

Chapter 9: Joy

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[0:00] Good morning. Please turn to Philippians 4.4. We're at chapter 9. The title of this chapter is Scriptures and Joy.

! He throws it away and begins pursuing something else.

In John 14.13, Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. And so it is with the worldling. But some believers consider it a virtue to remain gloomy.

They feel guilty if they are happy in such a world of sin as we are in, to quote Pink. They've made Jesus' words, Blessed are they who mourn their life first.

And by watching them, you would think that this familiar passage in Philippians 4.4 read, Grieve in the Lord always. And again, I say grieve. What's wrong with this picture?

[1:15] I think Isaiah summarized it well. Listen to Isaiah 55.1 and 2. Come all who are thirsty. Come to the waters.

And you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread and labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me and eat what is good. And your soul will delight in the richest affairs. Well, as I began this study and this chapter from Pink, I must confess that I struggled after getting about two pages into it.

For example, in commenting on Philippians 4.4, Pink stated, That the Lord has not left it to our option, whether we should be glad or sad, but has made happiness an obligation.

Not to rejoice is a sin of omission. Pink seems to be using the word joy, rejoice, and happy synonymously throughout the chapter. And here he is saying that it is sin for me not to be glad all the time.

[2:37] Well, that just didn't settle with me. Whatever happened to Jesus' pronouncement that blessed are those who mourn? Aren't we to mourn with those who mourn?

Are joy and happiness truly synonymous? I had always reconciled the seeming contradiction of these verses by differentiating between biblical joy and earthly happiness.

So as I said, I wasn't two pages into this before I set on a study to confirm my understanding of the subtle differences between these words. Well, to my chagrin, what I discovered is that Scripture seemed to support pink.

For instance, in Psalm 68.3, we read, But may the righteous be glad and rejoice in God. May they be happy and joyful.

It's just using all the words interchangeably. And there's passage after passage that does this in Scripture. Well, why was this a big deal to me? Well, because my religion, if it doesn't address the realities of life, isn't much of a religion at all.

[3:53] Who would deny that they regularly are overcome by emotions of sadness that sweep over us like a flood, usually through circumstances totally outside of our control?

Are we to suggest that a parent who has just lost a child or a widow who has just suffered the loss of her husband is sinning whenever a flood of grief overwhelms their souls? This was very practical to me.

Or how can one be blessed when he mourns, as Jesus stated, if by definition one is sinning whenever he is anything other than happy? My purpose in relating this story isn't so much to expose my ineptness as your teacher, because I'm sure you're all quite aware of that already, but to arrest your attention to the profound applicability of the subject of joy.

So what's the answer to the paradox? Well, I could have saved myself a whole lot of time if I would have read past page two in the chapter by Pink. For this morning, I've merged Pink seven points into five, and the first one is that we know we are profiting from the Word when we perceive that joy

is a duty.

When we perceive that joy is a duty. Again, look at Philippians 4.4. It doesn't say grieve in the Lord always. It says rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I will say it, rejoice.

[5:17] I just would like to simply break this into three parts. One, we are to rejoice in the Lord always. Notice the extent of the rejoicing.

It's all the time. It never is to cease. Always means perpetually, incessantly. Then we are to rejoice in the Lord always. Rejoice, the verb rejoice, is in the present act of imperative.

Imperative means it's a command. Present means it's continuous action. In present time, we're just always to be doing it. And active means that the subject is the one to be doing action. The subject in this verse is us Christians, you believers.

So this is something that God expects every believer to do all the time. But then thirdly, rejoice in the Lord always.

How can we mourn the loss of a loved one and fulfill our duty to rejoice all the time and do them both at the same time?

[6:21] How can we mourn over our sin while also rejoicing? The answer to the seeming dichotomy lies in this little prepositional phrase, in the Lord.

And this leads us to Pink's second observation. We know we are profiting from the word when we learn the secret of true joy.

What is true joy? We can become confused over the subject of joy if we have a wrong view of the nature of joy itself. Is joy a natural buoyancy of spirit?

Some of us are extroverts. Some of us are introverts. Some of us smile in bubbly nature while others, I won't say I'm in this category, but have more of a somber disposition.

Some of us will brighten a room as soon as we walk in. Others of us don't have quite that effect.

Must all introverted, sober-minded people become flamboyant extroverts to obey this command?

[7:26] Well, Scripture presents the state of joy as being a settled peace with and thanksgiving to our God. It's bathing in and appreciating an unhindered relationship with one's maker.

This spirit of peace and thanksgiving will manifest itself differently in different personalities. But regardless of personalities, two ways in which joy will be expressed in every believer are synonymous with the word itself.

Rejoicing and happiness. We already saw that. We tend to only look on the surface. So lest those of you who are naturally buoyant of spirit use this hour to catch up on some of your sleep, let me try to draw you into my net of application by stating early that there are many people in this world that have an upbeat, positive, smiling personality who don't have an ounce of true joy, who do not live their lives in a state of settled peace with and thanksgiving to God, who are not bathing in and appreciating an unhindered relationship with their maker.

If joy by definition will manifest itself through rejoicing and happiness, can we truly be happy all the time?

Could one be sorrowing over the death of a friend while rejoicing over the birth of their newborn baby, both at the same time? Well, I think you'd readily say yes. Of course he could.

[8:57] There's many natural examples where we see that there's a mixture of sorrow and happiness that we all live within. What are some circumstances or attitudes that can throw a wet blanket over our joy?

I'd like some participation here. What are some circumstances or attitudes that can throw a wet blanket over our joy? Very good.

Selfishness. Again, these things like selfishness is a negative. These don't have to be things that are biblically correct.

Most of them are not. Some of them are amoral. They're neither right nor wrong. They're occurrences. Selfishness. Very good.

Responsibilities. Didn't have that one. Sickness. Okay. Sickness.

[10:08] Broken health. Okay.

Sorrow over sin. Okay. Sorrow over sin. That's very good. We're going to come back to that.

We're actually going to look at that passage. Relationships. Relationships. And I think more specifically, broken relationships. Let me just make one comment before we come back to it.

We can be sorrowful over our sin. And as the verse says, yet still be always rejoicing. But sorrow over sin can become, in the context of what we're talking about here, a wet blanket over our joy.

Meaning, going back to where I started, we can be of those who make mourning our life verse. And therefore, it in fact does rob us of true joy.

[11 : 20] Others? Circumstance of unexpected bills. Car breakdown. Furnace repair. So financial pressure.

Good. Very good.

Sad demeanor of someone else we're associated with. Think of a way for you to put that in two words or less, and I'll write it down at the end. How about my own failures?

Mood swings. Later don't have any problems with that, right? All right.

I mean, death, obviously. The question I want you to answer to yourself, as you think about some of these things we just threw out, is does your joy fly away when experiencing some of these circumstances?

[12 : 40] If so, you might want to also ask yourself what your joy is based on. Is it as someone once suggested that happiness is five green lights in a row?

What is the secret of true joy? The secret of true joy is finding a source for happiness that will never run dry. If one's joy flows from their position in relationship with Christ, nothing can happen on this earth that will affect it.

Listen to 1 John 1, 3, and 4. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. The fellowship with Christ, the relationship with him, is what makes our joy complete.

Nothing less will make our joy complete. As the believer mourns over a great personal loss, he can simultaneously be rejoicing in the Lord because he knows his Lord controls every event in his life and works out everything for his ultimate good.

[13 : 56] Nothing that happens in this life or in death can separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, his Lord. Please turn to 1 Peter 4, 12.

The secret to true joy is Jesus Christ himself. As you're turning to 1 Peter 4, 12, please listen to Psalm 43, 4. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. Pink observes that for David, his Lord was not his joy alone, but his exceeding joy, not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but that joy itself.

In other words, the shallow, immature believer derives joy from the things his God does for him.

One of my children once observed, after experiencing the breakdown of some childhood relationships, that before reaching the teen years, our relationships were based on what we did together, having common playtime interests, enjoying the same toys.

But now my relationships are changing to those that I enjoy talking with, those who share my same convictions, those with whom I connect emotionally and mentally.

[15 : 23] You see what happens when a person goes from a child to an adult, is we go from toys to emotional relationships. What is your joy based on?

Is it the toys of this world? Or is it based on the relationship of your God? As God sanctifies us, we begin deriving our happiness from the person of Christ himself.

Our joy is based on our relationship with Christ, our discussions with him. And yet the true believer often lives with little or no joy radiating from his life.

So what's the problem? First, we must recognize that we are not immune from the temporal effects of this world. In fact, we're exhorted to expect him.

Look at 1 Peter 4.12. Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. Paul speaks plainly also of life's difficulties, as we already heard quoted in 2 Corinthians 6.

[16 : 33] And yet in every case, he points us to the eternal perspective. And I believe this is a model for how the Christian is to go about maintaining his joy.

I believe verse 10 is especially helpful. Listen to it. Sorrowful yet always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, having nothing yet possessing everything. Life produces sorrow.

Our own sin is going to produce godly sorrow. Yet even in our sorrow, we are to be always rejoicing. While I may be poor in the world's goods, yet I can be God's instrument to make many people rich in this world.

While I may possess nothing which this world has to offer, I may remember in Christ that I possess everything of true value. In each case, the earthly perspective is contrasted with the heavenly perspective.

The perspective on which the believer chooses to dwell will determine his level of joy. If I focus on my earthly circumstances, I'll be miserable. If I focus on the eternal, I will be overflowing with joy.

[17 : 43] So returning back to 1 Peter 4, look up at verse 12. Peter, in his exhortation, says, Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Why are you surprised that you're having sufferings? You're going to have sufferings in this world. Is that going to affect your joy? Well, it shouldn't.

Why shouldn't it? Because we're to be rejoicing that we're participating in Christ's sufferings.

There's two aspects here. We're participating in the sufferings of Christ. We're in Christ.

What greater thing is there to be joyful that I am in Christ? I am one of his children. But then we see our future hope, where he says that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Not only am I in him today, I'm part of his kingdom. I'm walking with him. He has made me his own.

But I can then look out to the future and see the glorious hope of when he returns and use the sanctified imagination that God has given all of us to think and dwell on that future hope.

[19 : 12] And as I do those two things, even though I'm in this painful trial, I should be able to be rejoicing. Please turn to Romans 15.13.

The secret of true joy is focusing on the person of Christ. What is it that enables us to realize such a focus? The question is answered in Pink's third point.

We know we are profiting from the word when we attend to the root of joy. When we attend to the root of joy. What is the root of true joy? What is needed to deliver the sap to the buds that causes them to burst in the blossoms of joy?

Anyone care to guess? What is the root of true joy? What is the sap that allows joy to flow?

Jesus Christ is the one in whom we have our joy. But how do I appropriate Christ? Can you see him?

[20 : 21] Okay, he grants his grace and mercy to be able to appropriate him. But we need faith. We need the eye of faith to see him. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Look at Romans 15.13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joy and peace comes as we trust in him which then allows us to overflow with hope. Well, how can I have hope if I can't lay hold of the promises and the things God has told me is going to happen yet into the future?

So how does this work? How does faith enable me to maintain an attitude of joy? We'll jump over to Romans 8 and verse 33.

We're just going to use a few examples of how this works. First, Romans 8.33. Trusting in the wondrous provision of the gospel is going to relieve my guilt.

[21 : 35] Notice what it says. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It's God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died. More than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Wonderful promise. But this promise must be appropriated by faith. Until it is, it's meaningless. It will do us no good.

Likewise, faith in God removes the sting, the terror of death, and turns it an entry point into glory.

We're not going to take time to look at verses for all of these. Indeed, faith lays hold of every promise of God.

Listen to a poem by A.B. Simpson. There are some who believe the Bible and some who believe in part, and some who trust with reservation and some with all their heart. But I know that its every promise is firm and true always.

It is tried as the precious silver, and it means just what it says. It is strange we trust each other and only doubt our Lord. We will take the word of mortals and yet distrust his word.

[22 : 46] But oh, what light and glory will shine over all our days if we always would remember that he means just what he says. What about all the misdeeds of the body, of the flesh?

Well, they are conquered by subjugating ourselves to the will of God. You're in Romans 8. Look back at verse 13. Romans 8, 13.

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

In other words, it takes faith to abandon what is seen to follow the leading of one who is unseen. Pink's puts it this way. When Christ is supreme in the heart, joy fills it.

When he is Lord of every desire, desire the source of every motive, the subjugator of every lust, then will joy fill the heart and praise ascend from the lips. The possession of this involves taking up the cross every hour of the day.

[24 : 02] God has so ordered it that we cannot have the one without the other. Stated concisely, joy is the fruit of seeing through faith God smile upon me.

He grieves over me when I sin against Him, when I reject His ways, when I depend on the arm of the flesh, and when I follow my own paths.

To possess joy, I must see His smile, and to see His smile, I must be led by His Spirit. Put negatively, while faith is the highway to joy, sin is a detour.

Pink again says, it is deliberate allowing of things which mar our fellowship with Him that chills and darkens our souls. It is the indulgence of the flesh, the fraternizing with the world, the entering of forbidden paths which blight our spiritual lives and make us cheerless.

After a time of terrible backsliding, David was brought to repentance and then cried, restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant to me a willing spirit to sustain me.

[25 : 06] Please turn to your Old Testament to Nehemiah 8.10. I began this study distraught over the notion that we were somehow to maintain an artificial happiness 24 hours a day.

Well, far from this idea, a pink observes that we know we're profiting from the word when fourthly, we diligently preserve the balance between sorrow and joy.

When we diligently preserve the balance between sorrow and joy. Look at Nehemiah 8.10.

Nehemiah said, Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Well, what were the people doing before being commanded not to grieve?

Go back to verse 8. They read from the book of the law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

[26 : 23] Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep, for all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the law.

The people were weeping because they were being instructed from the law, and through it, their own sins were being exposed and the sins of their nation and their forefathers, and so they wept. Seriousness and repentance over sin will lead to grief, mourning, and weeping. And I ask all of us, me included, when is the last time that we have wept over our sin?

Before this joy of the Lord can be our strength, we must be found in a place of weakness, weeping over our great sin and wickedness before God's holy law, and weeping over the sin of our fellow creatures.

This is the point to which Jesus' statement on the Sermon on the Mount is addressed, where he said, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn.

[27 : 35] Jesus himself was described as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And Pink observes, there is nothing more contemptible in itself, and there is no surer mark of a superficial character and trivial round of occupation than unshaded gladness that rests on no deep foundations of quiet, patient grief.

Grief because I know what I am and what I ought to be. Grief because I look on the world and see hell's fire burning on the back of mirth and laughter, and know what it is that men are hurrying to.

On September 11th, our nation went into a natural response of mourning. As we watched those towers collapse, as we saw the smoke, if you just put your mind back into that scene, you can help but do nothing but grieve and mourn because you know many, many people died there.

Many firefighters, firefighters going up the stairs, you know were caught in the building as it collapsed. So I ask, how can we but mourn when we look out on the world and see hell's fire burning at the back of mirth and laughter?

The world laughs, is constantly trying to have a good time, is drowning out everything that's happening, the future, the possible outcome of sin, with fun, fun, fun, with its music, with noise, with entertainment.

[29 : 27] And how can we look upon this world and see hell's fire burning at the back of mirth and laughter and know what it is that men are hurrying to? When is the last time we've mourned over sin?

But then, while there is no true repentance without mourning over sin, it is equally true that God-inspired repentance will always lead to rejoicing.

Philippians 3.13, Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. what allows us to strain toward what is ahead, what allows us to forget what is behind, but to be able to rest in the finished work of our Savior.

True repentance recognizes anew the magnificent work of Christ to propitiate God's wrath and satisfy His justice. And this must lead to rejoicing.

If we're stuck on mourning and we never get to rejoicing, it is no repentance at all. Christ is again our model on this point. Listen to Psalm 45.7.

[30 : 45] You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. Christ was full of joy, even though it is said of our Savior He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

It is only through joy in Christ that mourning over sin becomes profitable. Pink states, neither contrite remembrance of past failures nor vehement resolutions will carry us through.

I think that quote's profound. We are to mourn over sin, but it isn't as though the mourning will gain us redemption or deliverance.

As well-schooled, Reformed Baptists, we readily understand and give our hearty amen to the fact that it's only through the shed blood of Jesus that we are redeemed from the penalty of sin. But are we as quick to recognize that no amount of mourning over sin nor vehement resolution will provide the slightest deliverance from our committing the same sins in the future?

I will only experience deliverance from the power of sin to the degree that I rejoice in the deliverer of that sin. As the believer mourns over his sin, he is simultaneously rejoicing because that sin has been covered by the blood of his Savior, his standing before God remains perfect, Christ has propitiated all of God's wrath that he deserves for that sin, and that God has promised to never give up in sanctifying him into the image of his blessed Savior, Jesus Christ.

[32 : 32] Well, lastly, we know we are profiting from the word when we enjoy a life of enduring obedience.

We know we are profiting from the word when we enjoy a life of enduring obedience. Here we can consider that the presence or lack of joy in our lives is a barometer of our true fellowship with God. The believer is eternally bound to the most glorious, powerfully good being imaginable, actually beyond imagination. Is there anything ever in God that would cause variation in the joy we find in him?

You know, the sustainer of all life on this earth, our Son, S-U-N, we now detect has sunspots and there's variations even in the radiation that reaches us which can be detected.

But with God, his glory and radiance is perfect and immutable. He never changes. And if these things be true and they are, then who is to blame if we are ever not rejoicing in the Lord?

[33 : 46] Well, I think the answer is obvious. It's me. It's you. It is due to my lack of faith and trust in him. The littleness, the shallowness of my fellowship with him.

Not only is a lack of joy a barometer of our true level of fellowship with God, it is also an indicator of the level of entanglement we have with this world. We need to keep ourselves emotionally distant from all the glitter of this world.

Pink says, Be temperate in connection with all external things. Do not be taken with them when they seem most pleasing nor troubled when displeasing.

Be not exalted when the world smiles upon you nor dejected when it scowls. Maintain a stoical indifference to outward comforts. How is this accomplished?

Through the values with which we have already spoken. If I value Christ supremely and all the things of this world and the praise of men will then grow strangely dim as I look at his glorious face, then the world's smile or frown will have little effect on my joy for I am no longer living for their smile

or frown.

[35 : 00] My relationship with Christ and his smile upon me overshadows it all. Well, in conclusion and application, how do I fulfill God's command to rejoice in the Lord always?

First, by choosing to focus on Christ rather than life's circumstances. Our fulfillment of this command really comes down to focus. Pink says, if happiness is to be maintained, there must be a continued steadfast occupation of the heart and mind with Christ.

It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy. Rejoice...

Rejoicing in the Lord always is not accomplished by pretending that this life's pains and sorrows don't exist. Christ has to do with where we choose to put our focus. And that's why it's a duty. It's why it's a command. Because it's something we are commanded to choose. We will either choose to dwell on our earthly circumstances and forget the Lord or when those pains and trials and sorrows come, we will choose to focus on our Lord and rejoice in Him, thus bringing those painful circumstances into the context of true reality.

[36 : 25] Secondly, in way of conclusion, by dwelling on my future hope in Christ. What enabled our Savior to endure the cross? We read in Hebrews 12 to let our fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

How did Jesus endure the cross? He set before His mind the joy that flowed from His future hope. Thirdly, by devoting myself to the truth.

Pink says, a rejoicing heart comes from an increasing knowledge of and love for the truth as it is in Jesus. Jeremiah 15, 16 reads, when your words came, I ate them.

They were my joy and my heart's delight. For I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty. If faith is the avenue by which we lay hold of Christ and appropriate Him, then how can I increase that faith, but through the Word of God?

It is increasing my knowledge of Him. And since I have young people in here this morning, I would exhort you, as I have my own many times, read the Word, study the Word, put yourself into the Word.

[37 : 56] We have time for so many things in life, and you have more time on your hands now than you probably ever will in your lives, but it is the Word that is going to be the basis by everything you will be able to do in Christ.

It will become either your source of joy or lack thereof. Use the Word of God. Fourthly, by forgetting self.

Pink points out that the secret of happiness is forgetting self and seeking to minister to the happiness of others. It is more blessed to give than to receive. And then fifth, by resolving to rejoice all the more as my trials grow deeper.

Is there not a level of trial that would overwhelm my ability to rejoice in the Lord? Not a one.

There's a story of Daniel Webster's favorite Bible verse.

There was a conversation between Daniel Webster and some of his illustrious peers. Somebody raised the question as to the finest and most beautiful passage in the Bible. One argued for the creation story, another for the Sermon on the Mount, a third for the description of the Redeemed in Revelation.

[39 : 09] Webster slowly quoted the exquisite words from Habakkuk. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord.

I will be joyful in God my Savior. Have you ever found it true that the time of deepest rejoicing, of truest joy, comes at the time of deepest trial?

It's the time when the saint more closely clings to his God. It's the time when he sees more beauty in his God, which causes him to have greater rejoicing for the person of his God.

But the perspective doesn't come automatically. We must establish a premeditated response to our trials.

You know, these past few weeks, some of you heard, as my brother shared some, as we've sat by the bed of my parents during their great, great distress and trial and difficulty and pain and suffering, my wife and I have talked about it and we've thought, how will it go with me?

[40 : 28] How will I do when I enter this shadow of death? Will I have the strength, the ability? Will I be able to praise my Lord? Where does God-pleasing endurance come from?

And the lesson to be learned is that we need to properly train ourself to reflect on his goodness. If we are going to endure then, we must train ourselves now when the trials are so much less to be able to reflect on him and to have the habit of always choosing him over life's trials.