

Last week we examined verses 11-16, and our Savior's first petition for His disciples (which was for their preservation)—in so doing, we skipped over v13, to which I want to return this morning. Now at first glance, it may seem that v13 is out of place, given the fact that vv11-12 and vv14-16 all refer to our Savior's prayer for preservation.

But I suggest it relates in this way—our Savior not only prays that His Father would keep His people while in this evil world, but also desires that they be filled with joy. It's not enough to keep them from something, but He desires they be kept to something.

AWP—"The Savior would not only have His people safe in eternity, but He desires them to be happy here and now: He would have them enter into His joy."

Now, the subject of Christian Joy is a very large topic. The Scriptures are full of verses that speak about joy. Christians are commanded to rejoice and be glad. We are to "rejoice always." But, what is true joy, how is it increased, and why is it important? Well, it's these three questions that I intend to answer, as we come to our theme—Christian Joy.

- I. What is Joy?
- II. How is Joy Increased?
- III. Why is Joy Important?

I. What is Joy?

1. In seeking to define Christian joy, I want to first provide a broad definition, and then answer the question—Why does He refer to it as His—"that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..."
2. But, before I do that, let me make a brief admission—providing a definition of Christian joy is not very easy...
3. Peter describes it as "joy inexpressible" (1Pet.1:8)—the KJV has it—"joy unspeakable"—it's impossible to express in words...
4. All Christians know what joy is by way of experience, though they may not be able to provide a definition...
5. And yet, like every other aspect of the Christian life, the first place to start is with an understanding of Scripture...
6. If we were to examine the words translated "joy, rejoice, and gladness" as well as key texts of Scripture, I suggest we can form the following working definition...
7. Christian joy is the Spirit's work within our hearts, wherein we find pleasure and contentment in God and the things of God...
8. [a] True joy is the fruit of the Spirit, Gal.5:22—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."
9. True joy is something that only Christians experience—it's something that only those who have the Spirit know...
10. Thus, true or Christian joy isn't something self-created or generated—it's the fruit of Christ's Spirit in the heart...
11. Acts 13:52—"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" Rom.14:17—"for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit..."
12. [b] True joy takes place within the heart—by this I mean, true joy goes deeper than mere smiles and words...
13. A person can have true joy even while they endure the greatest trials and sorrows—true joy is sturdy and durable...
14. This is implied in the phrase "these things I speak in the world"—Christians have Christ's joy while in the world...
15. Remember, what we learned last week about this world—it's the place full of persecution, temptation, and deception...

16. True Christian joy is not superficial—it's not external or surface in nature—it's not merely an outward show...
17. I don't want to be unkind, but I fear many professing Christians mistake smiling, to be the essence of true joy...
18. Dear brethren, I trust we all understand, you can put a smile on your face, and have nothing of true joy in the heart...
19. Now, this of course doesn't mean that true joy never shows itself in our countenance or expressions of our face...
20. But it simply means—true joy is a spiritual and Christian grace that resides foremostly in the heart or soul...
21. Furthermore, Christian joy is more than a bubbly attitude or disposition—some people are natively cheerful...
22. But this doesn't necessarily mean they are joyful—a joyful person can also be a sober-minded and serious person...
23. At the very core of true joy are the concepts of pleasure and contentment—finding delight and satisfaction...
24. Christian joy is a grace that resides in the heart, that may or may not express itself in the countenance of our face...
25. Ps.13:5—"My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation" Ps.33:21—"Our heart is glad in Him" Ps.35:9—"My soul shall be joyful in the LORD..."
26. [c] True joy focuses on God and the things of God—it finds delight and pleasure in God, His Son, His salvation, His word, His people, and His day...
27. And it's for this reason, that true Christian joy always endures, because its objects can never be taken away...
28. True Christian joy does not end in any created thing, but traces every temporal blessing to the hand of God...
29. Do Christians find joy in their families—YES—in the blessings of this life—YES—but not as ends in themselves...
30. Because, if our joy ends in our families or possessions of this life, then it will leave when those things are taken...
31. Scripture exhorts me to "rejoice in my wife"—I find great joy in my wife—she is a source of joy and pleasure...
32. But here is the problem—if I rejoice in my wife as an end in itself—my joy will one day be taken from me...
33. But, if the joy I have in my wife, is traced back to the giver of my wife, if it finds it's ultimate end in God, then it never ends...
34. Thus, it's in every way lawful and proper for Christians to find joy and happiness in the temporal blessings of this life...
35. Providing they do not rejoice in these things as ends in themselves, but as good gifts given to us from our Father...
36. Hab.3:17-18—"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls – Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation..."
37. Isa.61:10—"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness..."
38. (i) Joy in the Lord—"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God"—true joy is in the Lord...
39. That is, it is experienced in fellowship and communion with the Lord—He Himself is the object of our joy...
40. God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), is the ultimate object of our joy—we find pleasure and satisfaction in Him...
41. And yet, in the context of Isaiah 61, it seems likely that by "LORD" is especially meant, the Lord Jesus Christ...

42. Christians rejoice "in the LORD" or "in Christ" because, they find in Him, One is who is altogether fair (beautiful)...
43. Necessary to true joy is the recognition that something is delightful and pleasant—it gives or brings us joy...
44. For example, I find great joy in eating my wife's cooking—especially, when she cooks Latin or Dominican food...
45. Why—because it brings pleasure to my taste buds—it's food that I find delightful and pleasant, and thus it brings me joy...
46. Well, the principle is the same with reference to Christ—because we find Him delightful and pleasant, He brings joy to our souls...
47. (ii) Joy in His salvation—"for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness..."
48. Even here we learn, that Christians do not rejoice in the benefits of salvation, detached from Christ who gives them...
49. We rejoice in the LORD, because—"He has clothed me with the garments of salvation"—because of what He does...
50. Thus, having broadly and briefly defined joy, I want to address the question—Why does our Savior speak of this joy as His—"that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..."
51. Well, if you remember, He said the same thing about "peace"—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you..."
52. Thus, let me suggest, our Savior speaks of joy as His, largely for three reasons—He purchased, experienced, and communicates it...
53. [1] He purchased it—by this I mean, gospel joy is a grace bought or purchased by Christ's redeeming blood...
54. True joy is the result of being reconciled to God, through the redeeming and atoning blood of Jesus Christ...
55. Perhaps we can say, true joy is very expensive—it would secured or purchased at the cost of Christ's blood...
56. [2] He experienced it—by this I mean, Christ Himself experienced true joy, in full and without measure, by the Spirit...
57. Thus, it's His joy, because He too experienced it—He knew what it was like to find pleasure in the things of God...
58. Now, it's true that Scripture describes God as rejoicing, but here I am thinking about the joy He had by the Spirit...
59. Ps.45:7—"Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions..."
60. Technically speaking, this refers to Christ's human nature, that was filled with joy by the ministry of the Spirit...
61. There was never a man who lived on earth, who had more joy than Jesus—"more than Your companions (other men)..."
62. And yet, it's also true that Christ presently experiences joy in heaven when His beloved people have joy on earth...
63. As our Savior said, "there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents"—so there is joy in heaven, when a saint rejoices...
64. [3] He communicates it—by this I mean, Christ gives true joy to His people, through the work of the Spirit...
65. Christ Himself, by the Holy Spirit, communicates His joy to the hearts of His people, through His holy word...

II. How is Joy Increased?

1. V13—"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..."
2. The means whereby Christian joy is increased and promoted is found in the phrase—"these things I speak in the world..."

3. Our Savior spoke certain things, while in this world, that are intended to provide and promote Christian joy...
4. Thus, the question at this point becomes—What specifically did our Savior mean by the phrase—"these things I speak..."
5. [1] The prayer itself—that is, our Savior allowed the disciples to hear this prayer, in order to increase their joy...
6. V13—"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..."
7. Our Savior spoke this prayer audibly so that His apostles could hear and know what He was praying about...
8. He was leaving them, and so our Savior desired that that His disciples to know what He would do for them in heaven...
9. He would be interceded for them in heaven—He would be repeating the substance of this prayer on their behalf...
10. Now, I mentioned a few weeks ago, that we mustn't think of our Savior's present intercession in terms of a literal prayer...
11. But, His very presence in heaven is a prayer (of sorts), or better, an ongoing and perpetual intercession for us...
12. And what that intercession secures is the very same things that our Savior prayed for in their prayer while on earth...
13. And it's for this reason He spoke if audibly, so that His beloved apostles would be comforted to personally hear it...
14. So too, His Spirit inspired John to record it so that all of His beloved disciples, would also have access to it...
15. [2] The upper room discourse—by this is meant, chapters 14-16—the entire discourse was given to promote our joy...
16. Jn.15:11—"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full..."
17. Here our Savior is obviously referring to the entirety of the discourse, especially the promise of the Holy Spirit...
18. [3] All that He taught while in the world—by this is meant, all that our Savior said throughout His ministry...
19. This of course includes the chapters 16-17 and chapter 17, but it also includes, by inference, all that went before...
20. Personally, if I had to chose one of these options I would combine them by saying—our Savior especially meant His prayer, which is necessarily connected to His Upper Room Discourse, which can never be severed from His entire ministry...
21. In other words brethren—in the fullest and broadest sense, I suggest, all that our Savior said, is intended to promise joy among His people...
22. And yet, I can go even further than this—for we must remember, through His Spirit, our Savior spoke through His apostles...
23. And thus, we must also include the entire NT—Matthew – Revelation—all 27 books are actually His words...
24. 1Jn.1:4—"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full"—this is because John wrote on Christ's behalf...
25. But then, if we include the whole of the NT, we must also include the OT, because the two tells us of the same person...
26. The entire NT was written upon the foundation of the OT, and thus it's impossible to sever the New from the Old...
27. And so, I suggest there is a very true sense in which, God gave His holy word, that His people would have joy...
28. Perhaps put another way—the entirety of Holy Scripture, both the law and the gospel, brings joy to our hearts...

29. Christians find joy in the precepts and promises of God's word—they find pleasure and contentment in the word...
30. And here's why—because it's in the word that we hear the sweet voice of our beloved Savior who loves me...
31. [a] Scripture must be clearly understood—I really fear that many Christians lack joy because they lack understanding...
32. I start here, because I fear many Christians over look this—true and Christian joy is not void of understanding...
33. Sometimes I fear joy is portrayed as "positive thinking"—just forget about reality and think of better things...
34. But nothing is further from the truth—true joy feeds on the truth of Scripture—it's fuelled by Scriptural truths...
35. William Gurnall—"The reason why many poor souls have so little heat of joy in their hearts, is that they have so little light of Gospel knowledge in their mind..."
36. For example, just think of our Savior's prayer—He Himself says, He spoke these things to increase our joy...
37. And yet, if we examine the content of this prayer, we would find, our Savior mentions highly theological truths...
38. He mentions election (v2); His finished work on the cross (v4); His equality with the Father (v10); His prayer for preservation (vv11-15)....
39. Perhaps we can summarize these into His twofold work of High Priest—He offers a sacrifice and then intercedes...
40. [b] Scripture must be humbly believed—by this I mean, we must, personally believe Scripture is true for us...
41. We must personally apply Scripture to our own soul—we must personally eat and drink the word of God ourselves...
42. Scripture refers to itself as bread and milk—bread and milk will only benefit our bodies if they are partaken of...
43. So too, the truth of Holy Scripture will only give us joy—will only gladden our hearts—if it is personally applied...
44. Jer.15:16—"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..."
45. By "Your words" Jeremiah includes both his call to the ministry and the substance of the message he was to proclaim...
46. He—"ate them"—that is, he digested them into his soul—they sank down into the deepest parts of his heart...
47. This resulted in joy—as his heart embraced the great truths about God, the Messiah, salvation, and redemption...
48. [c] Scripture must be deeply cherished—by this I mean, we must cherish the word because we cherish God...
49. Or put another way—we must fellowship and communion with God, through and by His holy and perfect word...
50. Ps.119:162—"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure"—he rejoiced at the word as if it were great treasure...
51. We must remember, Scripture is the living word of God, through which God, by His Spirit, speaks to our hearts...
52. It is through Scripture that we fellowship with God—we hear His voice—He tells us about His love for us...
53. Perhaps I can put it this way—it is through Scripture and prayer that Christians and Christ grow closer together...
54. True Christian joy—finding pleasure and contentment in Christ—is fostered as we fellowship with Him through the word and prayer...
55. Ps.16:11—"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (fullness of joy and pleasures are the same things)..."

56. That is—to have joy is to find pleasure—both of these are found in God's presence—in fellowship with Him...

III. Why is Joy Important?

1. Here I want to answer the question—Why did our Savior say the things He said, in order to fill His people with joy...
2. Or put another way—Why does our Savior desire His beloved people, who remain in this world, be filled with joy...
3. Well, the broad answer is that He loves His people and knows how important true joy is, in a world like ours...
4. Thus, the question becomes—Why is Christian joy important—I want to briefly suggest three basic reasons...
5. [1] Christian joy is strengthening, Neh.8:10—"the joy of the Lord is your strength"—true joy gives us strength...
6. A joyful Christian is a strong Christian—a motivated Christian—a busy Christian—a Christian willing to work...
7. Let me ask you—when you are sad, discouraged, and depressed—are you productive—are you a busy Christian (No—we are lazy, sluggish, and indifferent)...
8. [a] Joy gives us strength to worship, Neh.12:42-43—"The singers sang loudly...Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off..."
9. Here we learn, in part, how their strength, which was the result of their joy, manifested itself—in offering worship...
10. Dear brethren, surely we know, that throughout the Psalms, joy and worship are almost always brought together...
11. [b] Joy gives us strength to witness, Ps.51:12-13—"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You..."
12. A sad, doubting, discouraged, and depressed Christian, is hardly going to make an aggressive and effective evangelist...
13. [c] Joy gives us strength to endure hardship, 1Thess.1:6—"you received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit..."
14. [2] Christian joy is sanctifying—remember our definition—true joy finds pleasure and satisfaction in Christ...
15. The more we find joy in Christ, the less we will be tempted to find our pleasure and satisfaction in other things...
16. Perhaps I can put it like this—one way not to find pleasure in this world, is to find more pleasure in Christ...
17. The more we rejoice in Christ (His word, day, people, and salvation)—the less we will rejoice in this world...
18. [3] Christian joy is glorifying—God is glorified in joyful Christians, who live joy-filled lives in this world...
19. And the reason why He is glorified is because, it underscores the fact that He is worthy of our joy and delight...
20. A joyless Christian, gives the impression, he or she has nothing to rejoice about, as if there's nothing about God that pleasant...
21. Shorter Catechism—"What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever..."
22. These are the two things for which we were created—to enjoy God and to glorify God—or, one obvious way we glorify God, is by enjoying God...