” meaning “It’s good” or “It is true”.
- iii. Why were they celebrating and going crazy? Why was there such joy? It wasn’t because that they were going to now have a happy life free of tropical disease or a life of riches. They still live in thatched mud huts. So why was there joy? Jesus Christ. Jesus died for them, he is on the throne, and that was enough for them. Is it enough for you?

V. CONCLUSION

- a.