

## **The Secret to Lasting Joy**

**Key Verse: “That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11)**

The above are the words spoken by the Lord Jesus, and we should pay special attention to them. Jesus was talking about joy and pleasure at an unusual time. For soon He would be in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane, and soon thereafter He would be facing His accusers and hearing the insults and mockery of those who hated Him. Yes, just before He faced the agony of Calvary, He said, “My joy”; and, crucially, this is the only time in the Bible that He ever spoke of His joy. If He still had joy in Him during such a time of great trial and testing, His joy must have been very unique! – What He desires and gives to us (that is, to every believer) is that His joy (which is very different from the world’s joy) should become our joy. “That my joy might be in you, and that your joy might be full.”

### **1. Christian joy is a characteristic of life**

Too often we are sad, depressed and frustrated. But as Christians we should rejoice in all things (see Philippians 4:4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16). The Christian experience should be marked by joy from beginning to end: joy at conversion (Luke 19:6; Acts 8:39); joy in reading the Word of God (Jeremiah 15:16); joy in prayer (John 16:24); joy in trials (James 1:2); joy in suffering (Acts 5:41); joy in service (2 Corinthians 1:24); and joy at the end of life's journey (Acts 20:24). If we love the Lord and belong to the Lord, we should always be happy.

### **2. What is the joy that Christians should experience?**

1. **It is the joy of Christ:** “that my joy may be in you” (John 15:11). “My joy is in you...” The Christian life is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ living in us (see Gal. 2:20 and Col. 3:4). Christian joy is the joy of Christ in a Christian, which means that this deep and abiding joy is not to be found anywhere else but in Him. There are other joys to be found elsewhere, but this joy is found only in Him.
2. **It is full joy:** “...that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). There is a world of difference between joy and full joy. A vessel can be partially filled or completely filled. Our Lord desires us to experience fullness of joy (see Psalm 16:11, John 17:13 and 1 Peter 1:8).
3. **It is lasting joy:** “that my joy may remain in you” (John 15:11). The word “remain” indicates that Christian joy is not an intermittent experience but a permanent one. It is a joy that is not

affected by circumstances (see our Lord's words to His disciples in John 16:22). These first followers of Jesus had to go through many trials and tests, but He told them that nothing could take away their joy – His joy that was in them. Consider the following three passages that describe the permanence of Christian joy and the fact that Christ's joy in us is not affected by external circumstances or situations:

- i. John 15:11: As we have seen, our Lord experienced this joy in the shadow of the cross.
- ii. Luke 10:20: We can be sure that our Lord meant this: "Do not rejoice in anything earthly or temporal, but only in heavenly things."
- iii. Acts 16:25: Even in the midst of great suffering, Paul and Silas were so filled with the joy of Christ Himself that they could sing praises at midnight (compare Isaiah 61:3, 2 Corinthians 8:2, and Hebrews 10:34).

It is a wonderful and extraordinary thing that true Christian joy, far from being affected by adverse circumstances, is actually increased by such trials and tests as those mentioned above (see James 1:2).

### **3. How can we have this joy?**

1. **By having Christ.** If this deep, abiding joy is the joy of Christ, then we can only have it by having Christ. In Acts 8:8 we read, "And there was great joy in that city." Why was this so? Verse 5 tells us! In Acts 8:39, we read that the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." Why was this so? Verse 35 tells us! If we would have His joy, we must have Him (see John 17:13).
2. **By reading His Word.** When we read the Bible and accept its truth, we experience great joy (see 1 John 1:4). This is similar to the "burning heart" we experience when the Lord speaks to us and we commune with Him (see Luke 24:32).
3. **By obeying Him.** Notice that Luke 10:21 tells us two things: first, "Jesus rejoiced..."; second, He was in perfect obedience to the will of the Father. His joy is the joy of complete and constant obedience to the Father. As Madame Guyon said, "How blessed it is to receive the sorrows which God sends us!" When we accept pain, sorrow, and joy from God's hands, our joy will be truly fulfilled.
4. **By the Holy Spirit.** The literal translation of Luke 10:21 is "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit." Another translation is: "Then Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and was overjoyed" (see and compare Romans 15:13). At this very moment, the Lord Jesus, who was a perfect man in a perfect body, has ascended into heaven. He wants His joy to be in our hearts. How could this

be possible? He is there and we are here! He is in heaven and we are on earth! The answer is – by the Holy Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is...joy..." (Gal. 5:22, cf. Acts 13:52 and Eph. 5:18).