

Whatever Happened to Joy

by David Wilkerson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving God with joy and gladness, and warns of the consequences of joylessness in the church.

Duration: 45:29

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:45, Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 100:2, Matthew 6:33, Galatians 6:9, Philippians 4:4, 2 Timothy 4:16-17

Topics: "Serving With Joy", "Spiritual Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the various forms of sadness and tragedy that people experience in life, such as illness, death, and uncertainty. However, the speaker emphasizes that the worst tragedy is when someone grows bitter towards Christ. The sermon then shifts to the story of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Bible, where God sends a spirit of sorrow and repentance to the people of Israel. The people gather together and listen to the book of the law being read, and they are deeply moved and weep when they hear the words. The sermon concludes by highlighting the importance of serving God with joy and gladness, even in the midst of trials, and trusting in Him for true peace and confidence.

Transcript

I thought of the hard times that are coming, and I thought of Paul and the ship. And, you know, if you'd have told Paul, when they were, you know, he stood on the shore and they were loading up all the food and all the timber and everything they were hauling, wherever they were, because they threw a lot of goods overboard. If you'd have stood on the shore and told Paul, and there were 250 some prisoners, say, hey, by the end of the trip you're not going to need that boat.

You know, you're going to get there without the boat, they'd have laughed. You know, that's incomprehensible. You know, our ministry is the boat.

You'd be surprised when the storm comes how much you can throw overboard and still survive. I found that out. And you'd be surprised how you can still survive without the boat.

Because the Lord led them, even in the storm, led them to the Alta Miletus. Now, isn't it surprising that all through the storm, nobody gets saved, but when they lose the boat, everybody gets saved. I wonder if there isn't a lesson in there sometimes, you know.

We think without our buildings, without, see, all this equipment around here, you know, we're taping, today evidently you're taping. We wonder, you know, what happens if the total depression comes, we lose all the buildings and we lose all of our equipment. But suppose, you know, you've got to throw everything overboard.

That doesn't mean that you change. Paul was still Paul. And they throw everything overboard, and then the boat still cracks, it hits the rocks and sinks.

And they all walk ashore, soaking wet and cold and rainy, but they have a revival. And everybody, all the prisoners get saved, and in the Isle of Miletus, a revival breaks out. And boy, God just dealt with me this morning.

We need not fear the loss, in fact, of anything, because in the Old Testament Scriptures it said, you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. That means the loss of all things. So really, the thing that really accounts to God is not how many buildings we accumulate or how much equipment we have.

And sometimes we think we need all of that. But, you know, what did they do before Gutenberg and the press? What did they do before we had all these things? They preached the Gospel and the Holy Ghost made up the difference. I had a reporter ask me one day, he said, Mr. Oaks, what are you going to do when the money fails and you don't have to do like everybody else does? Everything is going to dry up, what are you going to do? I said, we'll probably be forced to go back doing things the way Jesus did.

And that's not so bad, is it? Okay. The message is whatever happened to joy? Whatever happened to joy? Lord, we're hungry this morning and we need You. We acknowledge You because You are the source.

Not only the source, You are the truth and You are the life. And nothing matters, Lord, unless life comes out of what we have and what we say and share. Let the life come.

Lord, You've come that we might have life, abundant life. We're not to look at the conditions of this world, we're to look to You, the author and the finisher of our faith. Lord, I pray that before I'm finished this morning, there'll be a sense of rejoicing and gladness in our hearts when we see how seriously God takes this matter.

Lord, this is a truth that we have so neglected. Lord, I didn't even see it, I didn't know You thought so seriously about this matter. But I do now and I pray that You help me project the seriousness of this thought to everyone listening in Jesus' name.

Amen. Whatever happened to joy? I believe the Holy Spirit is really yearning to bring us all, the whole church, back to serving Him with joy and gladness. And I think God is really grieved when He witnesses the wet blanket of despair that's falling over the whole church body.

The Word of God doesn't ask, it commands this. Now listen closely. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness. Proverbs 10.28. Psalm 68.3 Let the righteous be glad.

Let them rejoice before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Isaiah 12.3 Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. Psalms 5.11.12 Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice.

Let them ever and always shout for joy because thou defendest them. Philippians 4.4 Rejoice evermore. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Yes and again I say, rejoice. Jesus writing to His disciples said, Now if you'd love me, you would rejoice. If you don't believe that, John 14.28, look it up.

If you really love me, you would rejoice. Happy is the people. Happy is the people whose God is the Lord.

Now joy, according to the dictionary, means pleasure, delight, exhilaration of spirit, excitement caused by a certain hope. Rejoicing means joy in the highest degree. It's not joy, but joy in the highest degree.

It means to be not glad, but intensely glad. It's a superlative. Happiness means fully contented and extensive pleasure.

Extensive pleasure. How many Christians do you know who are exhilarated, excited, intensely glad, fully contented, experiencing joy in the highest degree? How many? Jesus said to His disciples, When they shall separate you from their company, and they shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil, rejoice in that day and leap for joy. Now, if Jesus hadn't said it, it would sound absolutely ridiculous, but there it is, black and white and divine.

It says when you rejected persecution and you kicked about, jump up and down with excitement. Let it give you the highest degree of joy, delight in it. Do you know anybody doing that? When the Holy Spirit first began to deal with me on this, I wasn't looking for this message.

I was looking for something, you know, dramatic. I want to blow people right out of their seats. You know, Lord, I'm going to convict people and bring them down to the altars.

But when God began to deal with me about the seriousness of serving Him with joy and gladness, I thought, well, what does this have to do compared to all the heavy problems in the world of sex and drugs and alcohol? I think it's because I didn't fully understand at that time God's attitude, what He thinks about our service to Him with joy and gladness. And I thought, well, so what, you know? I don't always experience happiness in my Christian walk. Sometimes I get blue, and the problems of life get me down, and you look at the future and it gets so bleak and dark, and you feel depressed and fearful at times, and I know that deep inside the joy is there, and maybe I don't show it, I'm only human.

How worried could God be about how I show joy and gladness in my heart when I'm down? But you see, that's not good enough according to the Word of God. The matter of serving God with joy and gladness and excitement and exhilaration is taken probably the most seriously by God of any other attitude that a Christian can show. And I'm going to show it to you.

You'll see, under the old covenant, and what I did, God said, get your Bible out, and I took a whole day, hours and hours, probably 10 to 12 hours, going all through the Bible and just writing. I think I came up with about 18 written pages of what God had to say about joy and gladness, and by the end of the day, I was absolutely flabbergasted at what I had missed and what the Lord was trying to say to me. Under the old covenant, God gave me a very clear picture of His attitude about Christians and believers serving Him in a spirit of joy and gladness.

If you go to Mount Ebel, you remember God gave them a covenant. It's called the Mount Ebel Covenant. And He pronounced a blessing for those who would obey Him, but then a curse.

And the curse involved six tragedies. Slavery, hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things, a yoke of iron about the neck until destroyed. Now, what kind of terrible sin could the children of God commit that would bring about six terrible curses, a sin that would destroy them? Think of that.

Slavery, hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things, a yoke of iron about the neck until destroyed. What a terrible thing! Lost incest, rape, murder? No! Of course, disobedience is a part of it. But here, the very next verse, "...because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things He has done." Boy, I couldn't believe it.

A curse of slavery, of hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things, a yoke of iron about the neck until destroyed. Deuteronomy 28, chapter 45, begin to read it and it's all there. You say, well, can God be that severe about joy and gladness in our service to Him? In New Testament days, this is a day of grace.

Certainly, you know, God can't be that concerned. Now, God's really not concerned about what He sees on your face because it's possible, and I know with me especially, it's possible to have a drawn, tired face, primarily because some of us just don't sleep that much at night. I do my writing at night and I wake up with a long, drawn, tired face.

And if you saw me, you'd say, there's a very sad man. And that's not true because you can have an inner joy and still not be always carrying a cold, gay grin. But on the other hand, it's impossible, absolutely impossible to hide the genuine joy of the Lord.

Somewhere, if it's real, it's going to show in your countenance. In the Old Testament, when there was anointing, the Bible said their faces did shine. There was a shine on their face that exemplified the anointing within.

And the prophet Joel predicted that in the last days, joy was going to wither and die. Joel 1.12, Yea, joy and gladness is cut off from the house of God. Joy is withered from the sons of men.

That's prophetic. He's speaking about the times, the last days. He said joy is cut off, it's withered from the house of God, from the people of God.

Now, this drawing up of the joy and gladness in the lives of believers is evident everywhere you look. You know, a majority of God's people look just as sad and defeated as their sinner friends. And it's disgraceful.

And the sinner says, why should I serve the Lord? You look just as sad and depressed as I am. It brings you no joy, why should you try to push it on me? And I think the time is coming, and it's here now, when the question has to be asked, if you're really sincere before God, how am I really serving the Lord? And what's my attitude? Do I serve Him only through a fear of hell or through obligation? Is it a half-hearted service? Have I taken the Lord for granted? Or do I have this unspeakable joy the Bible talks about? Is my joy and gladness withered? Am I really excited and full of ecstasy about knowing Him? Does my heart ever shout and leap for joy because of the abundance of things He's given to me? Am I a worthy testimony to the loss that Christ can fill your heart with joy and ecstasy at the highest degree of joy? Or have I become another one of those depressed, worried Christians? Is there enough joy overflowing in my heart to overflow into my actions and the way I speak, my conversation? Or have I become a murmuring complainer like the children of Israel who wasted away in the wilderness? Do I drag through my day like the whole world was on my shoulder? And when's the last time I really smiled? Now let me give you a few reasons why the joy is withering in the house of God. And I think this gets very, very personal.

First of all, we've grown weary of the way the Scripture says. We've lost the joy because we've wearied of the way. Thou hast been weary.

And the word weary means bored. You've been bored with me, O Israel. Thou hast made me serve with thy sins.

Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. And the prophet Malachi looked over the tragic condition of God's house in his day and he was unbelievable. He was incredulous.

He said, God's people are bored. Their services of God are monotonous. Their worship has become mercenary.

Ye have said, behold, what a weariness it is! What a boredom it is! Ye've snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts. Malachi 1.13 And what the prophet is saying, my people have become bored with me. They've dragged their feet in monotonous service at the altar.

He said, you're simply going through the motions. Your heart's no longer in it. You drag unwilling offerings to the altar.

You bring to me the diseased and the lame and the weak. You don't give me the best anymore. And tragically, the Bible says, Malachi said, the priests won't even shut the door, they won't even touch the altar without pay.

They're mercenaries. They'll do nothing for God except for money. They use the ministry to feather their own nest.

And what a sad condition. You see it today. History repeats itself.

Covetous ministers of the altar could become highlings. The temple worship here was a farce. And if you looked at Israel, then look how slow they move in.

They almost hate to get up in the morning and they move into the temple. They move slowly. The choirs drag through.

The instruments mourn. There's no excitement, there's no joy, there's no pleasure. And they were playing a dangerous game of hypocrisy.

They were in a religious what? They'd sing half-hearted songs, give half-hearted offerings, and listen to a half-hearted preacher give a half-hearted message. They hurried to the last amen and they quickly ran out of the house of God. And I'll tell you, the reason they were sad and bored and monotonous is because they had a sense of utility and helplessness.

You have said, it is vain to serve God. It's useless. And what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? No, the prophet said, you have said, what's the use? What good is it to work so hard at pleasing God and doing right when it doesn't seem to pay off? And why sacrifice, fast, and pray? Why be so rigid and religious? It's useless.

It's boring. Nothing changes. My prayers aren't answered.

I'm still flooded with problems. And I'll tell you, the same thing is true today. When there's no life in God's house and the preachers are dead and the alders get monotonous, the people develop a sense of utility and helplessness and they simply give up.

They go through the motions only because they're afraid of God and sometimes they drag crippled, cheap sacrifices to it and often they keep going to church because it's a thing to do and yet they dread every minute of it. Is that right? And all across America, people write to me and they tell me of the sad condition of their church. They talk about preachers without a burden who can't preach.

They complain of dead, dry worship services that are monotonous and boring. Their churches are dead. They go through the motions.

They drop a little money in the basket. The choir sings their dreary songs. The church functions.

The programs keep dragging on, but there's no joy. There's no excitement. There's no gladness.

There's no shout of victory. It's dead. And I think one of the rarest things in the world today is a red-hot, joyful church with a man of God and a pulpit who says something.

Who really says something. It's one of the rarest things in the world today. And I've heard people say, I've given up trying to find a church that really meets my need and that of my family.

I get up every Sunday. I dread the thought of sitting through another boring worship service. Where in the world am I going to find a church that's on fire? And I'll tell you this, wherever there's a church that's really got the joy and the liberty of the Spirit, you can mark it down and Devil is going to do everything within his power to rob that preacher and that church of its joy and bring some kind of legalistic bondage to it.

Try to bring a teacher or a teaching into the church that robs it of its joy. Now, as important as the role of the church is, serving the Lord with joy and gladness is simply a personal responsibility. It's personal.

Let us not be weary or bored in our service. Galatians 6.9 God will not let any one of us blame the loss of our joy and gladness on some boring preacher or a poor church situation because the Scripture says it's our privilege and it's our duty to maintain the joy and gladness of the Lord through our own personal dealings with God. Our own personal dealings.

Now, the Bible is full of accounts of men and women who stood alone. There was no ideal church situation. There was no red-hot preacher trying to excite them toward the service of God and prime and pump their joy and gladness.

Paul said at my first answer, No man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God it will not be laid to their charge. Nevertheless, the Lord stood with me and He strengthened me.

The Lord did it. I had a personal thing going with God. You remember all of Israel complaining and murmuring.

They lost the joy. They're wasting away in the wilderness except for two. Joshua and Caleb, who to the very end maintained a spirit of joy and gladness when everybody around them, the whole church of Israel was dead and dying.

These two men kept the joy and gladness of the Lord to their dying day. Remember when the whole country, all nations were bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol, 90 feet high, and all the ecclesiastical leaders and all the church people and all the Jews, all God's people were bowing down at the sound of the music except for Daniel and three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You know what their attitude was? I don't care if the whole world goes to hell.

I don't care if everybody else fails God. I don't care. I'm going to keep what I have with the Lord.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego leaped through that fiery furnace with the joy of God in their hearts. But everybody else is bowing down to the idols. Hallelujah.

They're saying, you know, people say you can't fight the government, you can't fight the spirit of the age, but they said, well, for us, nothing monotonous about it. There was an excitement that took them right in the midst of the fire furnace. You know, God still has his people, and he's going to have his people to the last day who in times of tribulation and trial, they lift up their heads.

They shine as beautiful examples of how the joy of the Lord is possible in the midst of any trial. They are testimonies of God's faithfulness. God says of them, they trust me, that's why they have joy.

Their hearts are at peace. They have a rock of confidence in me. Our joy and gladness is not founded on what a church does for us or what a minister does or even our friends.

It's that personal relationship, and it's based on a foundational truth that you and I have to have, and God showed this to them, and it's very, very real. And if you don't get anything else I say, understand this now. Our joy and gladness has to come from the knowledge that we are always, always under his protective wing.

Always. We're never out from under his protective wing. Psalm 63, 7, Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

He says, I will have the highest degree of pleasure. I'll have the highest degree of joy because I have an inner knowledge that I'm under the wing of my heavenly Father. No wonder Paul said, I'm exceedingly joyful in all my tribulations.

Exceedingly, it means beyond comprehension. He said, beyond anything you can comprehend, I have the highest degree of pleasure even in my tribulation and trials. How can anyone who realizes they're under the protective wing of our Savior, how can you not have that sense of inner joy and gladness? And anything else has to be a blasphemy, has to be an abuse to God himself.

It has to be an affront, that you could be under the protective wing of God and have that knowledge and then never rejoice in it. Secondly, joy is lost when fear is allowed to take root in our hearts. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts without fear, because fear hath torment.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love. Now, fear is always the result of disobedience and hypocrisy. Now, listen closely.

It's unforsaken sin that causes the people of God to tremble in the presence of the Lord. Don't you dare be in a red-hot Holy Ghost meeting with sin in your life. Oh, the despair! It's the loss of all joy and peace because of besetting sin has not been dealt with.

Isaiah said, and boy, I never saw this before, but listen to it now. He said, the sinners in Zion... Zion is the church. The sinners in the church are afraid.

Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites. A fear has seized upon the hypocrites. The sinners in Zion are afraid.

You know, see, the unconverted, the drug addict, the alcoholic, the man on the street, he's afraid, the Bible said, and his heart fades him for fear of watching those terrible things coming on the earth. He's afraid because of the signs of the time, about the future. That's the cause of his fear, but not so for the believer.

Not so for those who've known Christ as Lord and Savior. The fear and the alarm and the Christians' direct result of high bring a secret sin. Without doing that which is evil, be afraid.

Romans 13.3. It's just the same with Adam. When he sinned, he hid himself in the face of God because you can't look God in the face when you have sin in your life. And that's when he lost the joy.

What a tragic day when sin came in to the garden of Adam and he lost the joy. That was one of the greatest tragedies of all. Serving the Lord with joy and gladness is absolutely impossible if you've got sin in your life that's been unforsaken.

Paul warned, boy this is heavy, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. Jew first and also the Gentile. What is it? Tribulation and anguish.

That's anguish of spirit. Total sorrow of spirit for those that doeth evil. That's why you see so many depressed, sad Christians today.

You know, if you show me a minister that has an unforsaken sin in his life, I'll show you one of the saddest, most miserable men on the face of the earth. I'm thinking right now of the young evangelist that's wandering the streets of Haight Ashbury in San Francisco, barefooted, stoned. That was my lost wife and three children.

He carried this secret sin all through his ministry. One day it just overpowered him and he's out in the street, he's lost. Doesn't even know his name.

Most sad, mournful man you could ever meet. You show me any Christian who has disobedience in their life, and I'll show you somebody that's a bundle of nerves, wracked by guilt and condemnation, shame and sorrow. They're joyless, they're sad.

Can it be that we're bored and we're fearful because we're not honest with God? Come on now. Others allow fear to take root, not because of sin that's asserted, but because of an unresolved tribulation or sorrow that they're going through. Now listen to it.

Unreserved sorrow. Unresolved sorrow. It's a sorrow that you have not made the complete cycle through.

You haven't come through the other side of the tunnel yet. David said, tribulation, trouble and anguish have taken hold on me. Now that was after his sin and his child dies and he has sorrow and he's lost the joy and the anointing of the Lord.

But sometimes it comes through things that are beyond our control. In order to hear the continuation of the message, stop your tape machine and turn the cassette over. And how sad to stand helplessly by when you see somebody wasting away with cancer.

How sad to stand by when somebody dies in an airplane crash. How tragic, how sad. I think it's worse to see somebody grow bitter toward Christ.

That's worse. And it's unsettling today. You look at the uncertain future.

I know a minister friend in the East who's been trying to sell his home for months and now he can't sell it and he's in total despair. Others are trying to buy a house. They need a roof over their head.

There's unemployment. People living in insecurity. They're wondering if they're going to be fired.

There are problems in health problems, business problems, and education problems, and career problems. And all this conspires to rob us of our confidence in the Lord and take away our joy and gladness. It's a conspiracy of Satan to rob us of our joy.

And we're warned against failing to rejoice in the time of tribulation and sorrow. God said, don't let your pain rob you of your joy and gladness. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fire trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as you may partakers of Christ's suffering that when his glory shall be revealed, you shall be glad with exceeding joy.

And Paul goes further. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. You know, an Ecclesiastical preacher said, well, the Bible says in Ecclesiastes, sorrow is better than laughter.

But if you go down another chapter, it says even in our laughter there is sorrow. See, that's the vicissitudes of life, it's the problems of life. See, Paul even comes close to the point, he said, wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, now for a season, a small time, if need be, ye are in heaviness to manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, yet believe, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Hallelujah. You know what he's saying? Now, it's strong stuff. He says, this is written to you, who are right now experiencing a season of grief and anguish.

He said, if need be, for a little while, go ahead and grieve. Get it out of your system. But I want you to know you're being tested by fire, a fiery trial, and the Lord says, I won't let you linger very long in your sorrow, because my plan and desire for you is that His joy and gladness shall be your strength.

Now listen to this, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Not your faith, not your prayers, not your good deeds, your joy is your strength. You have no joy, you have no strength.

The Lord said, if you can simply learn to trust Me, and believe that He knows exactly why He did what He did, and what He is doing, and relax in this knowledge, the steps of a righteous person awarded by the Lord, then trust Me. The joy will return. And I'll tell you something, saints, we're all going into the furnace anyhow.

We're all going into the furnace. If I know anything in my walk with God, I know this to be the truth, I know a lot of people don't like to hear this, but I want to tell you, the Bible, if you know your Bible, and I have

studied my Bible more in the past two and a half years than I have in the twenty previous, and I know my Bible now, and the Bible paints a bleak, scary picture of the last days, and we haven't seen anything yet to what is coming. The future is absolutely humanly impossible.

The Lord warns of violence and war and earthquakes everywhere, famines, pestilence, and He says, fearful sights and great signs from heaven. Fearful. There's going to be persecution, betrayal, hatred, perplexity on all sides.

Men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, the powers of heaven even are going to be shaken. Now see, this trouble that's coming, the Lord Himself called it a trap, a snare. For as a snare it shall come upon all them that dwell on the face of the earth.

This beginning of Saul's is going to catch many of God's people unprepared. They're going to get trapped in this snare because they don't enter into the last days with joy and gladness. They enter into it with despair.

They enter into it weak without the strength of the joy of the Lord. And I tell you, with what's coming ahead, you and I better have some joy. It's not going to see you through without it.

Alright, finally. Joy withers because we're ignorant of the glorious liberty of the cross. We're ignorant of the liberty of the cross, and that's why joy withers.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now, there are very few Christians that I meet that have the truth about the liberty and the life-freeing glory of the cross of Jesus Christ. They've never allowed the cross to set them free from their fear and their bondage.

And I like what Austin Sparks said, that great English preacher. He said, No man or woman is worth anything to God until they have the knowledge of their security in the cross. Until they know how secure they are in Jesus.

You have no value to the kingdom of God. You've got to know the liberty that the cross has provided for us. How can you rejoice and be exceedingly glad when you have a poor or limited knowledge of the cross? Because if you have a limited knowledge of the cross and what it means, then you're serving the Lord through fear or bondage, and all you can say, Well, the Lord died on the cross to save me from sin and to save me from a fiery hell.

That's it. I don't know much more than that. Paul saw a glorious revelation of a liberating cross.

It meant freedom to him. He said, Brethren, you've been called to liberty. That's freedom.

From any foreign oppression. Freedom from anybody's authority that is supernatural. Any supernatural authority other than God's.

Stand fast. He said, Hold on tenaciously. Don't let go of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. You see, it's not only what we're saved out of that brings freedom, it's what we're brought into that brings the freedom. A lot of people get saved out of Egypt and get stuck in the wilderness and they never go to the Promised Land.

They've never known the rest and the trust of the cross. The rest that remains for the children of God is the liberty of the cross of Jesus Christ. It's the freedom from guilt and bondage and fear.

It's a rest that brings joy and gladness and rejoicing to the heart. Because the creature itself, that's you and me, also shall be delivered from the bondage corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He said that's what the cross is going to do for you.

It's going to deliver you from the fear of corruption, the fear of sin, and deliver you into a spirit of liberty. It's going to take you out of fear, but that's not enough. You can be rid of all fear and still be in a state of nothingness.

You've got to be brought out of fear into liberty. Liberty means freedom or release from slavery. It means a power to choose.

It's independence from oppressive powers. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ, He said, to proclaim liberty to all captives, liberty to them that are bruised. You sit here bruised this morning? He said, that's my minister, Jesus said.

It's liberty to you. He said, no longer will the devil control your will. No longer can you say, I can't help myself, because now we're free to forsake our besetting sin.

All your bondage after you repent is self-inflicted. It's not necessary. Joy is withered because we don't fully accept Christ full and free, forgiving grace.

We don't accept it. You see, it seems more holy to go on repenting and confessing, repenting and confessing all life long. It feels more holy.

You cry more, you cry a river of tears. I know people that get saved and re-saved, filled, refilled, baptized, re-baptized, and they just go around that miracle realm, and they never do spin off into the liberty of the Holy Ghost, through the cross. They live their whole lifetime in bondage because bondage feels holy.

We seem to forget that once we've confessed our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And you can't grasp the truth of the cross until you believe that God is no longer angry with you once you repent. He's no longer angry.

Here's something that you and I simply can't bring ourselves to believe. Here it is. The Lord taketh pleasure in His children.

So let the saints be joyful in glory. Why? Because the Lord takes pleasure in me. He loves me.

He takes pleasure and joy in me. Oh, God help you if you have to believe that Christ tiptoes around behind you, just waiting for you to fail. I got you! I knew if I waited long enough I'd get you.

Oh, we don't have a spy in the sky. No, no, no, no. See, there's a time to repent and there's also a time to rejoice in forgiveness.

Now, I want to show you something. I'm going to take you back to the first water gate. That's right, water gate.

Did you know the water gate's in the Bible? Ezra, Nehemiah's a cupbearer and he gets a burden. Go back and rebuild Jerusalem. Remember, Jerusalem is ruined.

It's laying in ruins. The walls have crumbled and the gates are down and the children of Israel are in a mess. There's degradation and there's wickedness.

They're cheating. They're charging high usury, taking advantage of one another. They're marrying heathen wives.

And here comes Ezra and Nehemiah. And God's about to do a work with Israel. He's about to revive Zion.

And God sends a spirit of sorrow and repentance on Israel. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood and he opened the book. And when he did, the people stood up. So they read the book in the law of God distinctly.

They gave the sense and cause of the people to understand the meaning of it. And the people wept when they heard the words of the law. All of Israel repented.

For hours they wept and they repented and they were in agony and anguish of soul. They were mourning. They grieved.

And even though there was going to be more that the Holy Spirit had to do and the Holy Spirit had not yet finished the work of obedience, yet in their heart they repented. And Ezra and Nehemiah stand up in front of the people that are grieving. You look at this.

Thousands and thousands of people repenting and weeping and crying and confessing their sins. And in the middle of all that, this prophet of God stands up and he said, This day is holy unto the Lord your God. Mourn not.

Weep no more. Neither be you sorry for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And that's where that Scripture comes from.

You repented. Now get happy. Don't keep on repenting.

You've repented now. Stop repenting and rejoice. No more depression.

No more grief. No more guilt. No more condemnation.

You've repented. Now it's time to sing. And the people went their way to make great mirth.

That means happiness. They were tremendously happy when they heard those words because they understood the words declared to them. Oh, that's the knowledge that brings the joy, the knowledge of forgiveness.

If you say, Lord, I'm sorry, you're repenting, don't go digging around trying to invent another sin. Man, some of you have been digging around in the garbage heap so long, trying to analyze and psychoanalyze yourself. We go to people and we repent and repent and repent.

We never stop and say, Thank you, Lord, I'm forgiven. Hallelujah. See, if you don't accept that, you don't believe that the cross of Christ, that the suffering of Christ and the sacrifice was complete.

When Jesus died on the cross, you don't have to understand propitiation. You don't have to understand atonement. You don't have to understand justification, sanctification, all the legal terms.

You don't have to understand. All you have to understand is that whatever Jesus did on the cross, it was sufficient. God satisfied.

God is completely satisfied. He's not mad at you. He's not mad at me anymore.

Satisfied. Completely satisfied so they can release your soul and release mine from walking through life with the burden and guilt and there could be joy of the Lord. Oh, there ought to be singing.

There ought to be rejoicing in the house of God. And we go around. Lord, I wonder if I've gotten to the bottom of my problem yet.

Lord, dig it all out. Dig it, Lord. We've been digging and digging and digging and walking around like grave diggers.

He said, You're reconciled. God said, I'm at peace with you. If you don't rejoice in that, that's the greater sin than anything you could commit.

Anything you try to confess couldn't be nearly as wicked as not accepting His finished work at the cross. You know how God yearns to be enjoyed. He doesn't understand why you and I don't enjoy Him.

He said that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. He said that my joy in you might be fulfilled. That's why it said ask largely that your joy might be fulfilled.

Listen to this. And the ransom of the Lord shall return and they shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and the sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

So don't you dare despise the grace of God. And that's what you do when you don't accept it. You say, You're going to get it.

You're going to obtain. By accepting your forgiveness and resting. That's the greatest peace I have.

That's the source of all my joy this morning. My heart leaps. I'm not doing a little jig up here.

And you don't have to put on some outward show and you don't have to be into some kind of an emotional outburst. But there's got to be something settled in your heart. Jesus did something of the cross for me.

I may not understand it all, but I know that God's satisfied. He's not mad at me. And all I've got to do is say, Lord, I'm sorry.

You may not even know the extent of your sin. You may not even know all the ramifications, but you confess it. And having confessed it, rise up in forgiveness and say, Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. And live in the glory of forgiveness. Live in the glory of it.

Hallelujah. We're forgiven. Do you understand how serious this matter is now of serving the Lord with joy and gladness? Father, give us a spirit this morning of joy and gladness.

Lord, it doesn't matter what happens in these last days. We could lose all of our buildings. Even if we lived in tents, nobody can take the joy of the Lord and our gladness from us.

Hallelujah. Lord, I rejoice in you this morning. I rejoice in you this morning.

Would you just thank Him right now. Come on, let's just thank Him, Lord. Thank you for forgiveness.

Thank you for saving me, Lord. Thank you, thank you, thank you for washing my sins away. I'm free, Lord.

There's no guilt. There's no condemnation. I'm forgiven.

I rejoice in you, Lord. Hallelujah. God's not mad at me.

God loves me. So rejoice in the Lord, ye saints. Rejoice in the Lord and be happy.

Hallelujah. Lord, forgive our unbelief. Forgive our unbelief.

This concludes the message. For copies of this message or a list of other messages by Reverend David Wilkerson, contact World Challenge, P.O. Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771. Unauthorized reproduction of this message is prohibited.

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