

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

SOUL-SAVING LESSONS “The Joy of Salvation”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Being a Christian ought to be one of the greatest joys in all the world. Christians ought to rejoice, and should be some of the happiest people you could ever find. But sometimes it is not that way. Sometimes we lose sight of the joy of salvation. Someone once said that, at times, certain Christians look like they have been “baptized in pickle juice.” That is so true. Sometimes we go around with a sour face. We look like we have lost our best friend, when, in reality, we have so much about which to rejoice. I am reminded of Philippians 4:4 where the apostle Paul said, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” We ought to have joy and true rejoicing in this life, not necessarily because of the here and now, but because of the hope of eternity. I think about people in the Bible who did rejoice. We find one good example in Acts 16:25. Paul and Silas were in a dungeon in Philippi. They had every reason to be depressed, yet instead they were praying and singing hymns to God while the prisoners listened to them. James said that even in trials we ought to be able to rejoice. In James 1:2, he wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” The psalmist wrote, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1). This life ought to be a joy. The salvation that we have ought to encourage us to be happy, even in the here and now. Do you remember the beatitudes of Matthew 5:1-14? Jesus said repeatedly that people would be “blessed” if they did God’s will. The idea of being blessed is that of having the joy that comes from obeying God.

But what makes salvation a joy? What makes being a Christian a joy in this life? Today, I would like to consider with you what makes Christianity joyful. As we think about the joy of Christianity, let’s note first that the redemption we have in Jesus Christ gives us great joy. In Colossians 1:14, we are told that we “have redemption in Christ.” The idea of redemption is that we have been “bought back.” Before we became Christians, Satan had us in a stranglehold. We were under the condemnation of sin and death. But through Jesus we have been bought back to God. As we think about the true meaning of joy involved in redemption, notice what Paul said in Romans 3:24-25. Paul said in those verses that we have redemption through Jesus Christ (that is, the forgiveness of our sins) by His blood. The idea of redemption is that Jesus gave His life as a ransom in order to buy us back to God. In Revelation 5, we see a scene that, at first, is sad, but that becomes joyous. John is weeping because there is no one to open the book. Then the Lamb appears who was “slain from the foundation of the world.” Jesus gave His life and shed His blood so that we could be bought back to God. The text of 1 Timothy 2:4-5 says, “Our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” I am reminded of the encouraging words of 1 John 2:1-2—“Jesus Christ the righteous...is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Galatians 1:4 says that Jesus gave His life as a ransom so that we could be bought back to God. Paul said in Titus 2:13 that as a result of that, we

should look forward to “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Peter said in 1 Peter 2:24 that “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we are healed.” How does Christianity bring us joy? It is a joy for us because we do not have to be a child of the devil. We can be bought to God by the blood of Jesus Christ so that we can be faithful servants of our Father.

Christianity is a joy because there is no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ. Condemnation is not something about which the child of God has to worry. It is not something of which we should be fearful. If we are Christians, then we are not under condemnation. Romans 8:1 teaches us this very principle. Paul wrote: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Here is what makes Christianity such a joy. Here is something about which we can smile. On the Day of Judgment, if we have been faithful to God, we will not be condemned to an eternal Hell. But there is condemnation for the unbeliever. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said that the person who does not believe will be condemned. Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 that one day Jesus is going to come “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel.” In Luke 16:19-31, the rich man was under condemnation. Yes, he had riches in this life. But he was in torment on the other side. Revelation 21:8 depicts those ungodly people who are idolaters, liars, or people who live in sin, as those who, one day, will be cast into the lake of fire. However, since Jesus overcame sin, we, too, can overcome sin. Revelation 3:21 teaches us that we **can** overcome so that we can live with Christ. If we live faithfully before Jesus, then on the Day of Judgment God is not going to send us to eternal condemnation. How do we know that? Titus 1:2 says that we are living “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” I am reminded of how Jesus gave us this hope. In John 14, He said that we could one day live in Heaven with Him when He comes again. That is the promise we have. In 1 John 2:25, we read, “This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” God cannot lie. He has promised us that if we will remain faithful unto death, then we will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Thus, we can rejoice in the fact that the blood of Jesus, and a life lived faithfully before God, can keep us from being lost for all eternity.

Another joy that Christians have is the victory that we have in Jesus Christ. Christians are not going to lose the battle of life. Hebrews 2:14 says that Jesus conquered Satan through His own death. The same principle applies to Christians today. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul wrote, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” Christians are led in triumph as they follow Jesus, and they **will** be victorious. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” For this victory to be ours, however, we must realize that we are in a battle. Starting in Genesis 3, when the subtle serpent deceived Eve, and she and Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man began a battle for his immortal soul. The text of 2 Corinthians 10 teaches us that we are still in that battle today. Verses 3-5 of that chapter state:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

We must contend earnestly for The Faith—against the devil and against false teaching. For us to be victorious, we must arm ourselves for the battle that we will experience in this life. One of the things about which Christians can be joyous is that God has helped us win the

victory—and continues to do so! He helps us by providing armor for us. We are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. We are to put on the belt of truth. We are to put on the helmet of salvation and take the shield of faith. We are to shoe our feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. And we have the sword of the Spirit to help us. Christians have not been left alone. We have been given the perfect armor that we need to win the battle of life. If we do this, we **will** be victorious. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Like Paul, if we remain faithful we can rejoice in the fact that after this battle is over, we will have a victory that will allow us to go to be with our Father in Heaven.

But there is something else that makes Christianity a joy. Christians get a second chance in this life. All of us, at one time or another, have made mistakes. We have all done things that are wrong. As Christians, we get to start over again. We get to try again with a fresh start as a child of God. Perhaps you can think back in your own life to times when you have made mistakes and when you wished that you could have had a second chance. There are times when we wish that we could go back and make things right or have done things differently. The child of God has that opportunity. Listen to what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Remember that before Christ, we were dead in sin. Ephesians 2:12 says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Romans 3:23 teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Paul said in Romans 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death.” But then he exulted in the fact found in Romans 6:17, “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.” Once we have obeyed the Gospel, we receive the victory of Jesus as we walk in the light. As a child of God who has been given a second chance, this means that the Christian has a new focus in life. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” We are no longer supposed to live as we once did. With the second chance, we have a new focus that helps us live faithfully before God every day. Jesus said in Luke 9:23 that if we desire to follow Him, then we must pick up our cross daily and live the life that He lived. Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me as I also imitate Christ.” We are to be an example to those around us so that they, too, can see the hope that lies within the Gospel. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul told Timothy to “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Because we have had a second chance, we are to live as an example to those in the world.

Here is another joyous thing that Christians have as children of God. We have “every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.” What a wonderful privilege it is to know that we not only have been given the armor to help us defeat the devil, but that we also have been given spiritual blessings in this life that can help us get to Heaven. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” We have not just “some” spiritual blessings, but “every” spiritual blessing in Christ. The joy for the child of God is that we have hope. We can call ourselves children of God. What a blessing and privilege that is. John said in 1 John 3:1, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” We are not children of the devil, but children of God, Who created this world. What a joy and blessing it is to have a heavenly parent, and to know that after this life we are going to live with God throughout eternity. Paul said in Philippians 3:20-21, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for

the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." One day, we are going to receive a new body. And we will live in that body in Heaven forever.

Think, too, about the great blessing of prayer. Where would we be as Christians without the power of prayer in our lives? James said in James 5:16 that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Jesus said in Luke 18:1 that "men always ought to pray and not lose heart." I am reminded of the psalmist in Psalm 86:3 when he said, "I cry unto You daily." Think about how Jesus started everyday of His life. Mark 1:35 tells us that in the morning, before daylight, He departed, went to a solitary place, and there He prayed. Jesus knew the power of prayer. Today, prayer is a wonderful blessing for the child of God.

Another blessing that we possess, and that makes salvation such a joy, is the forgiveness that we receive in this life. The sins that we once committed, we no longer have to bear. Sin is indeed a heavy burden, as the psalmist said in Psalm 38:4, "My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." We cannot bear our sins alone. The guilt, the consequences, and the heartbreak that they bring are unbearable. But here is the joy of being Christians. We have forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Notice what the psalmist said in Psalm 103:10—"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquity." This teaches us that, as Christians, we can be forgiven of the things that we have done in this life. All of us have transgressed God's law at one time or another. That sin is devastating to humanity. It is what causes us to be separated from God. Isaiah said in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Sin separates us from God and brings horrible consequences. Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul that sins shall die." Remember what happened to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 when they transgressed God's will? They were cast out of the Garden and death came upon them. They had to work by the sweat of their brows. The Proverbs writer was correct when he said, "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Pr. 13:15). We can rest assured that if we live in sin, our lives **will** be difficult. But the joy of Christianity is that Christians do not have to bear the guilt of their sins. Christians can live faithfully before God and know that their sins have been washed away. Revelation 1:5 says that our sins are "washed in the blood of Jesus." When Jesus made His atoning sacrifice for our sins, He took away the sin of the world. Hebrews 10:12 says, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever." Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ "tasted death one time for all men." As a result, we do not have to bear the consequences of our sins. The psalmist said in Psalm 103:12 that our sins have been removed from us "as far as the east is from the west." Micah said that our sins have been "cast into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:18-19). As children of God, we can rejoice that our sins no longer carry the burden and consequences that we once did.

Of course, if you are not a Christian, then your sins **do** haunt you, and the things that you have done in your life **do** bring you guilt in this life. But the joy is that you can have all of that taken away. You can be a Christian. You can rejoice in the hope of salvation that is made possible to all men. Think about how much God loves you and the rest of the world. Remember 1 Timothy 2:4? God said there that He wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Peter said in 2 Peter 3:9 that "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God does not us to be lost. He is not an angry God Who wants to send people to Hell. God loved us so much that He gave His

Son to die for our sins. John wrote, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life on Calvary at the cross so that we could go to Heaven. The text of 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” The love of God ought to motivate us to live our lives for Jesus and to give our hearts to Him. Paul reminded us of this great love in Romans 5:6-8 when he wrote,

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus died for us so that we could have the hope of going to Heaven. I can guarantee you this: If you are going to have **real** joy in this life—joy that is lasting and meaningful—it will be found only by your obeying the Gospel and becoming a Christian. What, then, must one do to have this joy? How can you receive salvation today? What does a person have to do to become a child of God? The plan is very simple. God has not made it difficult, and He has not tried to confuse us. We **can** read the Bible and know God’s will. The Scriptures say in Ephesians 3:4 that when we read, we can understand God’s will. Jesus said in John 8:32 that we can know the truth, and that the truth will make us free.

First, a person must hear the Word of God. This means that we must listen to what the Scriptures say on salvation, and that we must take God’s Word at face value and do what it says. Romans 10:17 says that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We know that faith is essential because Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Second, a person must believe that Jesus is God’s Son. We can know that belief is essential because when the Ethiopian nobleman was traveling down the road, he and Philip came to a body of water. Evidently Philip had been teaching the nobleman about the plan of salvation and baptism. The nobleman therefore said, “Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip then said to him, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (vs. 37). We must believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

Third, once we believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we then must be motivated by that belief to change our lives. Peter told the Jews on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38 that they needed to repent of the things they had done wrong. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change in actions. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that godly sorrow produces repentance. Repentance is not merely sorrow alone. Rather, it is a sorrow of heart—a true, godly sorrow—which produces a change of action.

Fourth, we must confess Jesus as the Son of God. Romans 10:10 says, “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” A person must believe in Jesus and confess that He is the Son of God. In Matthew 10:32-33, Jesus said, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

Fifth, the Bible teaches that we must then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. We know that baptism is immersion, because in Mark 1:9-11 that at Jesus’ baptism He went down into the water and came up out of the water. Then, as He came up out of the water, the Spirit descended upon Him as a dove. In order to “come up out of the wa-

ter,” a person first must “go down into the water.” Thus, baptism in the New Testament is full-body immersion. Baptism is essential in the plan of salvation. Jesus said it so plainly in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” If we do not believe, we certainly are not a candidate for baptism. Jesus said that both belief and baptism are necessary for salvation. In Acts 2:38, in response to the Jews’ question about how they could get rid of their sin for having murdered the Messiah, Peter said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Galatians 3:27 teaches us that baptism is essential. Paul said that we are baptized into Christ, which is how we put on Christ.

It is my hope today that you will be able to find real joy in your life. Life is sometimes sad. When sickness or death occurs, or when sin enters into our lives, it is sad and difficult to deal with. But there is only one way in which we can have real joy in this life, and that is through Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, who had suffered many things in his life, said, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

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Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE JOY OF SALVATION”

1. What was Paul's point in Philippians 4:4 when he said, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice”?
2. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas.1:2). What, according to this lesson, are some of the things that would make that possible?
3. In 1 Timothy 2:4-5, Paul expressed God's desire. What is that desire?
4. According to 1 Peter 2:24, what did Jesus do for us—and why?
5. What is the message of Romans 8:1?
6. What does Revelation 3:21 admonish us to do?
7. According to 1 John 2:25, what has God promised Christians?
8. According to Titus 1:2, what is something that God cannot do?
9. According to 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and Revelation 2:10, what will God give to all faithful Christians on the Day of Judgment?
10. Where, according to the teaching of Ephesians 1:3, are “all spiritual blessings” to be found?
11. What are some of those spiritual blessings?
12. List three specific things discussed in this lesson that make salvation joyous.
13. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, what are we when we are “in Christ”?
14. Paul taught in Romans 6:4 that if we are in Christ, we should walk in something. What is that “something”?
15. When Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 18:4, “The soul that sins shall die,” what type of death was he discussing?
16. Where, according to Paul's teaching in Philippians 3:20-21, is the Christian's citizenship?
17. What important point do Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:18-19 both teach?
18. What important point is contained in 2 Peter 3:9?
19. What important point is contained in Proverbs 13:15?
20. According to Hebrews 10:12, what did Jesus do for us?
21. What must a person do if he or she wants to become a Christian?