

## Rejoice in the Lord More Than Ever

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今まで以上に主にあって喜べ  
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ゴットホルド・ベック

### Nehemiah

8:10 "He also told them, 'Go eat the best food, drink the best wine, and give something to those who have nothing, since this day is holy to our Lord. Don't be sorrowful, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.'"

[International Standard Version]

### Psalms

16:11 "You cause me to know the path of life; in your presence is joyful abundance, at your right hand there are pleasures forever."

What these two verses encourage us to do is to rejoice in the Lord more than we do now. This is what the Lord wants us to do. To rejoice in the Lord is the source of all strength. This was what David, the author of Psalms experienced.

### Psalms

16:11 "You cause me to know the path of life; in your presence is joyful abundance, at your right hand there are pleasures forever."

The prayers of David are truly our treasures. These are, indeed, the prayers guided by the Holy Spirit 3000 years ago. So, they never become obsolete.

As we all know, David was a man who suffered very badly. He did not know what to do with all his problems, so he was compelled to pray. It is a great blessing for us that we can still read his prayers today, isn't it? Indeed, we rarely see such people who have no worries at all and fully enjoy their lives in all aspects. They all worry about something. They suffer from their own problems.

But, we do not have to pity them. If they do not suffer from any pain, any troubles at all, they would not pray. They would never seek help as long as they believe that they can solve their problems by their own efforts. This is a lie that the Devil wants them to believe. They cannot help themselves no matter how hard they try on their own.

The way of life that the Bible teaches us is to give up our own efforts, surrender ourselves, and entrust

everything to the One who can do all things. It gives us a peace of mind. Why don't we attribute everything to Jesus? Why didn't something work well? Why did I have to divorce? Nobody can explain it to you. You may say that it was because of the arrogance of your wife rather than yourself, but she might be saying the same thing about you. Instead of blaming someone, say "I do not care whose fault it is. I have entrusted everything to Jesus," if you can take this attitude, you are simply blessed by the Lord.

This was the attitude David always took: "Let us rejoice in the Lord." Why don't we read some verses from the Gospel according to John?

### John

3:29 "It is the bridegroom who gets the bride, yet the bridegroom's friend, who merely stands by and listens for him, is overjoyed to hear the bridegroom's voice. That's why this joy of mine is now complete.

3:30 He must become more important, but I must become less important."

This is exactly how we may experience the joy of the Lord. This is the testimony of John the Baptist.

### John

15:11 "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

What a wonderful promise!

### John

16:24 "So far you haven't asked for anything in my name. Keep asking and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete."

These are the words of invitation from the Lord.

### John

17:13 "And now I am coming to you, and I say these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves."

These were the words of farewell from Jesus. We need to constantly keep these things in our minds; We should not care about ourselves at all; we should not desire to be esteemed well or admired by others. Instead, we want Jesus alone to be glorified.

While all believers absolutely need to grow spiritually, each one of them also needs to be a part of the intimate fellowship of believers so that he or she may stop caring about him or herself. These two things are more important than anything for all believers, aren't they?

We need to rely on the Lord Jesus alone instead of relying on other people. It is only when we do that the Lord can begin to lead us and use us for His service. The right way of life for believers is simply the life that is crucified with the Lord.

One of the most important verses for all believers as you all definitely know is chapter 2, verse 20 from the Epistle to the Galatians;

#### Galatians

2:20 "I no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me, and the life that I am now living in this body I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Who do you think are the most blessed people in this world? I would say that they are those who see the Lord exactly the same way as Paul did: "the Son of God, who gave himself for me." We cannot even imagine how much Jesus suffered on our behalf. It is unthinkable and far beyond our comprehension.

It is kind of understandable if we are quite valuable to Him. But, actually, we are so worthless that we only deserve to be forsaken. In this sense, we cannot understand what Jesus did at all. Why does He refuse to abandon all worthless things like us? We simply deserve to be abandoned, don't we? However, Jesus still never forsakes us. "Never" is "never." Jesus never lies to us but, He is the one who absolutely keeps what He has promised.

We just read this verse from Nehemiah, "Don't be sorrowful, because the joy of the Lord is your strength." When we see the Lord, we all feel vibrant. We are given the strength we need. What do we need to do to experience this joy of being in the Lord? I suppose that there are five answers to this question.

Firstly, when we realize from personal experience the great power of the Lord that can save us, we can experience this joy. We always try to accomplish something on our own efforts, but unfortunately, when we do, this joy is lost instantly. The secret of having this joy is to unceasingly wish not our will, but the will of the Lord be done.

Still, Jesus would never lead us in the way we expect, but He guides us in the way we cannot even imagine. All our innate desires, our innate thoughts, and our innate emotions conflict with the intention of the Lord. When we insist on our own thoughts or intentions, it inevitably makes us all wretched. It is only those who are determined to abandon all their desires and intentions that will be given an opportunity to truly

experience the great strength of the Lord and this wonderful joy.

We first asked the question as to how we can receive the joy of the Lord Himself in our hearts. As I mentioned, the first answer to this question is that it is possible when we accept Jesus as our Saviour. When we believe that we are forgiven, we can rejoice in belonging to the Lord forever.

The second answer to this question is that when we are convinced of the presence of Jesus, it gives us great joy. When we are determined to live following Jesus, it soon makes us realize how worthless we are and that we have no strength at all.

When we are thoroughly devastated and are completely broken down, no matter how weak we have gotten, only if we look up to the Lord will we be able to experience His great strength and the wonderful joy He gives us. We are never alone wherever we are or whatever happens to us. Jesus is always with us.

Jesus left some words of farewell, one of which can be found in the gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20:

#### Matthew

28:20 "... teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age."

This is a wonderful promise, which is beyond our imagination. "I am with you each and every day until the end of the age." This promise was written for each one of us. Let me continue with a few more verses.

#### Lamentation

3:57 "You drew near when I called out to you. You said, 'Stop being afraid'"

The next verse is telling us fundamentally the same thing.

#### Isaiah

10 41:10 "Don't be afraid, because I'm with you; don't be anxious, because I am your God. I keep on strengthening you; I'm truly helping you. I'm surely upholding you with my victorious right hand."

When Isaiah heard these words, he must have been liberated from all worries. He must have felt very delighted and believed that he had nothing to worry about anymore because the Lord promised so. Jesus Himself is with us now; it is this conviction that gives us great joy.

Let me summarize what we have discussed so far. We learned that there are two things that give us true joy. Firstly, when we experience Jesus' power of salvation, we will understand the meaning of true joy. Secondly, when we are convinced of the presence of Jesus, we experience the same joy.

As the third answer to the question, being convinced of and experiencing the guidance of Jesus in our lives also give us great joy. In our lives, we suffer from many kinds of pains and are faced with various challenges. When we do, very often, we do not know what to do. On such occasions, if we can become confident that Jesus stays by our side and is leading us, it will be turned into a great blessing. This is what gives us true joy.

Many difficult things happen as we continue to live in this world. But, not even one of these events can happen unless it is permitted by Jesus. What gives us great joy is the confidence that we are being guided by true living Jesus.

David was the author of many Psalms. Among the many Psalms he wrote, I believe that this Psalm 23 is the most well-known:

#### Psalms

23:3 "He revives my life; he leads me in pathways that are righteous for the sake of his name."

This is the confession of David and his wonderful testimony too. He left many other remarkable Psalms. Let us look at how he confessed in his Psalm 107:

#### Psalms

107:6 "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress."

107:7 "He led them in a straight way to find a city where they could live."

107:14 "And he brought them out from darkness and the shadow of death, shattering their chains."

107:28 "Yet when they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, the Lord brought them out of their distress."

136:16 "To the one who led his people into the wilderness, for his gracious love is everlasting—"

These words in the Psalms are all the personal experiences of the author. They are his testimonies too. Being led by the Lord was the experience all the people of Israel shared in those days, and it was the source of their joy. When we feel certain that we are being guided by the Lord, we can experience great joy.

There are no accidents in our lives. It only leaves us confused to try to understand why Jesus allows something happen to us. Why does the Lord allow this and that to happen in our lives? We will never understand it while we are alive. But, let us not worry about it. Why don't we wait for a little while? The time will absolutely come when everything is clearly explained.

How can we share in the joy of the Lord? I gave three answers to this question. Firstly, we can rejoice when we accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour because it makes us believe that we are forgiven and realize that we belong to the Lord forever. Jesus never forsakes anyone, no matter how worthless they are. Secondly, feeling certain of the presence of Jesus also gives us great joy. Thirdly, being convinced that we are guided by Jesus and experiencing it also give us great joy.

As the fourth answer, it also brings us great joy to realize how Jesus has prepared all the things we need. Sometimes, we have to go through some hardships, which we cannot understand at all. There seems to be no escape from such hardships, and we cannot understand why. We have all had such experiences, which made us totally dismayed, haven't we?

Even when we are totally at a loss and do not understand why we have to go through such pain, if we are convinced that the Lord has prepared all things we need, it will turn all our pains into great joy.

Jesus is the one who loves each one of us human beings. Jesus has prepared all the things we truly need. How blessed are those who are convinced of this fact! Let us look again at what David, the author of the Psalms said. Let us open Psalm 23, which we read before:

#### Psalms

23:1 "The Lord is the one who is shepherding me; I lack nothing."

34:10 "Young lions lack and go hungry, but those who seek the Lord will never lack any good thing."

This was the experience that David personally went through. Jesus once asked His disciples as recorded in Luke, chapter 22:

#### Luke

22:35 "Then Jesus asked his disciples, 'When I sent you out without a wallet, traveling bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?' They replied, 'Nothing at all.'"

Let me read another verse.

## 1 Corinthians

1:7 "Therefore, you don't lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus the Messiah to be revealed."

What do we need to do to obtain the joy of the Lord Himself in our hands? As I just mentioned, those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour are forgiven. They are accepted until the end of time. They can rejoice because they belong to the Lord. As the second answer, having a conviction of the presence of Jesus also gives us great joy.

There are unbelievably many people who are suffering from loneliness. Once, cancer used to be the most feared disease. But, it is not so nowadays. It is not cancer, but loneliness is the most difficult disease to cure today. There is nothing humans can do about it. However, when we experience the greatness of Jesus, we will be liberated from loneliness. We can move forward into our future with peace of mind. The fact that Jesus prepares everything for us also gives us great joy, doesn't it?

The fifth answer to the question: What brings us the joy is the fact that Jesus is eagerly waiting to see us. Although we have not experienced it yet, it is clearly written in many parts of the Bible that it is a fact. To die is not to completely vanish away, but it simply means to return to the Lord.

These five convictions provide us with true joy and courage everywhere and always.

Let me summarize again. Firstly, Jesus forgives all our sins. He is the one who liberates us by His divine power. Although it is hard for us humans to believe, it is written in the Bible that when Jesus forgives something, He forgets it immediately. When you get to heaven and say, "Jesus, you must have seen what I did; I should have done this and I shouldn't have done that," He will look at you in surprise and tell you, "I don't know what you are talking about." We are afraid that Jesus has seen and knows all the horrible things we did, but He does not even remember them. If Jesus does not even remember what we did, why do we have to worry about them? This conviction makes it possible for us to face our death with peace.

"I will never remember your sins forever." This is one of the greatest promises of the Bible, isn't it? Jesus is calling to us everywhere and always. As I just mentioned, Jesus forgives all our arrogance, faults, and sins, then liberates us by His great power. And He would never forsake us worthless humans. He would never leave us alone. Jesus leads us by Himself.

Needless to say, Jesus is not leading us without a plan. His guidance is always impeccable. And Jesus loves each one of us humans. He is the one who prepares everything we need and He is eagerly waiting to welcome us.

The joy of being in Jesus gives us a strength greater than anything; it is the strength that can resolve all problems in our lives. This joy of being in Jesus, not only gives us strength, but it serves as a measure of the sureness of our faith.

When we are disobedient to Jesus, we will naturally lose our joy. However, even when we do something unrighteous, if we confess everything entirely to Him without holding back anything, Jesus forgives everything we did and gives us new joy. Whether we have this joy or not is a significant matter. Without this joy, not only will we be unable to testify at all, but Jesus will never be able to use us in His service.

I would like to finish this sermon with a few verses David wrote in the Psalms.

### Psalms

5:11 "Let all those who take refuge in you rejoice! Let them shout for joy forever, and may you protect them. Let those who love your name exult in you."

32:11 "Righteous ones, be glad in the Lord and rejoice! Shout for joy, all of you who are upright in heart."

33:21 "Indeed, our heart will rejoice in him, because we have placed our trust in his holy name."

68:3 "But the righteous rejoice and exult before God; they are overwhelmed with joy."

104:34 "I will rejoice in the Lord!"

Jesus is certainly waiting for us to praise Him from the bottom of our hearts and rejoice in Him just like the author of the Psalms did.

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