

“Full and Complete Joy”

July 17, 2011

Text: 1 John 1:4

The theme of our text today is “Full and Complete Joy.”

* The OT has a great deal to say about such fullness of joy.

In Psa 16:11, David wrote=> *“Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is **fulness of joy**; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.”*

OT joy was so full of emotion that it could become raucous/loud, and verged on rowdiness.

E.g. when David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he danced with joy before the Lord with all his might.

II Sam 6:15=> *“So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with **shouting** and the **sound** of the **trumpet**.”*

Verse 5 says there were also cymbals, castanets, tambourines, lyres, harps, and wooden instruments.

But in Psa 51, David forfeited this joy because of his sinful adultery with Bathsheba, and so he prayed=> *“Restore to me the **joy** of Thy **salvation**”*

(Psa 51:12)=> he had lost his joy.

* The NT is even richer in its statements about such human joy.

E.g. in Lk 2:10, an angel proclaimed to shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem=> *“Behold, I bring you good news of a **great joy** which shall be for all the people;”*

We associate this verse w/ Christmas, and with all the pleasure of Christmas traditions here on earth.

But the kind of joy both David and the angel were talking about had little to do with the mundane things of earth.

It had everything to do with the believer’s relationship with God, based on his salvation from sin.

The angel in Bethlehem explained the cause for this joy=> *“For today in the city of David there has been born for you a **Savior**, who is Christ the Lord”* (Lk 2:11).

In Psa 16, David’s greatest joy was being in God’s presence.

It was drawing near to Him, a privilege reserved for believers.

This is the of joy of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which asked=> “What is the chief end of man?”

Then answered=> “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, & to **enjoy** Him forever.”

Describing this kind of joy, Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote=>

“This is something quite peculiar which cannot be explained; it is a quality which belongs to the Xn life in its essence.... Joy is something very deep and profound, something that affects the... entire personality.”

That would sound unrealistic/foreign to most people.

The world has taught them to look for joy in pleasure, popularity, prosperity, applause, success, or anything else that evokes momentary feelings of well-being/good-fortune;

For some folks, that could be nothing more than a 6-pack, a new car, and a few bawdy jokes by Larry the cable guy.

Those who seek the world’s joy, don’t look for it in a relationship with God.

The Scriptures I read earlier won't speak to them, because they've come to believe joy is found elsewhere.

So the Bible actually has nothing joyful to say to them at all.

It leaves them alone, believing within themselves they have joy enough without it.

People who find no joy in the Lord are similar to those about whom Jesus said (Mk 2:17)=> *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

In the same sense, until a person realizes that he has no real joy and that he has complacently settled for counterfeit/worldly joy that's not really joy at all, he will never seek for the real thing, that is found only in the Lord.

Until a person comes to that realization, X has nothing for him either.

The Xn's joy has nothing to do with vulgar things, & the things of the world don't satisfy his noble mind.

His joy needs something far more substantial/elevated/majestic;

He needs a sense of fellowship with X.

He can sing w/ total sincerity=>

*"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see
And in Thy presence rest."*

Fleshly Xns may flirt w/ the world, but if they're truly Xns, they won't love it, because 1 Jn 2:15 says=> *"Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

And Xns who flirt with the world can have no more real joy than David did until he confessed/repented-of his adultery.

Nor can they have any assurance of their salvation, because in their hearts they are committing spiritual adultery with the world.

Xns need to guard their joy, because without it, they are spiritually impoverished/anemic/vulnerable.

If holy joy fills our hearts, we can withstand Satan's temptations.

Without it, we become as weak as Peter, swearing to a maiden that he really wasn't a disciple of Jesus, and didn't even know Him.

But with it, we can even say w/ Habakkuk=>

*"Though the fig tree should not blossom, & there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, & the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, & there be no cattle in the stalls [total economic disaster], / Yet I will **exult** [rejoice] in the LORD, I will **rejoice** in the God of my salvation" (3:18).*

Real joy is resilient, and it is found in the Lord God alone.

If we are seeking the face of our Savior, the joy that fills our hearts will disarm temptation.

But when worldliness/fleshliness/lust creep into our hearts, we're as spiritually weak as Samson with his hair cut off.

There are times when it's very difficult to remain joyful.

Paul commands us to=> *"Rejoice in the Lord always"* (Phil 4:4).

But sickness can steal our joy, until we have learned to rejoice always in all things, having become truly convinced that God really is working them together for good.

Poverty/affliction, business losses, the disloyalty of friends and the cruelty of enemies can also hamper our joy, if we let them.

Failure to resist temptation spoiled David's joy, and it can spoil ours as well, when we fall into sin.

But when our fellowship with our Savior is trusting/loving, joyful/vibrant, our resistance to discouragement becomes strong.

So we need to guard our joy carefully, by confessing sin, feasting on God's Word, & continuing in prayer.

When our joy is subdued, we need to break out of our funk by disciplining our mind to praise the Lord, so that doubt/negativity don't become a habit w/ us.

We need to overcome (by the Spirit's power) that which has distracted our hearts and undermined our Joy in the Lord.

Joy belongs to us as children of God, & as citizens of His Kingdom.

Rom 14:17=> *"The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*

In our study of Galatians, we saw that, as we walk by the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit grows ripe in our hearts=> *"Love, joy, peace."*

Today we will approach our text (1 Jn 1:4) by 1st placing it in its context (1 Jn 1:1-3—we considered last Sunday), then 2nd by examining the text itself, & 3rd by applying it.

* **The Context** (a review of 1 Jn 1:1-3).

Last time we saw that the Apostle John had been thinking for 60 years about a question Jesus had once asked His disciples=> Who do you say that I am?

John had come to realize that, although Jesus was a Man, He was also God's message of eternal life to mankind.

A group of heretics who would later become known as Gnostics, had said that Jesus wasn't a true man, because His body was not a physical body like ours, but was merely an apparition.

John debunked this fallacy, saying that he & all the other Apostles had seen/heard/beheld/touched Jesus both before His death & after His resurrection, & they could witness to the fact, He was 100% man.

And yet, John adds, Jesus was also the Word of Life who, from the time of the creation, had been revealing to mankind that He is the Author of all life & all kinds of life (plant/animal/human/angelic/eternal).

We also saw that eternal life is essentially knowing God by forming a personal relationship with Jesus, His Son.

It is life on a higher plane, a superior quality of life.

It is abundant life, spiritual life, God's kind of life, that we receive from Him, when we believe in Jesus X.

It is so closely connected with X Himself, that Jesus said=> *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies"* (Jn 11:25).

As a person learns about Jesus in the Bible, then translates that understanding into a personal relationship with X, that relationship itself becomes eternal life to him.

So John will say in 1 Jn 5:20=> *"We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life"*(this "knowing Jesus" so that we are in Him and in God the Father).

Not only do we receive eternal life from Jesus, He actually becomes eternal life to-us/in-us, so that Col 3:4 can say that X *“is our life.”*

Jesus X has come from heaven to bring us God’s message of eternal life.

As we believe in Him, forming a personal relationship with Him thru faith, His eternal life becomes life, to us.

In 1 John 1:3, the Apostle explained his purpose in proclaiming that Jesus was the Word of Life, from God.

1 Jn 1:3=> *“...that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

John’s purpose for proclaiming Jesus X as the life-giving Word of God, was to enable others to fellowship w/ him and the other Apostles, so they could lead them into a relationship with X, and through Him into a relationship with God the Father.

Within that relationship believers would find eternal life and would begin to fellowship with God.

Jesus described it like this in Jn 6:56-57=> *“He who eats My flesh & drinks My blood abides in Me, & I in him. / As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.”*

True/abundant/eternal life is fellowship with God the Father through a personal/abiding union w/ God the Son.

Since Jesus is truly a man, believers can fellowship with Him, and enjoy an ongoing relationship with Him, or, as Jesus put it, they can “abide” in X.

Within that fellowship, they enjoy eternal life, knowing Him personally.

But that’s not the end of the matter, because John now takes it one step farther, in today’s text.

*** The Text**

[1 John 1:4]=> *“And these things [verses 1-3] we write, so that our joy [both yours/ours] may be made complete [full].”*

John says he/the-Apostles write these truths by which we can enter into a relationship (& into fellowship) w/ God, so “our joy” (both ours/the-Apostles’) will be full/complete.

Xn joy is not found in things/achievements, but in fellowship w/ God through Jesus, & in fellowship w/ other people who have also formed a relationship with Jesus.

True joy cannot be found in isolating oneself from God (like an agnostic) or from other Xns like a hermit (even if they get on our nerves).

God has so created our nature that we can only find true joy in the context of fellowship—w/ Him/believers.

You see this principle throughout the NT, and John esp. alludes to it often=>

* Jn 15:11 (Jesus)=> *“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”*

What Jesus had said in the Upper Room Discourse, esp. what He had just said about believers abiding in Him, was intended to facilitate His delight in them, & theirs in Him, as they shared fellowship together.

“Abiding in X” is synonymous with continuing in fellowship with X.

* Jn 16:24 (Jesus)—*“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”*

Within our fellowship with X, we make requests to God in His name.

God's answers to our prayers reassure us of His fatherly love for us, thus making our joy full/complete.

* Jn 17:13 (Jesus)=> *"Now I come to **Thee** [the Father]; and these things I speak in the world, that they [X's disciples] may have **My joy made full** in themselves."*

Jesus' joy had been in His fellowship with the Father.

Now the Apostles would have fellowship with the Father, and in that relationship they too would find their joy, just as He had.

* 2 Jn 1:12 (John)=> *"Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your **joy may be made full.**"*

John's joy, and the joy of the "chosen lady" to whom he was writing would be heightened by their fellowship, as they spoke face to face.

* Phil 4:1 (Paul)=> *"My beloved brethren whom I long to see, **my joy and crown**, so stand firm in the Lord."*

Paul's fellowship with the saints of Philippi had made them his joy and crown.

**** True Xn joy is found within the context of fellowship with other believers and fellowship with the Lord.**

We come together on Sundays for worship/fellowship, singing-to/praising our God and enjoying one another's love for Him.

That should be the high point of our joy thru-out the week.

There can be no true fellowship between people who disagree over fundamental doctrines of the Xn faith.

* E.g., someone who believes Jesus is Lucifer's brother.

* Or someone who believes he can earn his way to heaven by going house to house, saying/doing something religious.

At times John addresses his readers as believers w/ whom he has fellowship; at other times, he speaks to them as if they weren't.

There were undoubtedly some of both types in the churches to which he wrote.

To those who weren't saved, or were even being led into false doctrine by the Gnostics, he was saying, "Believe in Jesus, because if you don't, there will be no way for Him/us to have true fellowship with you."

"Unless you believe that Jesus was both fully-man and fully-God, there can be no basis for fellowship between us."

To those who were true believers, he was saying, "Get as close as you can to X in your relationship w/ Him & in your relationship with us, because therein you will find joy.

"Within that fellowship, your/our joy can be made complete, as you grow in your understanding & in the joy of your fellowship, with the Lord."

John's joy would be incomplete until all God's people in the churches to which he wrote enjoyed the same level of uninterrupted fellowship with the Father/Son, that he enjoyed himself.

* **The Application**

Fellowship is built upon communication.

Like any relationship, it requires both talking/listening.

As we build our relationship with the Lord by hearing from Him in His Word, and responding to Him in prayer, our fellowship with Him becomes more-trusting/loving.

1st we must listen, as the Lord speaks to us in His Word.

That's why John begins our text w/ => *"These things we write"* (he is writing Scripture).

Ultimately, everything revealed to us in Scripture is intended by God to complete the believer's joy.

It's all part of God's Good News, to men lost in sin and its joyless misery.

All the doctrinal truths in the Bible should add to a Xn's joy.

* E.g. the doctrine of Election—that “*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*” Eph 1:4.

God chose us to be recipients of His infinite grace before the world began, & that fact alone should give a Xn enormous joy.

David danced before the Lord gladly and with all his might because he had been chosen by God—not only to be Israel's king, but also for salvation.

When his wife Michal mocked him for doing so, he answered (II Sam 6:21)=> “*It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD.*”

The truth that God chose us should ignite great joy in our hearts, as we bask in His love, entering His presence w/ thanksgiving, & into His courts w/ praise.

For David, such fellowship was fulness of joy.

Xn, can you believe God chose you and forever set His love upon you, & yet not rejoice, w/ great joy?

* The doctrine of Redemption, revealed in God's Word, should also be a cause for the believer's rejoicing as he fellowships with his beloved Redeemer.

Jesus redeemed us from slavery to sin/death, paying the ultimate price for our freedom—His own death.

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Nought me with His precious blood.”

That is the redemption which brings such joy to believers' hearts.

* The doctrine of Justification should also certainly give us joy.

We are fortunate beyond belief, in that God no longer sees our sin, because it was placed on Jesus.

What God sees in us is Jesus' righteousness, and that makes us acceptable to Him.

It also enables us to fellowship w/ Him, even though His perfect holiness bars all sin from ever entering His presence.

Nevertheless He invites us to=> “*draw near w/ confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need*” (Heb 4:16).

As we fellowship with God, we enjoy His mercy/grace, and that is great joy for us.

* The doctrine of Sanctification makes us ever more suited to fellowship w/ God in His perfect holiness; & so again we rejoice.

Phil 1:6 says He who began a good work in us will perfect it until the day of X Jesus, when we will be glorified.

How could such a truth fail to excite-us/incite-joy w/i our hearts?

How could we fail to love a God who would do that for us, or fail to want an ever-closer, more-immediate fellowship with Him?

* The doctrine of Preservation.

1 Pet 1:5 says we are protected by God's power thru faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So we have a gold-bond guarantee that we shall see Him where He is, not because of our own ability to hold onto our salvation, but because of His ability to protect it.

Jesus said (Jn 10:28)=> *"No one shall snatch them out of My hand."*

We are in the grip of Him whose fellowship we cherish, and He will never let go of our souls.

* The doctrine of X's Presence with us.

In the very last verse of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus told His followers=> *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt 28:20).

Jesus is a Good Shepherd who never abandons His sheep.

God has given us all these wonderful doctrinal truths in His Word, and as we read them, our hearts are stirred up with joy/gladness.

2nd, we build our relationship with the Lord by responding back to Him in prayer/praise for these blessings.

In his book *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray said that God's voice, speaking to us through His Word=> "... brings blessing and strength, and awakens the response of a living faith that reaches the heart of God again."

This is the responsive side of our fellowship with the Lord, as we express to Him our joy for what He's told us in His Word.

It is praising God for His goodness, just as David did=> *"How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. / They drink their fill of the abundance of Thy house; And Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights. / For with Thee is the fountain of life"* (Psa 36:7-9).

Isn't that a beautiful/magnificent picture of the abundant goodness/grace of God's love for us?

God expects us (His chosen people) to love Him with our whole being, & prayer is to be our expression of that love/gratitude, to Him.

It is a mutual celebration of our love for the Lord and His love for us, as we fellowship/commune together with Him in prayer.

We praise Him for all His mighty deeds, as they are revealed in the Word, and as we have experienced them in our own lives.

We praise Him for all His goodness to sinners like us, who by all rights deserve His condemnation, not His love.

Unfortunately, there are times when we as Xns fall prey to sin, & must come before our holy/loving Father, to confess our sins once again.

He may even be chastening us at the time, because of them.

One might think such episodes would destroy our joy and even our fellowship w/ the Lord.

But in reality, they have the opposite effect.

There is a mourning over sin which comes from the H.S. and is a joyful mourning—a sweet sorrow that leads to repentance.

In that humbled condition, we discover once again (on the level of experience) what we've always known in our minds: that God's graciousness to forgive is completely limitless.

As Charles Spurgeon said in one of his sermons=>

“I do not know, Beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin, at the foot of the Cross!”

A poet has described this renewed understanding of God’s love/grace like this=>

“Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground,

And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found!”

This too reminds us that in God’s presence there is full/complete joy, because He loves us as His dear children, and will never cast us away.

“Full and Complete Joy”

July 17, 2011

Text: 1 John 1:4

1. The theme of our text today is “[10 Full] and Complete Joy.”

Psa 16:11; II Sam 6:15; Psa 51:12; Lk 2:10, 11

2. In Psalm 16 David’s greatest joy was being in [12 God’s] presence.

Mk 2:17

3. The Christian’s joy has nothing to do with vulgar things; he needs a sense of [24 fellowship] with Christ.

I Jn 2:15; Hab 3:18

4. If we are seeking the face of our Savior, the joy that fills our hearts will [14 disarm] temptation.

Phil 4:4; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22

Today we will approach our text by first placing it in its context, then second by examining the text itself, and thirdly by applying it...

*** The Context**

I Jn 1:1-3

5. John had come to realize that, although Jesus was a Man, He was also God’s message of eternal [10 life] to mankind.

Jn 11:25; I Jn 5:20; Col 3:4; I Jn 1:3

6. John’s purpose for proclaiming Jesus Christ as the life-giving Word of God, was to enable others to fellowship with the Apostles so they could lead them into a [26 relationship] with Christ.

Jn 17:23

* **The Text**

[1 John 1:4]

7. Christian joy is not found in things or achievements but in fellowship with God through Jesus, and in fellowship with other people.

Jn 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; II Jn 1:12; Phil 4:1

8. We come together on Sundays for worship and fellowship, singing to and praising our God; that should be the high point of our [8 joy] throughout the week.

* **The Application**

9. As we build our relationship with the Lord by hearing from Him in His Word and responding to Him in prayer, our fellowship with Him becomes more [18 trusting] and loving.

First, we must *listen* as the Lord speaks to us in His Word.

10. All the doctrinal truths in the Bible should add to a [24 Christian's] joy.

Eph 1:4; II Sam 6:21; Heb 4:16

11. The doctrine of Sanctification makes us ever more suited to fellowship with God in His perfect holiness, and so we [16 rejoice].

Phil 1:6; I Pet 1:5; Mt 28:20

Second, we build our relationship with the Lord by *responding* back to Him in prayer and praise for these blessing.

12. This is the responsive side of our fellowship with the Lord as we express to Him our [8 joy] for what He has told us in His Word.

Psa 36:7-9

13. Unfortunately, there are times when we as Christians fall prey to sin; one might think such episodes would destroy our joy and even our fellowship with the Lord, but in reality they have the [20 opposite] effect.

14. This too reminds us that in God's presence there is full and complete joy because He [12 loves] us as His dear children.