

Where Has Your Joy Gone?

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[0:00] Christmas Evans had a very unusual name, but on the day that we find him, he had a very usual problem. Christmas Evans felt nothing like Christmas Day at all.

! He was called the Spurgeon of Wales. He was a great preacher. God used him to do all sorts of magnificent and mighty things there, but on the day that we find him, he is very sad.

And he's walking up and down the hills of Wales, and he's been sad for a long time now. His heart has been cold as ice.

And he preached, but he felt no joy. And he served, but he didn't feel any hope. And it had been some five, six years now.

Day after day. Weary month after weary month. And one of the hardest things to be is to be a sad preacher.

[1:10] Because every sermon feels like a lie. And every gospel invitation rings hollow in your own mouth and in your own heart. And pretty soon you don't feel like preaching.

Pretty soon you don't feel like serving. And Christmas Evans didn't know how much longer he was going to be able to last. But preachers aren't the only ones that can be sad, are they?

Perhaps you're sad right now. Perhaps you've been sad for a long time. Well, why was Christmas sad? He was sad, not because of anything that had happened on the outside.

He was sad because he had believed a false doctrine. He had somehow moved away from just believing in Jesus.

Just simply resting on him. And at first he was getting along fine. These things take time to gain momentum. And he was getting along fine. But now it's been some time that he's been believing this.

[2:19] And the ice had been slowly growing over the river. Until now the ice has filled the river. And the joy has been sucked right out of his life. It's evaporated.

Now, suppose you were Christmas Evans' friend. Or his counselor. And you could tell that he had been sad for a long time.

He wouldn't have told you that. Because like Asaph in Psalm 73, he would have kept that in. And he wouldn't have wanted to betray God's people.

But you saw it. The smile was empty. The smile didn't reach his eyes. And the zeal was forced. And you saw it.

And so suppose that you were his friend. What would you say to him? Where in the scripture would you take him? I hope you wouldn't just do some empty cheerleading and say, suck it up.

[3:19] Get over it. Get going. Shake it off. He needs real help. He needs truth that penetrates down to the deepest parts of his heart.

So where would you take him? I think I would take him to Galatians 4.15. Galatians 4.15.

And I would take him to this question in Galatians 4.15. Do you see it? Where? Where's your joy? What has happened to all your joy?

The Galatians were a sad group of Christians. False teaching, a substitute gospel, had sucked all the joy out of their lives.

And so Christmas's problem is the Galatians problem. And it can very easily become my problem and your problem, Christian.

[4:22] And so are you sad today? Is there a sadness in your heart that isn't related? It's not linked to anything on the outside. It's not because you've had some great loss.

It's not because things are going badly. Maybe this could be your problem. The problem that Christmas had. The problem that the Galatians had. See, the Galatians had been so happy when they had first believed.

They'd been so happy. Now, Paul wasn't a good-looking guy. He says as much. He wasn't a good-looking guy on a good day. He wasn't impressive.

But when Paul arrived preaching the good news in Galatia, he wasn't having a good day. He apparently was having some sort of nasty eye problem.

And it made him even difficult to look at. And it was difficult to deal with. But God had done something amazing. He had bypassed all of that.

[5:24] And the Galatians had received the good news like it was coming from Jesus Christ himself. And they were overjoyed. Those were exciting days.

It made them so happy. He says, you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me. You were so excited. You were so happy. They were falling all over themselves to love and to serve.

They had that first love. And they had all that first love deeds that go with it. But now Paul says, What has happened to all your joy?

Where's all your happiness? Where's all your joyful service? Now Paul says in verse 16, Instead of tearing out your own eyes for me, I'm your enemy.

You look on me as if I'm your enemy. What? A sad change. Their hearts are frozen. Their love is dried up.

[6:28] And the culprit, The problem, Is a compromised gospel. A compromised gospel. A less than good news gospel.

And see, they had added, False teachers had come along, And they had added something to Jesus. They had said, You need, Jesus is fine, Jesus is good, But you need to be circumcised. You need to keep the Jewish law And the Jewish rituals. And when they added that to Jesus, They lost something. They lost all their joy.

It's a very easy math problem. Good works plus Jesus For your salvation Equals negative joy. Minus joy.

And so they added their works to Jesus And they were left with just sadness. Their Christianity was wearisome And tiresome. And they were sad every day. And so I want us to learn four lessons.

[7:29] There's four lessons from this situation And from this great sad change that happened. And four lessons from Galatians 4.15. And the very first is that your joy is important.

Christian, your joy is important. It's important to be a joyful Christian. And I'm not talking about giddiness And chipperness and pebbiness.

That's more of a personality thing Than a Christian virtue. I am talking about a deep gladness. A deep satisfaction in who Jesus is. What he's done for you.

That kind of joy is important. The joy of the Lord Is your strength. The Galatians ran out of strength When they ran out of joy.

They ran out of joyful service When they ran out of joy. Is it important to have strength For the Christian life? Do you need strength to love Your brothers and sisters?

[8:29] Do you need strength to be a Christian mom? A Christian dad? Do you need strength to be A Christian husband? A Christian wife? Does it take strength and power To go into the workforce And to be a light there?

Do you need strength? Then you need joy. Your joy is important. And they had lost their joy. And when they lost their joy They lost their desire And their ability to serve Didn't they?

They would have given their eyes to Paul. And now, nothing. Joyful Christianity serves. Joyless Christianity does nothing.

So your joy is important. Joy is important for the peace of the church. As you read along in Galatians Something began to happen in Galatia.

They began biting and devouring each other. They lost their joy And they lost their peace. Peace. It's interesting. Over in Philippians chapter 4 Paul talks about these two women.

[9:34] And they're fighting each other. And he says, I beg you to agree with each other in the Lord. And then he begins to give them some direction About how are they going to have peace.

Do you remember the very first thing he tells them If they're going to have peace with each other And peace within that church? He says, rejoice in the Lord. Again, I say rejoice.

They needed joy for peace. And they lost their joy. They lost their peace. Joy is the lubricant of the engine of the church.

And without it, you know what we begin to do? We start picking on each other. And fighting with each other. And devouring each other. Instead of serving one another, We devour one another. We use each other. Because our hearts are empty. And so we're using people to fill them up. And it ends up ruining the church. So is joy important? If Grace Fellowship Church is going to stay peaceful, It's important.

[10 : 34] And what about you? If you're lost, You have never repented And handed over the keys of your life to Jesus.

If you've never received Jesus Christ as Lord, Is your joy important? Well, the gospel is a message of joy, isn't it? It's a message of joy.

It's a message of good news. The gospel takes your joy seriously. It takes your joy more seriously than you do. The gospel is a message of good news, Of great joy that is for all the peoples.

So God comes with joy in his hands to sinners. And he tells you about Jesus. And when the Galatians first believed, They were filled with joy.

Is it possible for us as Christians to forget that? We can sing beautiful hymns And never have a smile on our face.

[11 : 38] That's a sad thing. The gospel is good news, Sins forgiven, A new life, A new creation, A new start.

It's in Jesus. Life with God. You've been living without God. And now God comes to you And restores that relationship.

God comes through Jesus And you can have life again with God. You were pushed out of the garden Because of your sin. You're pushed away from God Because of your sin. And now he says, Come back and live.

Now if you're lost, Your joy is important. No doubt your sin will make you happy For a little time. I'm not saying that you have no happiness At all in your life if you're a sinner.

But the things that you need to know Is that that joy, That pleasure Is just for a time. And God offers you more than that.

[12 : 39] Everlasting pleasures. You will not find a Christian That says, I don't want to be a Christian anymore. I had it better before. I was happier before. Even on our worst days, We don't say that.

Because God gives us Indestructible joy. So are you lost? Are you living without Jesus Christ? Then the gospel is good news.

It's taking your joy Even more seriously than you are. And if you aren't taking God up on his offer, You're thinking too little Of what God can give you.

He made you. He knows how to make you happy. Well, that's lesson number one. Your joy is important. Lesson number two Is unbelief kills joy.

Unbelief kills joy. What killed the Galatians' joy? It wasn't some sort of external problem. It was their lack of confidence In Jesus Christ.

[13 : 39] There is a direct correlation Between the level of my faith, The strength of my faith, And the confidence that I have In Jesus Christ, And my joy. Little joy, Little faith, Little joy.

Great faith. Great joy. And this false gospel Had cut that confidence Right out of Jesus Christ And had taken all their joy away.

Galatians 5.4 Look at it, what it says there. You who are trying to be justified by law Have been alienated from Christ. That's what they were doing. They were trying to be right with God.

They were trying to get their righteous standing before God Based on their works on the law. And the result was they were alienated. They were cut off. Excluded in some way from Christ.

And he says, You've fallen away from grace. Well, what happened? They quit putting all their hope, All their trust, All their reliance on Jesus.

[14 : 40] And they added, This is what I'm going to do. Jesus isn't quite enough. They lost sight of him. And when they lost sight of Jesus, Their joy evaporated.

And they were acting like they were under law. It's a term that we, It's a phrase that Paul used several times In just the passage that I had read to you.

They were acting like they were under law. They were acting like they still Had to obey the law In order to be right, Justified before God. They thought that their works Could contribute to their salvation.

Some small part, maybe. And they thought that their observing, Their obeying the law would add, We contribute to their salvation. Jesus was good, But we need something else.

The Holy Spirit is fine. He's good. But we need something else. And when they added something else to Jesus, This is what always happens.

[15 : 46] You add something to Jesus, And then you shift The whole weight of your salvation Onto yourself. Faith is putting all the weight of your salvation on him.

But whenever I add something to Jesus, I shift the weight back on me. And now they wake up, And they think, If I'm going to be right with God today, I need to do something.

If God's going to accept me today, I need to do something. Unless I do something, God's going to be angry with me. I've got to keep these laws. And they wake up with a set of rules in their head, And saying, If I don't keep these, God's going to be angry with me.

And so every day was a new test. Every day was a new trial. Every day they entered the courtroom Of their salvation. And so they carried the weight Of their salvation on them.

They weren't free. They weren't happy. They were miserable. So imagine that you Were hiking the Grand Canyon.

[16 : 56] And you're planning to stay there a while. You're going on a long hike. And so your backpack is really heavy. It's really full. It's really big. And all of a sudden, As you're hiking through the Grand Canyon, Far away from help, No one around to help you, You fall down.

The ground goes out from underneath you. You're caught in a landslide. And you're swept away in this great fall. And you're bruised. And you're broken. And you're battered. And your legs are hurt. And your ribs are shattered. And your head is bloodied. Now someone saw you go down. Someone saw you. And they rushed over to help you.

And he's a strong man. And he picks up your pack. And he carries it on his back. And he helps you up. And now you're going up. And how are you feeling toward this man?

He has all your backpack on him. He's carrying you with him. Well, you're so happy. You're so thankful. You can't help but say, Thank you for what you're doing.

[17 : 58] Thank you. You're so wonderful. But after a while, No one likes to be helped for too long. Do we? One of the hardest things that we can do Is go ask our neighbor for help.

One of the hardest things that we can do Is keep asking, Oh, hey mom, can you watch the kids again? We don't like to be helped. And so that starts going in on you. You start feeling that. And you're tired of being helped. And you're feeling a little bit stronger. And you have your breath now. And you say, Well, I'll start carrying my pack now. And he says, No, no, I got it. And you insist. I want to carry that pack.

And so you begin carrying it. And it was hard before. But now that you're broken, It's impossible. And the straps are cutting in on you.

And every step is so hard. And the pack gets heavier and heavier. And he says, I'll carry it. And you say, No, I got it. I can do this. Well, you used to be so thankful.

[18 : 59] But now how are you? Well, you got this fierceness about you. You're not happy anymore. Things are just as bad as before.

They're even worse. The joy is sucked right out of your life. That's what happened in Galatia. Who could bear the weight of all of God's law?

The perfect demands of the law. That's what's required to go to heaven. Perfect obedience to that law. All the Ten Commandments. Perfect heart obedience.

Perfect external obedience. The obedience to the two greatest commands. To love God with all of your heart, mind, and soul, and strength. And to love your neighbor just as much as you love yourself.

Always. Without fail. That's the law. Well, who could bear the weight of all that law? Not them. But they were trying to carry that law. They were trying to carry that pack.

[20 : 05] Well, who could fulfill the law's perfect demands? Not them. Only Christ. Who could carry it all? Not them. Only Christ. The law says, do this and live. And so there they were trying to do it and live.

The law had broken them. And sin had shattered them. But Jesus had freed them. And now they were shifting the weight back on themselves. And now Jesus isn't their great hero.

He's not their great friend anymore. And God is back to being a slave master. And their adoption, that means nothing. They feel and they live like slaves.

They're like that older brother in Jesus' story. Every day I go slaving for you. And the joy is gone. Is that you? Has that happened to you?

You're not resting in Jesus anymore. You're not trusting in him. You're not celebrating that he was born under the law to redeem me out from under the law by dying for me.

[21:21] The cross is nice. But it's not everything that I put my hope in. I wake up and I just think about all the things that I have to do.

Or God's going to be angry with me. And the spirit is good. But my strength is what is really needed. Well, the real weight was on their shoulders in Galatia. And now they're miserable. Not putting all their trust in Jesus had killed their joy.

Has it killed yours? That's lesson two. Unbelief kills joy. Lesson three. You can get your joy back. You can get your joy back.

You can sing the hymns of the church with a smile on your face. You can get your joy back. Paul asks, what has happened to all your joy?

[22:22] It was gone. But he's not just saying that because now it's all over. He's saying the whole letter of Galatians is this manual, this how to, how to get your joy back.

They're sad and miserable because they believed a false gospel. And now Paul is coming in and saying, you want your joy back? You want your life back? You want, then here's the gospel. Throughout this whole book, Paul is fighting for their joy. He's giving them truth after truth. He's taking away steel, joy-stealing lies away from them.

He's giving them the truth in the place of the lie. You can get your joy back. When you flush the false teaching out of your mind and you embrace the truth.

He says, you aren't slaves anymore. They thought they were feeling like slaves. And he says, you aren't slaves anymore. Look over at 326.

[23:25] You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Or chapter 4, verse 7. So you are no longer a slave, but you are a son.

You're not a slave. You're a son. You used to be a slave. But you aren't a slave anymore. So my sad brother and sister, you are not a slave.

God doesn't say, what kind of slaving are you going to do for me today? He says, you're my son. And there's no going back. God has adopted you.

He did it through his son. You didn't earn your adoption. You received it when you believed in Jesus. You didn't earn it by obeying. You received it by Jesus.

When you trusted in Jesus. It was all of grace. You didn't work for it. You didn't win it. And that means that you can't lose it.

[24:29] God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law. He took the full weight of the law to redeem those under the law. That we might receive the full rights of sons.

There's no going back. He did it. If we did it, then yeah, then we could probably undo it. But if he did it, then it can't be undone. He bore the weight. He paid the price.

And he gave you everything you have. And so you can get your joy back if you remember that you're a child of God. You're a son of God. You're an heir.

Everything that Jesus has, you're going to have. You're an heir with him. And then at the end of Galatians 4, we didn't read this part, but he takes them and he says, Now, you've got to remember how your whole life started.

Christian. How did your whole Christian life start? Was it this great labor on your part? Was it you who gave birth?

[25:34] Was it this great mammoth human effort that brought your Christian life into existence? He says, no, you were born from above. You were born by the power of the Spirit.

That's the end of chapter 4. And he talks about Abraham having two sons. Remember the two sons of Abraham. Ishmael, he was born the natural way.

He was born with human efforts. And that natural son, that human effort son, was born a slave. Born of the slave woman.

And then Abraham had a second son, Isaac. And Isaac, you know, he wasn't born the natural way at all. I mean, obviously, Sarah gave birth to him, but his conception wasn't natural.

Elizabeth, or Sarah, was as good as dead. And Abraham was as good as dead. Isaac wasn't born the natural way. He was born from above. He was born at the Word of God, the promise of God.

[26 : 44] The Spirit of God. His birth wasn't ordinary at all. It wasn't natural at all. It was completely and utterly a miracle. The divine Word invaded the earthly existence of Abraham and Sarah.

And Isaac was the result. And Paul is saying, that's you. That's you, Christian. That's you. What kind of child of God are you?

You're divinely born. The promise of God. Your birth is from heaven. Look over at Galatians 4.26. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

Born from heaven. For it is written, Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children. Break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains, because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.

A woman with no husband has a baby. A barren woman gives birth. And it says she doesn't even have labor pains.

[27 : 56] Moms, how would you like that? Birth with no labor pains. No labor pains and yet lots of children. No work, just blessing.

So the virgin has a baby. The desolate, lonely woman has children. Well, how did that happen? It wasn't human.

Your conversion wasn't human. You didn't become a Christian through some great mammoth effort on your part.

No, you were born by the Spirit of God. He hovered over the waters of creation. And he created. The Spirit of God hovered over Mary's womb.

And the Lord Jesus was born. And the Spirit hovered over your dead, dark soul. And said, let there be light.

[28 : 57] And there was light. And so when you lose your joy, part of Paul's answer is, remember, this wasn't up to you to begin with. This was God at work.

When you go back to trying to keep the law to justify yourself, to say, I'm good, God will accept me, God will love me because I obey. When you go back to that, you're forgetting how you were born. You're starting, you're just forgetting how this all happened.

You weren't born through human effort. You were born through divine grace. Grace. And so Paul's answer is, take a deep breath and rejoice in what God has done.

And Paul says, you can be happy again if you remember you're justified by Christ's work alone. You're justified through faith in Christ alone.

Not by observing the law. Because by observing the law, no one will be justified. Jesus has done it all. Christian, Jesus has done it all for you.

[30 : 09] Apart from works. Apart from my works. Some of my favorite words in all the Bible are those, apart from works. Because I look at my works and they're filthy rags.

And God says, well, here's a righteousness that comes apart from works. Apart from observing the law. Romans says, but now a righteousness from God apart from the law has been made known. There's two ways that you can be right with God. You can completely obey forever, or you can have a righteousness that's apart, separate from the law. It comes through Jesus Christ. And that's how we have received it.

Jesus has carried the backpack. And unlike in my story before, he doesn't give it back to you. He doesn't give it back to you.

You don't have to carry it. And you know what? You can't carry it. Because he has thrown it away. He threw it all away. All your sin. All your guilt.

[31 : 11] That whole way of living. You died from that. And it no longer applies to you. It's not there. It's buried in his tomb. And so now you don't have to obey in order to be declared righteous.

But you can wake up and you can obey because he has loved me. So you're under law. You're under grace. You can't go back. Not really. In your unbelief, you can think that you have to.

In your unbelief, you can live like you're still back there in that old life. In that old way. In your unbelief, you can forget that Jesus died for all your sins, past, present, and future.

That he was born under law to redeem you from under the law. You can forget all that. But your unbelief doesn't make that true.

In your unbelief, you can act and think like that's the way it is. But you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.

[32 : 13] That old you, that old way, is gone. And so now you obey out of love. You obey out of joy. But you don't have to obey out of fear of condemnation.

Because now there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. So lesson three is you can get your joy back.

If you remember the gospel. You don't have to stay in your joyless, cold, icy state. Paul says remember your adoption.

Remember your birth. Remember and rejoice in Jesus again. Who saved you completely. He justified you through faith in him.

Not works. It was faith. Believing. And he did it. And so now he says count on me. Count on me.

[33 : 12] Depend on me. Trust me. And when we do. What joy. What joy fills and floods our life.

God's love warms our heart. And we look at him and we see a father. And not a slave master. So you can get your joy back. And now the lesson four and our final one.

Don't settle for joyless Christianity. Don't settle for joyless, miserable Christianity. We all fall into it from time to time.

But you can't stay there. Don't stay there. Fight for your joy, brothers and sisters. We said it's important. It's important enough to fight for.

It's important enough when I fall into that sadness to say, Where have I gone wrong? Am I believing in Jesus like I ought to? So fight for your joy. Are you struggling for your joy?

[34 : 10] Then ask yourself, Am I trusting all of my weight on him? Or am I shifting the weight of my salvation back onto myself so that in the morning I wake up and I feel the burden?

Am I forgetting my father's love? Am I forgetting that God, my father, loves me?

He loves me so much that he took care of all my sin and my shame. He took care of all my debts.

And he not only did that, he made me an heir.

My inheritance is in front of me. My best days are ahead of me. My father loves me. Am I forgetting that God, my father, still loves me with that same love that he loved me with when he sent his son?

The same love that sent his son is there in his heart for me right now. And if he had to, he doesn't, but if he had to, he would send his son all over again to be crucified.

[35 : 20] Because that's that love, it's still there. Am I thinking about that? Or have I let unbelief kill my joy?

Am I living in the spirit or in the flesh? How do I know if I'm living in the spirit or living in the flesh?

Well, the spirit points to Jesus and the flesh points to me.

The spirit says, put all your weight on Jesus. The spirit says, it's really up to you. If you're going to have a life, if you're going to make something of it, if you're going to be saved, it's up to you. And the spirit says, oh, look at Jesus.

Look at Jesus. So am I living by the spirit or in the flesh? The flesh says you have to go it alone.

The spirit says, Christ will do it for you. Christ is in you.

Rest in him. Are you running out of joy? Don't settle. Don't settle. Finally, one day, Christmas Evans had enough.

[36 : 27] Couldn't take it anymore. It had been five, six long years. Five, six long years. And he had had enough.

He didn't want to be an unhappy Christian anymore. He didn't want his sermons to be a hypocrisy anymore. And so you know what he did?

He's walking through those hills. And he forced himself to pray. You know, prayer is not something that we want to do when we're sad.

And we're not feeling like God loves me. But he forced himself to pray. His heart was hard. But he prayed anyways. And he says, I began in Jesus' name.

He's talking about what he did. He says, I'm walking through the hills. And I forced myself to pray.

And he said, I began in Jesus' name. Now, what does that mean? He's saying, you know what?

[37 : 25] For that moment, I took, I said, you know what? It's not up to me. My approach to God is not up to me. It's not up to my works. I'm putting it all on Jesus. I'm coming to you, God, the Father, through Jesus.

I'm coming in Jesus' name. He says, I began in Jesus' name. I'm coming to you through Jesus, not me. He didn't feel like it.

He didn't have anything to offer. He had no good feelings to give to God. But he just prayed in Jesus' name. He put his weight onto Jesus. And soon, and soon, the chains fell off.

And the dungeon flamed with light. Joy filled his heart again. He went up into the hills of Wales, a very sad man.

But he didn't settle. He ventured on Jesus. He went to God in Jesus' name, putting all his trust on him. He went in Jesus' name.

[38:30] And he came. And God opened the doors of heaven to him. And joy filled his life. The Father welcomed his son, who had been wandering for so long.

And he lit the fire. And he loved on his long-lost son. If you're struggling, don't settle. It doesn't have to be that way.

And don't give up. Don't give up. And it has been my prayer that God would soon make your dungeon flame with light.

Let's pray. Oh, our great God, we are prone to wander.

We're prone to shift the weight of our salvation back onto ourselves. Will you help us with our unbelief?

[39:35] Oh, we do come in the name of Jesus. He's our strong tower. He's our mighty fortress. And we come because he died for us.

He was born under the law for us. And he took that whole weight for us. And so we come, not with any righteousness of our own, but looking only to Jesus and his righteousness.

And we come asking that you would please restore us and revive us. Will you please make that gospel come and ring sweetly in our ears and in our hearts again.

Give us the joy of our salvation. Make us strong in you. Make us to be mighty witnesses for you. We need to be happy in Jesus.

Will you help us then to put away our sadness. To cling to Jesus Christ with all of our might. And to put all of our weight upon him.

[40:40] Will you help us to rejoice in him today. Will you break the chains that we have put back on ourselves. And help us to walk in freedom. It is for freedom that you have set us free.

Will you help us to enjoy that freedom that we have in Jesus Christ. Will you put a smile on our faces. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Well we're going to close with hymn number 580. And we're very much singing this just for the third verse. Which says, My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought.

My sin, not in part, but the whole. Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, O my soul.

Thank you.