

Experiencing the Joy of Knowing God's Purpose for Trials

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of finding joy in the Lord, even amidst trials and difficulties. It highlights the need to rejoice always, trust in God's refining work through challenges, and seek wisdom from God with unwavering faith. The goal is to experience contentment and strength in Christ, leading to a life filled with hope, joy, and peace.

Scripture: Romans 15:13, Philippians 4:4, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1:6, Romans 5:3

Description

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Transcript

I'm going to begin today's message from Romans chapter 15. Romans chapter 15, verse 13. As you're turning there, I just want to emphasize that the Christian life is not designed to prosper without the joy of the Lord.

If it's not a joy to you, something is wrong. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a man going through a field and he found treasure that had been hidden in this field. Who knows whether he stumbled it with his toe.

We don't really understand how he found it, but there was treasure partially hidden in this field. And Jesus said in the parable, the man in his joy went and sold all he had. Now that's interesting.

We hold on to things that are valuable to us. So what would cause someone to joyfully get rid of everything he had? Only something so much better. He had a new means to compare.

And while he was joyfully selling all he had, what was he thinking? I'm going to be rich. I'm going to be rich. And if serving the Lord is not that kind of joy to us, we're missing something.

We are to rejoice in the Lord always. Because the joy of the Lord is our strength. And we say it and we have a saying in the United States, time flies when you're having fun.

Paul asked the Galatians this question one time at a church that he founded. He asked them, what has happened to all your joy? How did you lose the joy of the Lord and get into living like you're doing? So joy is that crucial for us to experience the life that God has us in Christ Jesus. So if you're there in Romans chapter 15, find verse 13 and follow along.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is my desire. I do not want a single person to attend University Park Baptist Church out of some kind of obligation that you should be here.

We need to help one another discover the dynamic joy. Being filled with joy and peace in believing. Remember last week's message, we talked about the Lord laying the chief cornerstone.

I lay in Zion a cornerstone. And it happens to be the stone that the builders rejected became the head of the corner, the chief stone. And then the psalmist says, this is the day the Lord has made and I will rejoice and be glad in it.

And let me tell you why I am so full of joy that Jesus Christ is Lord, because he is going to rule his kingdom in righteousness and justice and truth. There'll be no corruption. He will not be bribed.

He will not have any other agenda. He will render decisions in behalf of the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the alien, the orphan. They will all find he cares and treats them in kindness and justice.

He's not like some modern day politician that you can't trust. He is fully reliable because he was chosen to be king by the father anointed to be king because he hates lawlessness and loves righteousness. And that's why we can so look forward to his reign because he loves righteousness.

Therefore, righteousness and truth are the foundation of his throne. And with that, we we want to be full of his joy and peace. Looking forward to it.

And I'd love us for all of us to experience a bounding in hope. See, hope is something that you experience while you're waiting for something. No one hopes for what he already has.

If you're hoping for a package, it hasn't arrived yet. If you're hoping for a certain date on the calendar, you're waiting for it. But there is a way for us to abound in hope while we're anticipating what's coming.

And in the meantime, being filled with joy and peace, anticipating the good things that the Lord is going to do. Peter talks about the same spirit. If you want to turn with me to First Peter, chapter one.

First Peter, chapter one. I think I'm going to start reading in. Verse three.

First Peter, chapter one, verse three. 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. And into an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, having been kept in heaven for you. In other words, you've already won the lottery.

Did you realize that? You don't need to play, by the way. You already won the only lottery that counts. Because Jesus Christ is the source of every treasure of God.

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. And if you have Christ, you have it all. We don't need to get our riches from the world and give them our money.

But if you want to do something, why don't you just give it to me instead of throwing it away. We'll put it to use here at the church. We're already rich in Christ Jesus.

And it says about us that we are protected by the power of God through faith. Unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. We haven't seen the fullness of salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

Because right now we still have to live in a world that has corruption and evil. That causes pain and suffering, sorrow and misery. But one day there will be a separation of the evil and the righteous.

And then the new heaven and new earth. Jesus Christ will take his throne and begin to reign. And will literally protect that realm from any form of corruption.

So that we can enjoy harmony with God and harmony with one another. Without any of the pain and suffering that evil has caused. And that's a hope.

We're waiting for that salvation to be revealed. And in that Peter says we greatly rejoice. Even though now for a little while it's necessary for us to have been grieved by various trials or tribulations.

The Greek word is thalipsis. It's various things that pressure us. Now in this life we go through very difficult things.

Even Jesus told the disciples. In this world you're going to have many tribulations. The Old Testament said the same thing.

Many are the tribulations of the righteous. But the Lord rescues them from them all. So even though we're now going through many things that press us, squeeze us.

That are difficult for us. We know it's only temporary. And not only is it temporary.

Listen to this. God has a purpose in it. It's necessary that you've been grieved by these various things that are pressing you.

So that the proof of your faith. I don't really like the English word proof there. I think the word should be refining.

It's a term that's used by the silversmith or the goldsmith. So that the refining of your faith. Because faith is not finished in us.

Our faith has a mixture of things. Some beautiful qualities of Christ. And some things that still need to be refined out.

24 karat gold is pure gold. There's no alloys. 20 karat gold means that there's 20 parts of it are pure gold.

But 4 parts of it are some other inferior metal. And 14 karat would be there's 14 parts gold. And 10 parts some inferior metal.

Well your faith has some inferior qualities. That need to be refined. Refined out.

And how does a silversmith or a goldsmith. Get the impurities or the other alloys out of gold and silver. What do they use? Because they are bonded together.

And in order to separate the elements that are bonded together. They heat them. They put them to the flame.

And the heat causes a separation between the gold or silver. And the other alloys that are there. In the same way.

The tribulations and the difficulties of this life. That are mixed together in our hearts. Need to be put to the flame.

They need to be refined. So that our faith can become purer. Less of the inferior.

And more of the pure and holy faith. That is pleasing to God. And the way God does.

What does He use to crank up the heat in our life? Tribulation. And pressures. And they're intentional.

So not only are they just temporary. They're only for this life. Because there is going to be a day.

When there are no more temptations. There are no more trials. The new heaven and earth is a perfect place of rest.

So they're temporary. That's one win. But the other win is this.

They are actually beneficial. And purposeful by God. To refine the quality of our faith.

And increase its purity. Less doubt. Closer and closer to 24 karat faith.

In the eyes of God. And this happens so that the refining of your faith. Being more precious than gold.

Which is perishable even though refined by fire. May be found to be genuine. In other words.

Genuine means 24 karat. When God. That day when we stand before Him.

There's no unbelief. In our heart. Just faith.

Now. This kind of faith. Because we begin talking about the need of the joy of the Lord.

When you understand. How God uses trials. Because you might be wondering.

Well how can we rejoice in the Lord always? And how can the Christian life. Always be full of joy. When there are so many difficulties in this life.

Some of you are here in a wheelchair. Some of you are taking dialysis. Some of you are having to take drugs to stop seizures.

Some of you can hardly see. Some of you can hardly get up without pain. And you're wondering.

How can we rejoice in the Lord always. With these things still in the world. How can you do that? Well James talks about that.

If you will turn with me. You're in 1 Peter. The book before 1 Peter is the book of James.

James chapter 1. Turn there with me. James chapter 1. And look with me in verse 2. And look what the apostle James tells us to do. To consider it.

Pure or all joy. The word consider means. Have this leading thought.

I want you to look at me. This is the leading thought. The next time you experience something really hard.

This needs to be your thought. Oh boy. All joy.

That's it. That's literally what he's saying. You can rejoice in the Lord.

Always. How can you have joy. Whenever you face various trials.

Can you remember what they're used for. Can you remember that God uses them to refine your faith. Can you remember that he's with you in the trial.

That he won't let you be tempted above what you're able to bear. But along with the temptation he'll provide a way of escape. So that you can bear up under it.

And he's going to use the difficulty to work some beautiful things in your life. To enrich and purify the quality of your faith. So James says consider it all joy my brothers.

Have this leading thought. Whenever you face various trials. Knowing this.

See you have to know this. You have to know this. That the testing of your faith.

That's that word refining again. When your faith is put to the fire by the pressures that God allows. What that results in.

The trying of your faith results in perseverance. Endurance. I know a lot of us would like to learn perseverance.

Lounging on the beach in Hawaii. Sipping something to drink. We'd like to live in Southern California where the temperature is the same all the time.

Just put me in a place where there's nothing hard. No. God to teach us endurance.

Because the word endurance literally means to remain under. Now what do most of us. We think it if we don't actually pray it out loud.

What do we think when we get in a situation that's really squeezing us. Lord get me out of here. But he says you're to have the leading thought.

That it's all joy whenever you enter these trials. Because these trials have come to do a refining work. So that you will learn you can actually stay under them.

You can endure. You don't need to get out of the situation. And then you know what you're going to learn.

You're going to learn that victory can happen in the trial. Not afterwards. You don't want to be like the people of Israel do you? Standing there's the Red Sea in front of them.

And the Egyptian army behind them. And God's kind of got the Egyptian army pinned back. Because the pillar of cloud went behind them.

They couldn't see. But what are the people doing? They're panicking. They're full of fear.

Because they have not. They had this mixture in their heart. Their hearts.

They got faith and doubt. They've seen the power of the Lord. Ten plagues deliver them from Egypt.

And now they're full of fear. Well God delivers them and sends them through the Red Sea. And then what do they do on the other side? They rejoice.

We need to learn in the middle of our trial. To have the leading thought in our mind be. Oh this is going to be good.

God is going to do something good in me. It is only temporary. And God's going to work it together for good.

Let perseverance have it's perfect work. And then what happens? You'll be it says perfect and complete. Not lacking anything.

You know why some of us fail? Many of us fail when we get in certain situations. Because we lack things. Now let's don't be too hard on ourselves.

I don't want you to get on yourself. The disciples of Jesus. They freaked out because of some things they lacked.

Remember when they were in the boat with them? They were crossing the sea. Jesus was asleep. And then suddenly a squall came up.

And it was so severe. These were fishermen that spent a lot of time in the sea. But it even freaked them out.

So they became so afraid. Because of the severity of the storm. That they cried out.

Lord wake up. Don't you care? We're about to drown. And Jesus stood up.

Rebuked the winds and the waves. And he grew immediately calm. And then he turned to his disciples.

And what did he say? Why are you so afraid? And he said where is your faith? So what were they lacking? Faith. They had some faith. They were following Jesus.

They were disciples. They were learning. But they were lacking faith.

There's deep things needed to happen in their heart. And the Lord allows storms to come into our life. So to reveal the lack of faith.

Those areas that need to be refined out. That's what James says the purpose of these. But you must know this.

And it's interesting. James and the apostle Paul. Both stress this is what you have to know.

To be able to rejoice. To have the leading thought in your mind. To count it all joy.

When the pressure gets turned up. When the heat gets turned up. And you are feeling squeezed.

You have to know what God's about. If you want to see what Paul said. Romans chapter 5. I'm going to go to Romans chapter 5. Where Paul has a very similar thought.

That is expressed by James there in chapter 1. I'm going to start right at the beginning of Romans chapter 5 verse 1. Therefore having been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom we have obtained our introduction.

Into this faith. And into this grace in which we stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only this. But we also boast in our tribulations. How many of you have been boasting in your tribulations? It's like oh right I'm under a lot of pressure.

I'm having a really tough time. It's really hot where I'm at right now. If you're not doing that.

It's because you don't know yet. There's something you don't know yet. You don't know what James says you need to know.

To have that leading thought in your mind. To consider it all joy. Paul says knowing this.

Tribulation produces endurance. Yep. You don't even need to learn to endure.

Unless it's difficult. But the more difficult it is. The more there is an opportunity for you and I to learn endurance.

How to stay under the pressure. And what does endurance work? Endurance works that same word refining. Proven character.

It's the same word. It's staying in the fire. Staying in the difficulty.

Knowing that God is at work. Knowing He's refining the inferior element of your faith out of your life. Knowing that you stay in the difficulty.

And your faith gets refined to a greater quality. A purer quality. Deeper.

Stronger. Richer. Tribulation works endurance.

Endurance works this deep refining in our hearts. And that deep refining does this. It produces hope.

May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace and believing. So that you can abound in hope. Let me ask you to ask yourself.

Are you an optimist? Are you a here we go again? Or are you a here we go again? Which is it? Which is it? Which are you? Because you're going to go through it anyway, right? You can't stop it, can you? There are certain things you can't control. But if you look to the Father. If you know He uses these things to refine in your life.

And it takes pressure. It takes difficulty. And He's at work.

He wants to produce something deep and wonderful in you. If you know that. You can know He's with you. And you can say, okay Lord, here we go. Thank you. In everything we give, thanks. I'm going to even count this joy. Because something good. Not necessarily going to be easy. See, God does not promise to keep us from hurting. But if God can take pain and make it beneficial. It doesn't harm us. So, God has His ways of testing and working in us. And it doesn't make it easy. But when we have faith. When we're of faith and we're looking to Him. We know that He's with us. We know He uses the difficulty. We know He's refining us. And we can literally say, being filled with hope. Something good is going to happen. But what happens when that's not our response? When we're unbelieving. When we don't respond in faith. Here we go again. Not again. We get pessimistic. Down in the mouth. We're like that servant. Who didn't want any trouble. He got his talent. What did he do? He went and hid it in the ground. Why did he go and hide it in the ground? Because he knew that his master was a hard man. There are those who don't rejoice in the Lord always. They don't see His presence with them as a counselor. A friend. A support. A help every day. They think of God's way as hard. They think it's hard. It's hard being a Christian. It's hard doing what's right. No. No, you got it wrong. The way of the wicked is hard. Jesus said, my yoke is easy. And my burden is light. There's nothing easier than finding yourself actually in the will of God. Doing what God says. With God with you. Working in your life. That's when life is really good. And that's what He desires. But that's something that is dependent upon faith. And you know without faith, it's impossible to please God. Let's go back to James. I'm going to flip, go back there. Because I stopped early on. James said, yeah, we're to have this leading thought. That man, whenever you face the pressures, when the heat gets turned up, have this leading thought. Alright. I'm going to enjoy this because God is about to do something in my life. God is going to work something rich in me. I'm going to learn some endurance so that I can be complete. I don't want to be lacking what I need. This is going to help me become equipped and full in my spiritual life. And then James goes on to say this in verse 5 of James chapter 1. But if any of you lacks wisdom,

because in those situations, you are going to be looking for what to do.

You're going to be wondering what to do. Because most of the time, when the situations are pressing upon us, we don't have the answers. And that's sometimes the most difficult when you don't have the answers.

So, if you lack wisdom, what you're supposed to do is you're supposed to ask God. And it says that let him ask God who gives to all. And it says generously.

Now, I do not know why they translated that generously. Because the Greek word is *aplous*. It means unfolded.

In simple. If your I be single. Same word.

He gives in an uncomplicated way. When God gives something to you, it unfolds. It makes it clear to you.

You can be wrestling with a problem. Oh, I'm not sure what to do at all. And God gives you something.

And suddenly, ah, it's simple. Why didn't I see that? That's how God gives. God gives uncomplicatedly.

And He doesn't reproach. He's not going to get on you for asking. It's the very thing He wants you to do.

He wants you to look to Him. He wants you to ask Him. And He's going to give you a clear answer.

But what did James say? Only let him ask how? In faith. Why is he saying that? Would anybody ask God and not ask in faith? Oh, yeah. People do it all the time.

Help, God, help. Lord, Jesus, help me. Kind of like in case of emergency, break glass.

They have no fellowship with Him. They have no relationship with Him. They spend no regular time with Him.

But they get in trouble. And what do they want? They want help. You think they're asking in faith? Or they're just kind of throwing it up there and hoping? That's what they're doing.

That doesn't please God. God has proven His goodness, hasn't He? Look at the heavens declare His glory. The skies proclaim the work of His hands.

He has all power. There are over 100 billion galaxies. Each of those galaxies have 100 billion stars.

There's no limit to His power, His ability. And there's no doubt about His goodness. Because while we were yet sinners, God demonstrated His own love for us.

And that while we were still sinful, Jesus Christ died for us. He who loved us so much that He spared not His only Son but gave Him up for us all. How is He not going to graciously give us all the other things? He gave us the very best He had first.

He addressed our most crucial need first. We needed rescuing from sin. And we needed eternal life.

We needed His Spirit. And He gives all these things. Does He not care about all the other things too? Of course He does.

And He expects us to approach Him that way. But when He asks, He must believe and not doubt. For he who doubts is like what? A wave of the sea.

If you saw what the original word for doubting, you'd understand it better. Diakrino means, it means this. To go back and forth in your mind.

And here's what many of us do when we're in a difficult situation and we ask God for help. Here's what we start doing. Let's see, if I do this.

And if I do this. And we start weighing things. Back and forth in our mind.

We start trying to logic it out. You're going back and forth in your mind thinking that God's going to use that process to give you the answer. The Bible says don't.

You've asked God. Why don't you just wait until He gives you an uncomplicated answer? Just don't try to reason it through. You don't have to know.

God will make it clear. You know, my children, I used to let my children play outside in the yard. Believe it or not.

I know you think I was really mean growing up, but no, I actually let them play. But if I needed their attention, it was easy. I just opened the door.

Hey! Daniel! Come here! I have any problem getting his attention. And you know what? God doesn't have any problem getting your attention either. Ask Him for wisdom.

And when the answer comes, it will be uncomplicated and it will be clear. And don't try to figure it out on your own in the process. Because you know what that makes you? Unstable in all your ways.

Well, maybe we should do this. And you end up chasing your tail around the tree, right? The only thing you do is make yourself dizzy. Wait upon God.

He loves to give an uncomplicated answer to those who... Because the man who doubts, it says, he's a double-minded man. The Greek word is he's two-souled. He has two souls.

That's interesting. You're split personality. You're spiritually schizophrenic.

You're bipolar. You don't want to be a bipolar Christian, do you? You trust God when it's all great. Thank you, God.

I love the Lord Jesus. He's wonderful. He's wonderful.

Then it gets hard. Where is God? What's wrong? Doesn't He love me anymore? That's bipolar. You don't want to be a schizophrenic Christian.

God is good. And God allows difficulties in our lives to do good things. And that's why we're to give thanks in everything.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus. We are to have the leading thought to count every difficulty we face joy. Because we're going to learn some endurance.

That endurance is going to produce some deep refining in us. And that deep refining is going to produce in us a hope. We're going to anticipate the goodness of God.

The faithfulness of God. The work of God in our lives. And we're going to be filled with all joy and peace in believing.

So that we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And it's going to make us as believers grateful, thankful, joyful. And a good testimony.

How many of us would do this? By people looking at your life. Can they get the impression that it is so good. I want to be just like you.

I want to experience such joy and freedom. And the abundant life in Christ. That it makes people envy.

How good I have it. It's possible. You know how it's possible? The apostle Paul talked about it being possible to him.

Remember? Remember what he said? If you go there to Philippians. That same book we were in. Where it says rejoice in the Lord always.

Look, let's turn there. So you can see it. I want you to see it.

Philippians chapter 4. And I'll be closing with this. Philippians chapter 4. Now remember. Remember who's writing this.

This is written by the guy who was beaten with a cat of nine tails. Five times. He was flogged five times.

He was beaten with rods three times. He was imprisoned often. He was stoned.

He was left shipwrecked out in the open sea. He had a price on his head. And there were people who were looking to kill him all the time.

And here's what he says in Philippians chapter 4 verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice. And did he prove it not? You remember the time when at midnight he was in the jail in stocks.

Sitting on the ground. Having been, having received a flogging. So his back was ripped open.

He's sitting on the ground in the lowest part of the dungeon. Of course where the rats and the smell and the filth and all of it is there. And what is he doing at midnight? What is he and his companion doing at midnight? They are rejoicing in God.

So he's not one that just writes these things lightly. He knows what he's saying. Rejoice in the Lord always.

And again I say rejoice. And let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is near.

Be anxious for nothing but in everything. Do prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving.

Because you know that God cares. And you know that he wants to give an uncomplicated answer. Present your request to God.

Let them be made to know. And you know what happens? The peace of God that passes understanding. Guards your heart from unbelief.

And it guards your mind from anxiety. So that you're filled with all joy and peace in believing. By the power of the Holy Spirit.

And this is something that Paul said he learned. If you're there in chapter 4. Flip over to verse 11. Or look at verse 11 that is.

And Paul said verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. That now at last you have revived your thinking about me.

Indeed you were thinking about me before. But you lacked opportunity. And then he says not that I lack anything.

I don't speak from what. He says I've learned to be content in whatever circumstance I'm in. Now how many of us would like that to happen? Oh boy.

I mean no matter what's happening to me. To learn to be content. Content means to be self-contained.

Self-contained. In other words, if I'm content in the Lord. I don't need anything from you.

I don't need anything from the government. I don't need anything from anybody else. Christ is with me.

And that's all I need. I'm self-contained. I've learned the secret of being content.

He says in any every situation. And then what's the secret? What did he learn? I can do all things through Christ. Who gives me strength.

So the secret of staying self-contained in every situation you face is. Jesus Christ is with me. And he will strengthen me.

And do a beautiful work in the situation that I'm in. That's just. I'd like us to experience this.

We need to experience this. So that the world can see. Our faith is real.

This is a sad part. And this is a reality. And I don't want you to be discouraged by this.

I want you to be sobered by this. You can be kind and walk in goodness. And love.

And gentleness. Trusting the Lord. I mean.

Your family and your friends. Your coworkers can see you walk in this beautiful gentleness. Seven months.

Eight months. Nine months. They see this transformation.

And one day you come in. You don't have it together. Then you're like.

You know. It's cracking the building. There you go.

That's all it was. Your life begins to fall apart. Here's the thing about that.

What are they going to remember? Seven or eight months of your kindness. Or the one minute you blew it. It's a sad part.

This is why we have such a high calling. To live such a consistent life with Christ Jesus in us. That we are constantly soberly alert.

And walking in the Holy Spirit. And giving people a chance to see. That though we're just as human as any of the rest of them.

Jesus Christ lives in us. And that's all the difference. And that makes us.

Like Paul. We learn what Paul learned. We know what Paul and James knew.

The Lord uses the difficulties. To do something wonderful in us. So when it comes.

When we sense a difficulty coming. We kind of like the old ship captain. Batten down the things that are loose.

Batten down the hatches. Tie things down. You're about to go through a storm.

And turn the ship. Straight into the wind. Straight into it.

Don't try to outrun it. Batten things down. The Lord is going to be with you.

Let hope. Make you grateful. Joyful.

And on the other side. You won't be disappointed. Okay.

God bless you.

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