

The Gladness and Joy of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] I direct your attention to Hebrews chapter 1 for our scripture reading. Where the word of God says, After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, You are my son. Today I have become your father. Or again, I will be his father and he will be my son. And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, Let all God's angels worship him.

And speaking of the angels, he says, He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire. But about the son, he says, Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.

And righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

[1 : 45] He also says, In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain.

They will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

To which of the angels did God ever say, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

A couple of years ago, I was asked to speak at a conference on the joy and gladness of Jesus Christ.

I had a wonderful time studying the passage in question and its assertions about our Lord. And I hope you this evening will come to share in the blessing this passage has been to me as I preach it to you this evening.

[2 : 59] Surely there are a few things that might be of more intense interest to us than the subject of joy and gladness. Perhaps by studying the joy and gladness of Jesus Christ, we may learn how we can know something of that same joy and gladness.

So please turn again, if you're not already there, to Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 9 and follow while I read Hebrews 1, 8 and 9 once more.

But of the Son, he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of his kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. Now, I want to say several things, again, by way of introduction to this text before we come to his exposition.

And the first thing I want you to notice is the theme of Hebrews 1, 9. The theme of verse 9 is the joy and gladness of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 16] And you notice how this theme takes center stage in that verse as it concludes, God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.

The use of this verse must also be understood. In the argument of Hebrews, it is intended to support the theme of the superiority of Jesus Christ.

Remember how the author of Hebrews works through a number of ways in which Jesus Christ is superior to Old Testament realities. Specifically, in the way that the author of Hebrews uses this quotation from the Psalms, and that's what it is, its main purpose is clearly to assert the deity of Jesus Christ and in this way assert his superiority to the angels.

And verse 8 is particularly clear in this regard. But that brings me to the backdrop of the verse. And of course, as I've already said, the backdrop of this verse is to be found in the Old Testament.

Hebrews 1, 8 and 9 quotes Psalm 45, 6 and 7. But to understand the deep meaning of Hebrews 1, 9, we must examine Psalm 45, 7 in its context.

[5 : 36] And we will do that in a few moments. And we will confront knots that need to be untied and untangled if we are to fully understand and deeply appreciate the meaning of Hebrews 1, 9.

And when we do this, we will consider this text in its Old Testament context. The outline of the verse seems pretty clear to me. I hope you'll agree with me when I tell you that the verse deals with three things.

The glorious identity of the one addressed. The righteous activity of the one addressed. And finally, the consequent joy of the one addressed.

First of all then this evening, consider with me the glorious identity of the one addressed in the text. It's perfectly clear that Hebrews 1 is speaking about Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ as God.

It's also clear that this quotation of Psalm 45, 6, and 7 is brought forward in support of that teaching. The author means by means of this quotation from Psalm 45 to assert the full deity of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 54] But here's the difficulty with this assertion of Hebrews. It is that to many it is not so clear that this is actually what Psalm 45, 6, and 7 intends to teach.

And I can show you that and why there is some question about that if you'll turn to Psalm 45, please. And I want to read Psalm 45, verses 1 to 7.

Psalm 45, verses 1 to 7. We read here, my heart overflows with a good theme.

I address my verses to the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips.

Therefore, God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and your majesty, and in your majesty ride on victoriously.

[7 : 58] for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Let your right hand teach you awesome things. Your arrows are sharp. The peoples fall under you.

Your arrows are in the heart of the king's enemies. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your fellows. And then the psalm goes on to address the bride of the king and tells her to forget her own people, verse 10, her father's house.

Then the king will desire her beauty. Now, the difficulty is that not a few interpreters of the Old Testament and conservative interpreters, understand these verses to refer to the Davidic king of Israel.

They understand that the reference even in verse 6 to this king as God may use the term God as a reference to a human ruler that in a special way images the authority and rule of God.

[9 : 11] And it is indisputable that in the Bible, sometimes the term God, Elohim, El, can be used and is used of human rulers who image God in their authority and in their power.

And this way of taking the term God is also encouraged by another fact that we've seen. In spite of the king being called God in verse 6, he is then distinguished from God there in verse 7.

The king in verse 6 is called God, but he is distinguished from God when it is said that God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows or companions.

And yet the inspiration of the New Testament assures us that this text is talking about him as in his true deity.

How should we solve this problem? What's going on here that this text that does seem in the context of the Old Testament to be talking about the king of Israel and the day of his anointing and his rise to power is also talking about the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 22] Well, I think I just don't want to go into that deeply because it is very deep water. But I do want to say a couple of things about it. Psalm 45 is a psalm addressed to the Davidic king of Israel, who was by God in the Davidic covenant, we spoke about this this morning, appointed to be God's kingly son and therefore competent to rule over God's people Israel.

In the appointment of David's son as God's son, there was a deep mystery concealed. The last and greatest son of David would in fact be God's son in a greater sense.

The eternal son of God would become incarnate as the Davidic son of God. Only in the incarnation of the eternal son as the historical and Davidic son of God could the purposes of God be fulfilled, because those purposes required his son to become a man, as the New Testament never tires of telling us, a man of the seed of David.

And thus the historical sonship of David's final son would reflect an eternal sonship. What is the historical sonship of Christ that I would say humbly is mainly in view in Psalm 45.

This historical sonship of Christ reflects the eternal sonship of Christ, which is why it's right for the writer to Hebrews to take it as revealing that fact.

[12:00] We must not contrast the historical sonship of Christ with the eternal sonship of Christ. We must rather see the historical sonship as reflecting and revealing the eternal sonship of Christ.

And in the mystery of God's purposes, his bringing his own son into the world as the last and greatest kingly son of David. Well, but I want to come in the second place with saying only that about some of the difficulties of the text, to look at the righteous activity of the one addressed.

The righteous activity of the one addressed. And here I have reference to the first part of verse 9. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Now in these words there are three things. There is a process assumed.

There is a virtue expressed. And there is a character perfected. I want you to consider those three things with me.

[13:19] First of all, notice the process assumed. These words assume a process or probation test to which the Son of God was subjected.

Throughout the book of Hebrews, we are informed of a process of development that took place in the being of the mediator. Now obviously when we speak of a development taking place in the mediator, we are not talking about his divine nature.

That divine nature is immutable, unchangeable, and therefore, if you'll allow me to coin the word, undevelopable.

That's hard to say. Undevelopable. Anyway, the eternal sonship of the mediator is, however, reflected in the historical sonship and thus is reflected in his human nature.

And it is in this human nature that a process of development takes place in the mediator. This change, this maturation, this development under the auspices of the test and probation to which God subjected him is assumed and reflected at many points in the book of Hebrews.

[14:41] It is implied in our own text, which you will note, speaks of his having loved righteousness and hated evil in the past tense.

You have loved righteousness and hated evil. Something, according to our text, is past and done. But then it is also assumed in Hebrews 2.7, this process and development.

It's assumed in Hebrews 2.7, which speaks of the mediator having been made for a little while. For a little while.

Lower than the angels. That little while has now been superseded by the Son of God. He's passed out of that little while in which he was lower than the angels. He has ascended the throne of God, but there was a process.

There was a development. There was a period of time before that ascension to the throne of God. There was that for a little while. This process, probation, development, is reflected in Hebrews 2.17 and 18, which speaks of the mediator having been tempted in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.

[16:13] He was tempted that he might become our priest. That period of temptation necessary for him to become our priest was real. It happened.

But it has now been completed. He has loved righteousness and has hated evil. The same development is intimated in Hebrews 4.15, which speaks of the mediator having been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

But once more, the text certainly makes clear that this temptation is now past. And it is stated perhaps most fully in Hebrews 5.7, this process.

Hebrews 5.7 reads, In the days of his flesh, he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his piety. Although he was a son, listen to the next words, He learned obedience from the things which he suffered.

[17:30] He learned obedience from the things which he suffered. Now the divine nature of Jesus never needed to learn anything, always knew everything. Would you agree? So this must not be talking about the divine nature of our Lord.

It must be talking about his human nature. In which he learned obedience from the things which he suffered.

And having been made, notice the language, having been made perfect. How can you talk about the Son of God being made perfect? Because the Bible does.

Right? And having been made perfect, he became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation. You see, it was in the crucible and in the fire of this testing process that the Son of God loved righteousness and hated evil.

It was in that fire, it was in that crucible, it was in that fire and in that crucible that he loved righteousness and hated evil. It is this fiery trial which is assumed in the past tense of our text.

[18 : 43] But that brings me to a second subheading. We see here not only the process assumed, but the virtue expressed.

How are we to conceive of this process? What kind of process can it be? Was not Jesus' human nature, even from birth, perfectly innocent?

Of course, he was that holy thing, born of Mary. But then what can this process be? How is it to be conceived? This process by which he was, in the language of Hebrews itself, made perfect.

This process in which he learned obedience. How are we to conceive of this? What are we to think of this? How are we to look at this? Well, I want to give you two closely related answers to such questions.

First, this process must be understood in terms of Jesus being the second Adam. Language the New Testament itself uses of our Lord, correct?

[19 : 59] He is the second Adam. Obligated to fulfill for his people to attain their eternal life a kind of second covenant of works.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was placed under a covenant of works. You have been taught this. This was a divine administration, which by his keeping the condition of the covenant, he was to attain eternal life for himself and all his posterity.

You remember that as it turned out, he had to fulfill this condition while being tempted by Satan, who came to him in the form of the serpent. Well, similarly, Jesus as the second and last Adam had to fulfill the condition laid upon him in order to attain eternal life for himself and all his seed, all his people.

He also had to do this in the context of fierce temptation. If we had read on this morning from Matthew 3.17, you would have seen that the next thing that happens is that the Spirit drives him into the wilderness to be tempted of that same serpent that came to Adam in the Garden of Eden. So he also has to fulfill this covenant, fulfill this second covenant of works, this process, this probation. He also has to fulfill it in the context of fierce temptation, which had to be resisted.

[21 : 40] That condition was, of course, that he had to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross and that obedience began in the fierce temptation in the wilderness to which he was subjected.

And as the Bible says, subjected by the will of God. The Spirit drove him there. All this, this outward administration, all this is the outward administration within which we are to understand the process of which Hebrew speaks and which is implied in our text.

But this outward administration meant an inward development in our Savior. And so, in the second place, this process must be understood in terms of the maturation of Jesus' original innocence into mature and hardened righteousness.

It must be understood in terms of the maturation of Jesus' original innocence into mature and hardened righteousness.

The soft cement of innocence had to become the hardened cement of matured righteousness.

There is a difference in the Scriptures between the innocence of undefiled purity and the righteousness of the one who has passed through the crucible and testing of fierce temptation and has come forth victorious.

[23 : 17] There was a difference between innocent Adam and the Adam who might have, by resisting temptation and obeying the requirements of the covenant of works, would have come forth with the knowledge of good and evil to be bestowed by the tree of testing.

Would have come forth with that knowledge in a righteous frame. Even so, the Son of God in His human nature was to learn obedience from the things which He suffered.

This obedience which He was to learn is revealed in Hebrews 1.9 in the words, You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

But the third thing here under this head is the character perfected. Notice two things about the perfected character of the Messiah of which our text speaks.

First, you will notice that the character has been, past tense, perfected. It is spoken of in the past tense. Reflecting on the terrible testing and the perilous tribulation through which the mediator has passed, the text says, past tense, you have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

[24 : 37] Through all the awful ordeal through which Jesus passed, through all of it, He loved righteousness and hated evil. Now it can be rooted and as a completed fact of a kept covenant that, past tense, He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

You'll notice also in our text that this perfected character of the Messiah is two-sided. It is both loving righteousness and, and hating evil.

Such matured righteousness must have this two-sided character. For righteousness really to be loved, there must be more than a naive and easy admiration of goodness.

There must be more than an untroubled and natural keeping of the work of the law written on the heart. There must be a loving of righteousness that has been tested and tempted and hardened in the crucible of fierce temptation.

Such righteousness must look lawlessness straight in its seductive face and resist it. Such righteousness must count the cost and sorrow that may accompany loving righteousness.

[25 : 55] Such righteousness must pay the price for loving righteousness and hating evil in the context of that fierce temptation. This is the loving righteousness and this is the hating evil which is here attributed to the Savior.

This and nothing less than this was the righteousness by which our redemption had to be claimed. This is the glory of Emmanuel. He is the one who has loved righteousness and hated evil. He is the one who has become obedient even to the death of the cross and so claimed our eternal life. Can you conceive now a little better of this transition from perfect innocence to hardened righteousness?

Let me see if I can illustrate it for you. I think of the recruits brought to one of our national military academies. They are loyal to our country.

They have met all the strict physical and intellectual and moral requirements that that academy has insisted upon. They are fine young men.

[27 : 05] They are not yet trained and battle hardened soldiers. All the rigors of life at the military academy. And then finally actually serving their country in battle.

That will make them into soldiers. It's the same kind of process that I'm asking you to conceive in the greater son of David. Yes, he was born holy, harmless, undefiled.

His human nature met all the standards of God's holy law. But that babe in the manger had not yet loved righteousness and hated evil in the crucible, the fire, the testing, and the temptation that would be required of him.

If he would become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Now having come through that process, now having completed that probation, there is something more in that human nature than there was before.

Now he is no longer an innocent babe. Now he is a man who has loved righteousness and hated evil. Now there is something more and different and hard and matured in the eyes of that man.

[28 : 27] Just as there is something different and matured and hard in the eyes of that soldier who has now become more than he was as a new recruit at the military academy.

And because of this very development, because of this victory over temptation that we have in our text described as loving righteousness and hating evil.

Because of that, our text tells us, because of that, this man, this Jesus, is now the happiest man alive.

And that's the third point of the text. Look at the consequent joy of the one addressed. The consequent joy of the one addressed.

Hebrews 1.9 says, Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. Now this last part of verse 9 tells us four things about this joy and gladness of the king.

[29 : 37] It tells us, first of all, the cause. The cause of this joy and gladness. See the word therefore? The cause of this exalted gladness of the Messiah is his fulfillment of his redemptive

responsibilities by loving righteousness and hating lawlessness.

It is his firm resistance of temptation. It is his firm resistance of Satan. It is his faithful pursuit of righteousness throughout his earthly life that finally results in his being rocketed into the stratosphere of joy and gladness beyond comparison.

This cause reminds us of a therefore and a parallel passage, doesn't it? Having been found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, therefore, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. Here also then we see the exaltation of Jesus Christ to a place of joy and gladness because of his loving righteousness and hating lawlessness.

It is exactly, it is precisely, it is precisely because he became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, that God highly exalted him.

[31 : 08] We learn from this that there is an intimate connection between matured righteousness and exalted gladness.

An intimate connection between matured righteousness and exalted gladness. It was only because he loved righteousness and hated lawlessness that we one day will be anointed with the same oil of gladness.

It is only when the righteousness of the Son of God is formed in us that we will not carry around inside of us the source of our own sadness.

And that we will be freed to enjoy perfect gladness. It is when we share the character of our Savior who loved righteousness and hated evil that we will have the same joy and gladness which he possesses.

But look in our text and see not only the cause of his gladness, but see the creator of it. The creator of it. I refer, of course, to the words, God, your God, has anointed you.

[32 : 35] Not only is there an inseparable connection between gladness and righteousness, we also learn that there is an inseparable connection between gladness and God.

It is only God who can make us happy. It is only God who can make our Savior happy. It is only God who can make us joyful.

It is only God who can anoint us, can anoint us with the oil of gladness. God is the creator of joy and gladness. And such joy and gladness is to be found nowhere else but in him.

Do you want to be happy? Only God and a relationship with God can make you happy. We constantly forget this, don't we?

Even as Christians and subtly begin to look for happiness and gladness in created things. But in such a perspective, we are already sowing the seeds of our own unhappiness.

[33 : 40] Created things may be lost. Created things by themselves do not satisfy. Created things will not be allowed to satisfy us.

Created things by a God who wants us for himself. Are you unhappy? Serious question.

Are you unhappy? Do not look anywhere else to fix your problem than, first of all, to your relationship with God. Get right with God. Walk with God.

Seek God's face. And even if your circumstances do not change, we hope they do. Yet your spirit will change. And God the Holy Spirit will be poured on you as the oil of gladness.

Do you want to have joy and peace? There's only one way to such peace and joy in this dark world with all its trials and troubles and tumults. You must know and trust God.

[34 : 37] Yes, God will test and try us as he did his own son. But those tests and trials always come with the assurance of his presence.

They always come with the insurance of his protection. Always come with his promise to work all things, all things, even our darkest trials, together for good.

It may sound, I don't know how it sounds, but it's the truth. My wife and I can say that in our lives, as it turns out, the worst things have been the best things.

And I think you will find that true as well. No trial is so dark that on the other side of it, for the son and daughter of God does not lie the oil of gladness, joy and gladness, which we had never expected.

Joy and peace only come in full and certain trust in those absolute and sovereign promises. We see also in our text the character of this exalted joy and gladness.

[36 : 02] Its character, its cause, its creator, its character. It is the oil of gladness above all our companions, above all his companions, I should rather say.

But when the text speaks of gladness, to what more particularly is it referring? Well, this word means more than quiet happiness.

Now, there is a quiet happiness. That's a wonderful thing, to walk around quietly happy, but that's not what this text is talking about. The lexicon defines it this way.

That's the dictionary definition.

But let me give you something more than that. This is the word used in Luke 1.14. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

[37 : 13] These are the words of the angel to Zacharias and Elizabeth about the fact that they will finally hold in their arms, in their old age, a son.

How many years had that good old couple longed to hold their own child in their arms, and yet she was barren?

What sadness. What sadness had been their portion. What sadness had they known over this? But now, now at the end of days, they, the promise is from the angel of God.

They would have a son. And the result would be joy and gladness. Now, do you see what this joy and gladness is?

Do you ladies know what it would be like, an advanced age like that of Elizabeth, finally, to have that son which you had longed for for decades?

[38 : 23] Yes. Yes. This is joy and gladness of an exalted kind. And, of course, this is how the words are used in Jude 1.24.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy. One day we will stand before Christ in glory, blameless.

Then we will share in the oil of gladness which he knows today. Then we will know. Great joy.

That's the word used of our Savior in Hebrews 1.9. Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it blessed to consider that our Savior right now, right now, enjoys this exalted gladness, this great joy of which we are thinking?

Now, you know, sometimes I think that we do not even know how to be happy in this world. This world, which is the valley of the shadow of death.

[39 : 43] Perhaps sometimes we even wonder if such gladness and joy is ever possible. It may be possible for us. We may look back and remember times of some joy and gladness, but we think those days are gone.

And we are tempted to think forever. But there is, according to the testimony of Scripture, one who knows right now such gladness.

It is our King. It is our King who has been anointed with the oil of exalted gladness and great joy. I am glad that he is happy.

Aren't you glad that he is happy? After all his sorrows and all his griefs and all his rejections and all his pains, aren't you glad that he is happy now?

Isn't there something, isn't there something you're at that rejoices in this because he deserves to be happy, right? Yes, true. But more personally, he possesses this happiness not just for himself, but for his bride.

[40 : 59] This, you remember, is the connection in Psalm 45, right? The connection in Psalm 45 is that because the King is happy, his bride may be happy. Well, here we are.

He possesses this happiness not just for himself, but for his bride. That's the connection of Psalm 45. The happiness of the King is the happiness of his bride.

If he has exalted in gladness and great joy, then in him we may come to have it also. In fellowship with the one anointed with the oil of gladness, we may know that gladness as well.

I think I may argue, I think I may argue, because of his love for me, that if he is happy, then I may be sure, no matter my present feelings or situation, that I will come one day to share.

To share and be anointed with that same oil of gladness. That I will share in his happiness.

[42 : 05] Furthermore, I may give you this, if you are not a Christian. Find Christ and you will find exalted gladness. Not here completely or immediately. Not all at once.

But you will be put on a course to an exalted happiness that you have never known and that you cannot now perhaps even conceive.

But there is in the last place under this last heading, the comparison. You see the comparison? He is anointed with the oil of gladness. And the text says, above your companions.

Above your companions. Now it's a little difficult to know who these companions are, which the text mentions. A lot of different suggestions are made by commentators.

Some think that the brethren of Christ are in view here. Others understand that it's the other anointed servants of God that are in view. The other prophets and priests and kings of the Old Testament, perhaps.

[43 : 07] From Psalm 45, we might naturally conclude that these fellows are the other young men who are part of the royal household. They could be the younger brothers of the prince who was to become king.

Perhaps that's the meaning of the text. For in Hebrews 1 and 2, we might naturally think of these companions as the angels with which Christ is being compared in this passage.

Then the text affirms that Jesus has been made happier than the angels of heaven. But ultimately, and I think for our purposes this evening, I don't think we need to decide how to identify these companions.

Because the point is this. Whoever they are, Jesus is happier than they are. The application of the text is still this. There is no one happier than the king.

He is blessed as God in his self-sufficient deity. He is blessed as the eternal son of God in his eternal relationship with the Father. He is blessed as man in the glory of his resurrection.

[44 : 15] And his matured righteousness as the one who loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. This is the glad glory of the mediator. And let us also then be glad as his bride, his servants.

Let us show the world. Let's determine this week to show the world the grace and glory and gladness of our master and husband by the holiness and happiness of our lives.

And when we experience the darkness and difficulties which will surely come in this fallen world, let us remember that there is one above with whom one day we will share perfectly in the joy and gladness of him who is the happiest man alive.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your mercy and grace to us. Thank you for the reminder that there is a joy and gladness which is the right of our Savior and the bestowal of our Savior upon us. And we ask that you would bless your people. Bless all of us, Lord. We think we would be better Christians if we knew more of this joy and gladness, if our faith was enlarged to embrace it as we ought to.

[45 : 48] We think that the joy of the Lord would be our strength, as your own word says. So bless us. Bless us with a new portion and increase of that joy and gladness which is in our Savior and there in him for us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.