

"Rejoice in the Lord"

Many want happiness, but there's something better than happiness! What's better? Joy! Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore the joy we have in Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know God is wise and good. He'll always lead us into the path that brings us joy and peace, so we turn to the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to hear from you and be a part of your life each week.

If you ask people what makes them happy, they usually speak about all the things they like and want in their lives. They might speak of ideal houses, cars, or jobs, thinking they can find happiness in possessions or position. They might consider the satisfaction of their fleshly desires or the accomplishment of some goal in life and how that will bring them happiness. Many discipline themselves to gain riches, fame, education, or to set a record. Well, these things, however, belong to this life; and they're only temporal. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1:14, "behold, all is vanity and striving after wind." What really matters? What lasts beyond this life?

The Lord Jesus told this parable in Luke 12:16 to 21, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Have you laid up treasures in heaven? Is God an important part of your life?

If you want to study more about joy, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Philippians 4:4 to 7, and explore the joy we have in Christ Jesus!

Our reading today comes from Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 to 7. And they talk about our relationship with the Lord and the joy it brings.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Oh, how wonderful it is to be a Christian. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the gift of Your son Jesus who died for our sins that we might live with You. And receive all the blessings You give us including the peace that passes understanding. Help us always Father to be devoted to You to love You and to serve You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Everyone is hungry for joy. Joy is that true pleasure over a blessing or a loving good relationship with someone. The joy we have in Christ is a mindset of delight and wellbeing that comes from knowing and serving God. This joy arises from all the blessings and promises grounded in what God has done for us in Christ. It comes from knowing God that He's our Father and Jesus is our Savior and Lord.

You can have no greater blessing than a relationship with the God who created us and can give us an abundant life here on earth and eternal life in heaven. It's no wonder Scripture urges us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4 verse 4).

Joy and our relationship with God are unchangeably united. When we're right with the One who created us, who loves us, who sustains us daily, and who sent His Son Jesus to give us eternal life, then our joy is multiplied with peace, hope and gratitude. Day by day God is good and takes care of us. And every blessing, the answer to every prayer, the forgiveness of all our sins, and the love of brethren are good reasons to rejoice in the Lord always! If you want more joy, then count your blessings every day.

Christianity is more than a faith or a religion; it's a relationship with our Father in heaven. The Lord taught us to pray to Him and to obey Him. In prayer we can pour out our hearts and our requests. God has given us His Scriptures to guide us and lead us in the right path. Both prayer and following God's teachings are matters of love and blessing. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:9 to 11, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." When people love each other and maintain a right relationship with the Lord, joy grows and grows.

From the time Jesus entered this world, He's brought joy and hope to mankind. Everything about Him speaks of an abundant life filled with joy, peace and promise! When Jesus was born an angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds out in the field as they were watching over their sheep. The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. Luke 2:10 to 11 says, that "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Truly the beginning of the greatest joy in all history was the day Jesus Christ the Lord came into the world.

Can you imagine all the joy that Jesus caused people as He forgave sinners, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and healed everyone who came to Him? The blind could see, the deaf could hear, the lame could walk, the lepers were cleansed, and those who were maimed, that is had some limb missing, were made whole. Jesus fed the multitudes, cast out the demons, stilled the terrifying storms, raised the dead, and welcomed tax collectors and sinners. People's lives were changed for the better for having known Jesus. He brought true joy everywhere He went.

Luke 15 contains three stories of joy, where something is lost and then found. A shepherd who lost one of his sheep searched until he found it. And with joy he calls together his neighbors and friends and asks them to rejoice with him. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 15:7, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Repentance is a reason to rejoice. In the second story a woman lost a coin. Searching diligently, she finds it and calls to her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.

In the third story a younger son causes himself to be lost in sin by wandering off to a far country and wasting his inheritance. A famine caused him to be destitute and hungry. When he came to his senses, he came home acknowledging his sin, but the father rejoiced over his penitent son. With hugs and kisses, the father put the best robe on him, shoes on his feet, and a ring on his finger. He said in Luke 15:23 and 4, "bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." God loves to forgive people; He rejoices when people repent and turn their lives around. And we too should rejoice when we see people turn their hearts toward God to follow and serve Him.

Now Jesus knew that He would die on the cross, and it caused Him great sorrow, to the point of death. And even those who went to the garden with Him sorrowed; Luke 22:45 says that Jesus found them “sleeping from sorrow.” Now speaking of His resurrection, Jesus said in John 16:22, “Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.” Now though He suffered through a painful trial and bore an agonizing cross, Jesus could see joy in His suffering. Hebrews 12 and verse 2 reminds us to fix “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” What could possibly be joyful in the cross?

The joy of the cross was not in the pain or the suffering or the shame the Jews heaped upon Him as they mocked Him. No. The “joy set before Him” was what allowed Him to endure the cross. And it came from what He was dying for. He died to save people, people who would follow Him in this life and live with Him forever. Acts 20:28 says He purchased the church with His own blood. He was willing to sacrifice Himself on the cross, because He loved us. He knew that in dying, we would come to understand just how far He was willing to go to demonstrate His love and to save us from our sins. He knew His death would make a difference in our lives. He rejoices every time a sinner repents and comes to Him.

When the women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus early on the first day of the week, they saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. A severe earthquake had occurred, and the angel rolled away the stone. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. Matthew 28:5 to 8 says, “The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.” And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.” Jesus conquered the grave, and we can rejoice in the promise that He gives to us that one day we will rise from the dead.

You may be going through a tough time right now. You may not have much to rejoice about or be thankful for. But even in our heartache, the Lord can bless us. James 1:2 to 4 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (patience) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” You see your struggles may be the very thing that allows you to grow and become the person that God wants you to be and prepare you for eternity. Rejoice even in your trials. Like Paul, we can say: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8 and verse 18). If all we see is the suffering, we may miss what great things God has in store for us.

Christians find their joy not only in what the Lord has done in the past by forgiving their sins but also in the future. Paul spoke of “Rejoicing in hope” in Romans 12:12. We have a living hope in Christ that cannot be taken from us. 1 Peter 1:3 to 5 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Salvation and a home in heaven are certainly great reasons for joy. In fact, verses 6 to 9 say, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even

though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you haven't seen Him, you love Him, and though you don't see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

Yes, Christians will suffer various trials and tests; but when Christians face trials, their faith sustains them. God sees the proof of their faith and blesses them for it. Though we've never seen Jesus, we love Him. Though we do not see Him now, we expect to see Him when He comes again. We rejoice with a joy inexpressible, because we know we have a place reserved in heaven for us. Just for us. Faithful Christians have their names written in heaven and an inheritance in heaven. And nothing, nothing can take away the joy that comes with a living hope.

Now God proved His love for us by sending Jesus to us, and Jesus proved His love for us by dying upon the cross. When we demonstrate our faith and love for Him, our faith becomes more precious than gold. Our faith will result in praise and glory and honor from our Father. One day the Lord will reward those who remain faithful. Paul proclaimed in 2 Timothy 4:6 to 8, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." Do you believe? Do you love the Lord? Will you rejoice when the Lord comes again to receive His own? Will you love Him on that day?

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for all the reasons to rejoice that You have given to us. Your love, Your bless, and the hope we have. And Father help us in every way to remain faithful. To grow in our faith and in our commitment to You. And to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Let me repeat: everybody hungers for joy. We want a joy that never fades, a joy that lasts forever. There can be no greater joy than this, to know that we are forgiven, to know that we are walking in the truth, to know we are right with the living God, to know He hears our prayers, and to know that He watches over us, and that He has prepared an eternal home in heaven for us. Now lasting joy, which is so much better than temporary happiness can come only from Jesus Christ!

The more you share joy in Christ, the more you have. Paul wished everyone was a Christian, and so do we. We rejoice when we hear of people repenting and being baptized, when souls are forgiven by the Lord, or when prayers are answered. We rejoice when people become children of God, and we rejoice when saints are called home to be with Jesus. Indeed, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8 verse 10).

Do you have the joy of the Lord in your heart? Are your sins forgiven? Are you at peace with God? If you have unresolved sin in your life, you're missing the joy that God wants for you. Give your heart and life to God. To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus and His words with all your heart, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16). And after the Eunuch was baptized in Acts 8:38 to 39, he went on his way rejoicing and you can too!

We hope today's study about joy has stirred you to draw close to the Lord Jesus. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." That's one word. And be sure to like the

programs that you watch because that helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're not in that business. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Now everybody needs a church family. And I realize that some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been. You need a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. We do ask that you keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about the program. Let em know that you watch and that you want them to watch because it is a blessing to you and to them. As always we say God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.