

## “The Path To Full Joy”

November 10, 2019

Psalm 16:1-11

I appreciate the opportunity to join together with you in learning the truth from God’s Word again today. So, thank you. And thank you for opening your Bible with me to the first chapter of the First Epistle of John; I John 1.

The essence of Christianity is salvation. But, what is the essence of salvation? I want to say something today about a topic that’s included in your salvation and, at the same time, something that makes salvation rich and more wonderful as the days go by.

A Christian, as you know, has a whole host of blessings in the treasure chest we call salvation. For example, assurance; the assurance of your salvation. Then, there’s the constant cleansing of your conscience by the blood of Christ. Then, there’s the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, a whole lot more.

Another of those blessing is joy. What about joy? What about the joy of the LORD? Here’s Nehemiah 8:10 “*Then he said to them, “Go, eat rich food, drink sweet drinks, and send portions to those who can’t provide for themselves; for today is consecrated to our Lord. Don’t be sad, because **the joy of the LORD is your strength.**”*

Joy is another of those treasures that belong to a Christian. Ephesians 3:8 “*Unto me [Paul], who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ.**”*

If we’d be honest, we’d say that our joy is somewhat sporadic and maybe even, at times, non-existent. Today’s message is on the topic of a Christian’s joy. So, I’ve titled it “The Path To Full Joy.” Shall we pray?

What’s really on my heart today is the relationship between salvation and joy. So, let me begin with an illustration; marriage. Have you ever wondered why so many marriages start off so wonderfully and then that same marriage breaks up? I don’t know all the reasons. But, for sure, one of them is this. It’s not that you quote “fall out of love.” Instead, you lose your joy.

Whenever Janet and I live in close fellowship with each other, there’s a measure of joy that, sometimes, is hard to contain. And you can only find it one other place; in your relationship with the LORD. In other words, joy is essential to a good marriage. And joy is essential to a good relationship with God.

Here’s one of Israel’s greatest saints, King David on the subject. Psalm 52:12 “*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation...*”

So, what about the *joy* of your salvation? Where does that come from? And, since we’ve all got experience with losing it, how can we re-capture that joy?

Fortunately for us, these are the sorts of things the Apostle John deals with in this First Epistle. And, surprisingly, at the top of his list is joy. Let me show you what I mean.

I John 1:1 “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (2) (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

*(3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (4) And these things write we unto you, **that your joy may be full.**”*

Having fellowship with God means that it’s wonderful to belong to Him. Salvation isn’t a burden to be dragged around

by a Christian. It's a delight to live in fellowship with your Savior.

So, let's consider your bank account; O.K., your imaginary bank account. Imagine that you've been given one million dollars. It's in your account. Right now, this very moment, it's yours and yours alone. There's no way you can lose it. Now, imagine this. Imagine never spending a single penny of that million dollars. How much joy does it give you? Absolutely none. [Found on <https://irpcdn.multiplescreensite.com/> "Basic Elements of the Christian Life" by Watchman Nee, page 13].

Now, consider something bigger; something much bigger. Imagine that God has given to you a reservoir of pure joy.

Listen to Jesus with me. John 15:11 *"These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy** might remain in you, and **that your joy might be full.**"*

John 16:24 *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, **that your joy may be full.**"*

Acts 13:52 *"And the disciples were **filled with joy** ..."*

Romans 15:13 *"Now the God of hope fill you with **all joy** ..."*

Philippians 4:4 *"**Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.**"*

And I Peter 1:8 *"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with **joy unspeakable and full of glory:** ..."*

II Timothy 1:4 *"that I may be **filled with joy...**"*

Folks, just like your million dollar bank account, you cannot lose that God-given reservoir of joy. But, what are you doing to spend it? What are you doing to enjoy your joy? Wouldn't you like to enjoy your God-given joy?

Think about it like this. If God has given it to you, do you really think He wants to withhold it from you on any given day? Don't you think that enjoying your joy in the LORD is better than just letting it sit in your bank account?

So, what is it?

Joy is pure delight. It's a pre-cursor of Heaven. One well-known writer tries to explain joy by putting it this way "Joy is the serious business of Heaven" (C. S. Lewis). It's an experience of being very near to God.

Another write puts it like this. "I can say that I never knew what joy was like until I gave up pursuing happiness, or cared to live until I chose to die. For these two discoveries I am beholden to Jesus" (Malcolm Muggeridge).

Well, let's see if the Holy Spirit doesn't lead you into the light today. See if John can lead you and me onto that same path?

First, listen to the right voice; verse three.

I John 1:3 *"That which we have seen and heard **declare** we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: ..."*

What is John up to in this letter? He's been with Jesus personally. He's watched Him. He's heard Him. He's eaten meals with Him. He learned from Jesus. He became one of His disciples. Now what?

Here's what. "Since I spent three full years with the Son of God, here's what I want to say to you." That's what this word "declare" means. In the original, it's ἀπαγγέλλομεν. It means "to declare," "to proclaim," "to announce," and "to report." John is giving a report on those three years he spent walking with Jesus.

Do you remember the Old Testament Joseph; Joseph, the son of Jacob? Do you remember the time when Jacob's ten older sons were away from home tending cattle? And what did Jacob ask of his youngest son, Joseph? He asked him to go out into the pastures, look for his brothers, and to bring him back a report.

You've all done that at some time in your life. You've had to give a report of what you now know. That's, in essence,

what John means when he says *“that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you...”*

So, here’s what this all means for us. Who you choose to listen to will definitely affect you, not only mentally, but emotionally and spiritually. Listen to the Holy Spirit in John. Listen to the man who walked with the LORD. What does he say is at the top of the list of knowing Christ?

John wasn’t only a personal disciple of Jesus. He was also an Apostle of Christ. His role in the body of Christ is to given the Church a foundation.

Here’s Ephesians 3:19 *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ...”*

So, listen to John. John stands as one of the stones in the Church of Christ. But, he’s a foundation stone, like all of the Apostles.

And here’s Jesus. John 10:10 *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it **more abundantly.**”*

So, who do *you* listen to? And, do you find that’s worth listening to and reading that brings you into an experience of joy? Who thinks the joy of the LORD should be at the top of a Christian’s fellowship with his Savior?

That’s right. Who you listen to and what you listen to will either bring you joy or it remove it from you.

Doesn’t it strike you that so many people you know are joy-less? And those joy-less people; do you know who they are listening to? Isn’t at least part of what John is saying here that if you’d just listen to him, you’d increase your joy?

So, listen to the Apostles. Listen to the Holy Spirit in the words of the Bible. Who is it that really has the words of life? And Who is it that John says is the Word of Life? It’s Jesus Christ Himself.

So, some of you listen to yourself. I have some practical advice for you. Here it is. Weigh what *you* say to yourself against what *the LORD* says in His Word. How many times have you heard me say “Learn the Word of God”?

Are you learning the Word of God? Or, does the Bible sit on your dresser or your coffee table six days a week and then you pick it up on Sunday and carry it to Church?

The Bible is the greatest book on joy in the entire world.

How can you ever nourish your spirit if you neglect to the one Resource that towers over every other resource in your library?

Psalms 19:8 *“The statutes of the Lord are right, **rejoicing the heart:** ...”*

Psalms 119:111 *“Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are **the rejoicing of my heart.**”*

Jeremiah 15:16 *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me **the joy and rejoicing of mine heart:** for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.”*

Matthew 13:20 *“...the same is he that heareth the word, and anon [immediately] **with joy** receiveth it.”*

When was the last time you saw the Bible in this light; as the joy and the rejoicing of your heart?

Your Bible is a Word from Heaven. It’s a Word from the Holy Spirit. It’s a Word from God’s heart. Do you really imagine God being One Who denies you joy? Take it in daily. Learn it. Learn to love it. Learn it by memory. Simply enjoy it and you will discover a measure of joy that you can’t find anywhere else.

The devil, on the other hand has come to steal and to kill and to destroy. Jesus doesn’t tell us exactly what Satan steals and kills and destroys. But, I’m sure it includes your joy.

And did you know that even when you are going through a trial, you can count on the LORD dispensing His joy into

your heart? James 1:2 “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers [various] temptations [trials] ...*”

Here’s a personal testimony. “I sat on a worn armchair in my living room, my head hung down with sorrow, and an ache in my heart that I felt nothing could possibly heal. I had not opened my Bible in what felt like quite a long time. I didn’t want to. I wanted to fill the void of loss with other things, or simply sit in the sorrow. My second daughter had just died. Could God’s Word meet me in the utter darkness that surrounded me? Would I let it? Would I let Him?”

My husband, Kevin, came over and wrapped his arm around me tenderly saying, “*I think we should read the Bible together.*” The tears that had been brimming at the surface gushed over without warning, and I simply said, “*I can’t. I can’t.*” Part of me didn’t want to hear what God might want to say to my pain and sorrow, part of me was just so mad and angry, and part of me wondered if the Bible would contain the life-giving words I thought they were supposed to hold. I let the jumble of my emotions come out, until finally, like Peter, I said, “*Where else is there to go? I know His words are the only place that hold life*” (John 6:68).

I knew in those moments of such acute sorrow and loss that God’s Word still held life, power, and hope. I knew there was nowhere else to go but to Him (and I had tried a thousand other ways). I knew His promises were true even when they didn’t feel true, or when I didn’t know how they would be fulfilled. That day when Kevin pulled out his Bible was a turning point for me in my grief—choosing to turn to God’s Word for life, regardless of my feelings.

I wish I could tell you that all of a sudden my heart was rejoicing in God’s Word, but that was not immediately true. I had many questions for God, doubts about Him and how He worked. I was mad and angry and just so deeply sad.

Often times we approach God’s Word wanting to feel something, searching for verses that will fill the voids we think need to be filled in our hearts. But God wants to do something even better as we turn to His Word. He wants us to come to know Who He is. He wants us to know and understand His ways. He wants us to wrestle with our preconceived notions about Him—the questions that His Word stirs in our hearts—so that we would know Him deeper than we ever had before. He wants us to know His love, written through every page and story of His Word, so that it would radically change how we view life, our circumstances, our sorrow, our joys, and our future.” [Found on <https://hopemommies.org/> “Rejoicing The Heart” by Lindsey from Orlando, Florida].

Folks, listen to John. “I’m declaring to you; I’m reporting to you that the One I spent so much time with; He is the Master of joy. I found it. My friends found it. And now, I’m telling you this so you can find it too.”

I John 1:4 “...*these things write we unto you, **that your joy may be full.***”

And, folks, when you find yourself missing out on joy, please don’t blame anyone. Don’t wallow in self-pity. Instead, go back to the Word. Take time for the Word. Take time for one of the millions of devotional books available to you. Go online and find a devotional book that has its roots in Jesus Christ and the truth of Scripture. Prove me wrong that the Bible isn’t the most joy-producing Book in the entire world.

I read from five or six books every single day. All of them are words from people God has taught His Word to. Shouldn’t I listen to them? Shouldn’t I learn from them? And when I do, I find a fuller and fuller joy.

So, first, listen to the right voice.

Second, spend time with the right people; verse three.

I John 1:3 “*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (4) And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*”

John tells us exactly why he’s writing this letter to Christians. It’s so that they will have fellowship and that that fellowship will produce a full joy.

Let me remind you folks of this one treasure in the Christian life that many of you have left in the treasure chest. It’s fellowship with other Christians.

Do you really want to discover the fulness of joy? Spend more time with Believers. Yes, come to the Worship Hour. Yes, come to the Prayer Hour. And here’s what you’ll find. You’ll discover that fellowship with other Saints is a source of joy that the world can never know and that you can’t find in the world.

I spoke to you earlier about marriage. Now, husbands and wives. Do you see the connection between fellowship with each other and the joy of that relationship? Do you find joy in your marriage? If not, do exactly what John says. Go for the fellowship and let the joy follow. Work on fellowship with your spouse and the joy will follow. The most joyous Saints are the ones who spend lots of time in fellowship with the Saints.

Psalms 5:11 “*But let all those that put their trust in thee **rejoice**: let them ever **shout for joy**, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name **be joyful in thee.***”

Psalms 16:11 “*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is **fulness of joy...***”

John will have a lot to say about fellowship. But, first, he says, I’m writing this letter to you so that you’ll experience fellowship; fellowship with the Father, fellowship with the Son, and fellowship with each other. And good fellowship is what produces great joy.

Folks, it’s possible that you are missing out on a lot of the Christian life. So, here’s how one writer puts it. “When you enjoy your fellowship with other Christians, you experience the presence of the LORD.” [Found on <https://irpcdn.multiplescreensite.com/> “Basic Elements of the Christian Life” by Watchman Nee].

When you’re saved, you have new desires. One of those new desires is for fellowship with other Christians. When I was in Lesotho a number of years ago, I noticed what happened when Sunday came around. Some people would travel for miles; either by foot or by bicycle; some of them for days to get to the Sunday service. And here’s why. When they got there, they found two wonderful things: fellowship with other Christians, fellowship they didn’t often have back home, and they found joy. And it was a huge joy to my own heart to be around these Christians.

It’s an indication of your salvation that you simply want to be where Christians are. Psalms 133:1 “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*”

It’s normal for a Christian to want fellowship. And to neglect it, maybe, makes you a bit of a sour, dour, unhappy, and unjoyful Christian.

So, yes, I’m admonishing you to attend the Church services. If you aren’t, you are missing out on two essentials for the Christian life; fellowship and joy. They just go together.

Think about it like this. Suppose you have a Dad or a Mom that’s still living. And you simply don’t have time for them. You don’t call them. You don’t visit them. Your family and your work and your life schedule is too full for you to spend much time with them. Now, how does Dad feel? How does Mom feel?

Now, transfer that same feeling to the LORD. Yes, He’s an emotional God. He constantly wants your fellowship.

And when Christians meet with each other, whether it's around work or play or prayer or worship or study; it's a time for the very presence of the LORD to be enjoyed. It's a time to share in fellowship.

Matthew 18:20 “...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

“The greatest enjoyment for a Christian is to be together with others who love and enjoy Christ. No human words can utter the sweetness we experience when we praise Him and speak about Him together” (W. Nee). And add to that this. “Fellowship is not a duty, but an enjoyment; the greatest joy on earth” (W. Nee).

What will it be, then? Joy or fellowship? No, joy and fellowship. Fellowship produces this joy. This is the LORD's way.

So, what will it be for you? “Do you enjoy *joy*?” God's intention is that you experience His joy. Joy, folks, is bound up in a Person, Jesus Christ. It's bound up in fellowship with Him and in fellowship with His children.

And, if you've never trusted in Christ, Go to Him today; this One Who is Eternal Life? Turn to Him? Receive Him as your LORD and Savior? Will you trust Him? Will you receive the free gift of Eternal Life? God puts the choice into your hands. What will you do? If you've never trust Christ as you Savior and LORD, do it today.

The Sinner's Prayer

“LORD, I know that I am a sinner. I ask Your forgiveness for all my sins. I believe on Your Son today as the One Who paid for all my sins. Thank You for the free gift of Eternal Life in Him. Amen”

And here's the Christian's Prayer. “LORD, I want and I need Your fellowship. Teach me today to know You better and to walk with You and Your people in sweet fellowship.”

Shall we pray?