

Joy in God

by C.H. Spurgeon

The Christian life is one of continuous progress, where we experience joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ and delight in His attributes.

Duration: 36:12

Scripture: Exodus 15:1, Psalm 16:11, Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:2, Romans 5:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Joy In God", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of remembering and acknowledging God as our creator and the keeper of His laws. He contrasts the troubled state of those who have forgotten God with the joy and peace experienced by those who have been regenerated and feel a kinship with Him. The preacher highlights the unique joys and blessings that come from knowing and being in relationship with God, which cannot be found in worldly pleasures. He encourages listeners to turn away from the temporary joys of the world and find true joy in God through Jesus Christ, emphasizing the need to approach God through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Transcript

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Joy in God A sermon intended for reading on Lord's Day, January 2nd, 1898. Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Thursday evening, October 2nd, 1884. Romans 5, verse 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement, or as it should be, the reconciliation.

You notice, dear friends, in reading this verse, the not only so and the also. And if you look back to the earlier verses of the chapter, you will see that there is a continual rising, as of one ascending a golden staircase. You get an also and a not only so, and then a long succession of Christian attainments rising one out of the other.

Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, and so forth. From all which it clearly appears that the Christian life is one of continuous progress. It would be so without a break if we were more careful and lived near to God.

We should go steadily on from our spiritual childhood and youth and manhood till we become fathers in Christ, and by and by perfect men in Christ Jesus, having reached the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. I am afraid that we sometimes sadly hinder that progress by our want of prayer and our

neglect of communion with God. Still, this is what true Christian life should be, a continuous going from strength to strength till we, every one of us, appear before God in the Zion above.

Let each believer ask himself how far it is so with him. It is to be feared that there are some who, after many years of Christian profession, are not holier, or stronger in faith, or fuller in wisdom than they were twenty years ago. Some believers seem to be like the children of Israel in the wilderness.

They go forward and backward. Their path is very intricate, and they make but slow progress towards the heavenly Canaan. Let us, beloved, labor to grow in grace.

Let us cry unto God to enable us to grow. Let us not be satisfied with what we have already attained, but let us always feel an insatiable craving to acquire more and more of the good gifts of the covenant of grace, that we may have all things and abound, seeing that all things are provided for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. But I want just now to bring this thought especially under the notice of young beginners in grace.

I am about to speak of an experience which belongs rather to the full-grown Christian than to the newly born believer, and it may be that I shall cause trouble of heart to some of the little ones of the Lord's family while I speak of what is more commonly enjoyed by the greater ones and the stronger ones. I do not mean to do so, but quite the reverse. You, dear friend, who have been lately brought to Christ, must not judge and condemn yourself if you do not as yet possess all the graces which belong to the more matured saint.

No one would think of condemning a child three years of old because he was not six foot high. No one would blame him because his little feet would not carry him upon a long journey. No one would expect from him the wisdom which we do look for in his father.

You cannot put old heads on young shoulders, says our proverb, and it is very true. It would be a pity that we should try to do so, for the old heads would be out of place upon young shoulders. Let the whole man be of the same age.

If therefore I talk at this time about a high and noble joy which you have not tasted yet, long for it and go the right way to gain it, but do not begin to say, I do not know that joy and therefore I am no child of God. I have not partaken of that delight and therefore I cannot be a sincere believer in Jesus. If you do so, you will be acting very unwisely.

You will be acting toward yourself in a way in which a father would not think of acting toward his own child. Christian life is a life of progress. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we are going forward and onward and upward and we hope to continue doing so until we behold the face of him we love, and then we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

A second observation I want to make is that the Christian life has its own peculiar joys. If you look through the chapter from which our text is taken, you will see that it begins with a joy. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

That is a smoothly flowing current, fathomless and full of infinite sweetness. I do not know if I had my choice of the state of heart in which I would wish to be between here and heaven, whether I would not prefer continual peace to any other condition of mind. It is a blessed thing sometimes to soar aloft as on the wings of eagles and to seem to play with the young lightnings that are at home with the sun.

It is a grand thing to live even here in the very presence of God and to feel that earth has grown into a little heaven, but I find that such an ecstatic state as that is frequently followed by deep depression. Elijah runs before Ahab's chariot, but the next morning he runs away from a woman and asks that he may die. Our great ups are not far off equally great downs, and we climb the mountains and then we slip down the cliffs.

We descend into the valley of humiliation soon after we have been on the tops of the hills of communion. If one could always be just quiet and peaceful, it would be best. Then in the second verse the apostle says, We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

That is no small joy to be always looking for His coming, in whose sovereignty we shall be made kings, and as the result of whose passion we shall be made priests, expecting to behold Him here, and then looking for the revelation of the glory when we shall be forever with the Lord. Oh, we have great joy whenever we think of heaven. Sit down and turn over the passages of scripture which relate to it.

Think of the communion of saints that you shall enjoy there, and especially of the beatific vision of the face of Him, who having not seen you love, in whom though now you see Him not yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What must it be to be there? We cannot at present tell, but the apostle says, We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And so we do.

Then in the third verse he tells us of another joy of which worldlings certainly never taste. Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also. There is a secret sweetness in the gall and wormwood of our daily trials, a sort of ineffable, unutterable, indescribable, but plainly experienced joy in sorrow and bliss in woe.

Oh friends, I think that the happiest moments I have ever known have been just after the sharpest pains I have ever felt. As the blue gentian flower grows just upon the edge of the alpine glacier, so too extraordinary joys, a zurr tinted with the light of heaven, grow hard by the severest of our troubles, the very sweetest and best of our delights. Then the apostle tells us in our text that we have another joy of which I am now going to speak.

Joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let no man's heart fail him when he hears the experience of the tried people of God. It is true that we do have troubles peculiar to the Christian state.

There are some sorrows which are not known outside the family of God. They are very blessed, health-giving, purifying sorrows, and we would not wish to be without them, but still sometimes they are very keen and cut the heart even to its very center. Yet though that is the case, and we admit that it is, we also have some peculiar joys which no others realize.

There are fruits in God's storehouse which no mouth has ever tasted till it has been washed clean by the word and by the Spirit of God. There are secret things which are not seen by the human eye, however much enlightened by knowledge, until that eye has been touched with heaven's own eye salve that it may look and still may live. Look into the glory and not be blinded by the wondrous light.

Come then, ye who are tempted by the world's joys, and see where true joy is to be found. Turn away from that painted Jezebel. She will but mock and deceive you.

Solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion's children know. If you, young people, give your hearts to Christ, you must not dream that you have come to the end of your delights. You have but begun them.

Notwithstanding the trials of a believing life, the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Now coming more closely to the text, I'm going to answer three questions. First, what is joy in God? Secondly, how is this the evidence of reconciliation? We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.

And thirdly, why is it that this joy is said to be through our Lord Jesus Christ? First, then, what is joy in God? Now, my dear friends, I have before me a topic which far exceeds my ability. I get out of my depth when I have such a question as this to answer. What is joy in God? I shall be like the swallow that touches the brook with its wing and then is up and away again.

I can do no more than skim the surface of the subject, but I know that there is to the believer a joy first in the very fact that there is a God. To the ungodly man it would be a great delight if it could be proved that there is no God. When he is at all serious and thinks upon the great problems which concern his own state, he is troubled with the thought of God, for if there be a God, then sin must be punished.

If there be a God, then a life spent in neglect of Him must entail somehow or other chastisement and sorrow. The worldling would be glad if he could be thoroughly well assured that the idea of God is a mere bugbear of priests to keep men in terror, as some say. There is something within a man that makes him feel and know that the world must have had a maker.

If it is so, full of intelligence, a someone by his intelligence superior to all the intelligence of mankind must have made it, and the man gets troubled as he remembers that he has lived so many years, and yet he has forgotten his maker and broken his laws. But the child of God, the regenerate man, who feels within him the nature of God and the kinship to the Most High, could not bear the idea of there being no God. Atheism is a black Egyptian knight to a soul that once has known God.

If we ever come to have joy in Him, anything which robs Him of His glory makes us grieve. But to prove that there is no God would be to prove that we are orphans. It would prove to us our everlasting poverty and wretchedness.

It would be to us an infinite catastrophe if we could ever be convinced that there is no God. Happily, we have no fear of any such of a calamity. We delight to know that there is a God and that God is everywhere.

Our highest joys are experienced when we are in His most immediate presence, and if we ever do anything that we should not do, if we were conscious of His presence, we know that it is wrong, and we have to grieve for doing it. But when we live as in His sight, when we truly walk with God, when we live like Enoch, who had this testimony that he pleased God, then do we realize the truest form of happiness and joy. So first, we have joy even in the fact that there is a God.

But we have joy most of all in the knowledge that this everlasting God has become our Father. We take no delight in the universal fatherhood which comes of creation. That is a poor thing and belongs as much to dogs and cats as it does to us, for they are as truly created by God as we are.

And that sort of fatherhood of which I hear men talk, which is the portion of those who blaspheme God and live in utter rebellion against Him, is not that of which the Apostle wrote. If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, says, until God renews your nature, you are children of the wicked one and not children of the Most High. Neither have you any right to talk about the fatherhood of God towards you.

Ye must be born again. And only when you are born again and have believed in Christ are you God's children. For as many as received Him, to them gave He power, the right or privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

But that fatherhood which comes of the spirit of adoption within you, because you have been born into the family of God, in this you may indeed rejoice. Now, can you not and must you not, if you have believed in Christ, joy in God as you feel that He is, through His abounding grace, your Father? Whatever He does, He is your Father. When He smiles upon you, He is your Father.

If He frowned upon you, He would still be your Father. I have told you before what the old Welsh preacher answered when his friend said to him, while you are preaching this morning, may you have the smile of God resting upon you. Yes, he replied, my dear brother, I hope that I shall have it, but if I do not have the light of God's countenance, I will speak well of Him behind His back.

So we should. When we do not have the Lord smiling upon us, we should speak well of Him behind His back. Let us be resolved to say with Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

If he should take away every comfort which I have, I am so persuaded that it will be a Father's love that will dictate the action, that I will yet still praise Him and magnify Him, do what He may. It is joy indeed when you can say that. If the Lord is strong, He is strong for you.

If He is wise, He is wise for you. If He is unchangeable, He is unchangeable to you. And whatever He is and whatever He possesses, He has made Himself over to you to be your possession, saying, I will be their God and they shall be my people.

This then is joying in God, first rejoicing that there is God and then delighting in Him as our Father. When we once reached this point in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we rejoice in every attribute of God. We delight in Him as He is revealed.

I fear me that in these days, many men are very busy trying to construct a God for themselves, such as they think God ought to be. It generally turns out that they fashion a God like themselves, for that saying of the psalmist concerning idols and idol-makers is still true. They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusteth in them.

These modern manufacturers of gods make them blind because they are themselves blind, and deaf because they are deaf, and dead because they are spiritually dead. No, beloved, there is no God but the God revealed in Holy Scripture, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the excogitation of any other God which has been the business of the sages of the present day is all a mistake and a delusion. God can only be seen in His own light.

He must be His own revealer, and no man can know God except God shall reveal Himself unto him. I trust that many of us can say that we do rejoice in God as we find Him in the Scriptures. Some quarrel with God as a sovereign, and no doctrine makes them grind their teeth like the glorious truth of divine sovereignty.

They profess to want a God, but He must not be on a throne, He must not be a king, He must not be absolute and a universal monarch. He must do as His creatures tell Him, not as He Himself wills. I adore that God who says, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Such a God as He is needs no limitation. Let Him do as He wills, for it is not possible that He should will to do anything that is unjust or unholy. Let us joy and rejoice in Him as an unlimited sovereign.

Then let us rejoice in Him as perfectly holy. The holiness of God is an attribute that may well fill us with awe. To the eyes of ungodly men, it shines like the terrible crystal of which Ezekiel speaks.

But in the word of God, whenever the song rises higher than usual, you will generally find it is a hymn in praise of the Holy God. Yea, this is the song of heaven. They rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.

The wholeness of the divine nature is seen in His holiness. There is in Him no defect, no excess. He is altogether just such as a holy soul must delight in.

I trust also, dear friends, that you and I can joy in God as to His justice. The justice of God makes men dread Him till they become His children. There are some today who pretend to preach the gospel and who really are preaching another gospel which is not another.

And they try to set forth the littleness of sin. And as for the justice of God, it seems to be ignored by them. Their effeminate deity is not worthy to be known by the name of God.

But our God is terrible in His justice. And He will by no means clear the guilty. And conscience tells every man this.

But the believer in Jesus when he sees what God did, that justice might be satisfied and that love might freely flow to the unworthy, when he beholds Christ crucified, the great Father piercing His Son with sharpest smart that He might justly put away the sin of His people, then he comes to delight in God's justice. Instead of threatening Him, God's justice becomes the guardian of His salvation with a drawn sword happy as the man who can say of every attribute of God that He adores it, the man who would not have turned back at the Red Sea and refused to sing unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously in His righteous vengeance upon the ungodly. Bow your heads before God as He is, as He declares Himself to be in His own word.

For if you do not, you are not reconciled to Him. But if you are truly reconciled to Him, you will find Him without question in all those points that sometimes seem to grate upon the air as you hear of them. And you will say, though I cannot understand, I adore.

And where I tremble before the Lord so that the joints of my bones are loose and I fall prostrate at His feet, yet even in those dread mysteries I feel that I love and I joy in God. Beloved brethren and sisters, what a blessed joy this joy in the Lord is. Sometimes you joy in your children, yet they die and then you sorrow.

At other times you rejoice in those who are grown up and are prospering, but perhaps they treat you with ingratitude and then again your joy is gone. You joy in your health and that is a great blessing, but you sicken and your joy departs. Some rejoice in their riches, you may joy in a choice friend, but after a while you may be forsaken and forgotten.

You may joy perhaps in past achievements and there may come to you a joy in your prospects for the future, but there is no joy equal to joy in God. Suppose I have nothing in the house but God. Suppose there is nothing for me to rely upon but God.

Nothing that I can call my own but God. Well, is that a little thing? Are not all creatures but the visions of an hour? But the Creator is the substantial all in all so that he who has God has all that he could possibly need. God to his people is the fullness out of which all their wants shall be supplied.

What a mercy it is that when we can joy in nothing else we can joy in God. We can joy in his power for he can help us. We can joy in his faithfulness for he cannot fail us.

We can joy in his immutability for he changes not and therefore we are not consumed. We can joy in every thought that we have of him for altogether and observed from every point of view he is the delight of his people. Well now dear friends, if we have come as far as that we can also say that we joy in God in all his dealings with us.

That is hard work says one. But when you perfectly joy in God you joy in everything that he does. Suppose you had a dear friend who came to your house and suppose you should say to him anything that there is you may enjoy or you may take.

I will give you anything you can ask for or desire. I owe my life and all my prosperity to you. Well, if you did miss that and this of your treasures which you might like to have retained when you heard that your friend had them you would be quite content.

According to that good old parable when the master went to the garden and took a very choice rose the gardener did not trouble himself with the loss of it when he knew who had plucked it. He was so glad that the master admired it that he could even rejoice that it had gone. Now dear friends, can you not get to this point that if the Lord brings you comforts you will not rejoice in them so much as in himself who brings them.

You say that you can get as far as that but if the Lord takes away your comforts can you come to this point that you will not sorrow over them but that you will joy in him who took them away. The drops are gone. Yes, but there is the fountain always flowing.

Let the sunbeam be hidden from your eye. The sun is always shining. Wherefore always rejoice in God your all in all and say yes I will rejoice in all his dealings with me.

Looking back on the whole of my own life I desire to bless God for everything that he has ever done for me. I desire to praise him for every cut of the rod for every blow of the hammer for every melting in the furnace for the crucible everything has commenced and continued and concluded as it ought to do according to his infinite love and wisdom and therefore joy in all that God does to me and bless his holy name. Then I think that we also learn to joy in all God's requirements of us and in all his teachings.

In all that he tells us and in all that he reveals to us of the world to come we learn to joy in God. Thus as I told you I have only touched the surface of this great subject. I pray the Holy Spirit to reveal to you all that there is in the blessed Trinity in which we can rejoice.

This God is our God and he has said delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. There is no fear of your delighting too much in him. So let your hearts be filled with joy.

Take down your hearts from the willows and touch every string with sacred delight as you joy in God. I was next to have answered the question how is this joy the evidence of our reconciliation to God. I have occupied so much time over the first part of my theme that I must not dwell upon this portion of the subject

but it must be clear to you that any man who can truly joy in God is reconciled to God.

That God is reconciled to him is certain or else the man would not be reconciled to God for no sinner ever was beforehand with God and if I love God I may be sure that he long ago loved me. But one of the most glorious evidences of a man being reconciled to God is when he rejoices in God. Suppose he becomes obedient to certain outward precepts that he may be and yet be very sorry that he has to be obedient to them.

Suppose he begins to repent and mourn to think that he has sinned. He may do that and yet there may be latent in his heart the wish that he could have his full of sin without fear of punishment. But when a man feels there is no one in the world that I love as I love God.

There is none that I adore as I adore the Lord. For him I would live. For him I would die.

He is everything to me. He is the source of my delight and the spring of all my joys. He is God.

You can see that the enmity in his heart is slain. You can see that now God's purposes are his purposes and God's desires are his desires. That which God hates, this man hates.

That which God loves, this man loves. You can see that he is perfectly reconciled to God because he rejoices in God. As for that part of the reconciliation which has to do with God himself, about that no question can possibly arise.

He never was asked how to reconcile God to a sinner but to reconcile the sinner to God. The Lord Jesus Christ has done perfectly that which enables God with justice to manifest mercy to the guilty. That is done.

You may take that for granted and be sure that it is done in your case when this lesser matter of reconciling you to God is most assuredly accomplished as it is when you joy in God. My last question is why is this joy said to be through our Lord Jesus Christ? Why, first, because it is through him we have received this reconciliation. No man can rejoice in an unreconciled God. As long as you look up to God and see him bound by the justice of his nature to punish you for your sin, you cannot delight in him.

You are filled with dread and dismay. But when you see Christ making a full atonement for sin, when you know that because you have believed in him you have the sure evidence that he made atonement for your sins in particular and put them away, then you feel that you are reconciled to God. God apart from Christ must be the object of dread to the guilty. I believe that in the world in general men talk a great deal more about God than they do about Jesus Christ.

At least they speak about providence and about the Almighty and so forth and there are some who say yes, God is good, he has been very good to me and in common parlance you hear much about God. But ah, my dear here, well as that may be, it is all ignorant misunderstanding until you see God in Christ Jesus. For you unconverted people, there can be nothing about God that can be comforting to you until you see him revealing himself by his own Son, the great sacrifice for sin.

Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. No man cometh unto the Father that hath seen the Father but he who knows not God knows not Christ however frequently he may speak about him. So that it is God seen through Jesus Christ to whom we are reconciled and in him we joy in the reconciled God who has at his side the man of love, the crucified of whom we sang just now.

Furthermore, we only joy in God in ourselves viewing the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything that makes a man love God like a sight of Christ? You may, when you are well trained, love God for all his goodness in creation and providence but the heart is never truly tuned to love until it comes to Calvary and I believe that afterwards the waves of love never rise to Atlantic billows except when the wind blows them from Calvary. When I behold him who is the best beloved of the Father an infant in his mother's arms a sorrowing man toiling over the rough roads of Palestine when I behold him as a bound victim led to the slaughter and willingly yielding up his life in a cruel and shameful death that he may redeem us from the curse of the law as a child clings to its mother.

Blessed be God the Father since we have beheld God the Son and our hearts have been renewed by God the Holy Ghost we can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no joy in God except as you see Jesus Christ intimately knit with him and with yourself. Do not try to go to God by any other way than through this golden gate of the great sacrifice of your redeeming Lord but just now sit here and joy in God and then go home and still joy in God.

Perhaps when you reach your door there will be some bad news for you. If so, still joy in God. Possibly when you get home there will be an ungodly husband there and no peace or comfort in the house but still joy in God.

Perhaps when you sit down to your evening meal the question may arise where will the next one be found yet still joy in God. Say with the prophet although the fig tree shall not blossom neither shall fruit be in the vines the labor of the olive shall fail and the field shall yield no meat the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

If you have between here and heaven no source of joy but your God it shall be with you as when the rock was smitten in the wilderness and the stream followed Israel through all their journeys but if you have all that heart could wish for and yet do not joy in God you have not tasted what true joy is you have only the pretense and the mockery of an adulterated delight but if you get just a sip of true joy in God though it be but as a drop by the way until you get to the wellhead in the home country you shall be cheered and comforted in a manner that worldlings cannot understand I would that some of you would come and trust the Lord you cannot joy in Him till you have trusted Him but if you trust in Jesus as your Savior you shall go onward step by step till even God Himself shall be an infinite delight to your every thought God bless you for Christ's sake Amen

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