

Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (5)

Joy in the Holy Spirit

Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Recapitulation

Brothers, sisters and friends, in the past few weeks we have been studying Romans 14:17 “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” We have studied the qualities of righteousness and peace, today we are going to look at the quality of joy.

Introduction

According to this passage if you live under the kingship of God, you will experience joy. But some people would say, “I don’t believe in God, but I still have joy”; And some other people would say, “As long as I have money, my money can buy me joy; I don’t need to submit to the kingship of God!” Then another group of people would argue in a different way saying, “Does it mean that when Christians run into disasters in life, they will still laugh and rejoice? That’s crazy! Only crazy people would rejoice when disaster strikes!”

Brothers and sisters and friends, the joy in the kingdom of God is entirely different from the joy that people in the world have. Let’s look into the word of God to see what is the joy in the kingdom of God.

The joy of living in the love of the Lord Jesus

^{NAU} **John 15:10 – 11** “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.”

Here the Lord Jesus says that if we keep his commandments, we will live in his love, then his joy will be in us, and our joy will be made full. This is the joy of living in the love of the Lord Jesus; when you live in the love of the Lord, you will have this special kind of joy in your heart. In order to have this kind of joy, you will have to keep the Lord’s commandments. If you don’t keep the Lord’s commandments, you won’t abide in his love, then you won’t have this kind of joy in you.

Now let's find out more about this joy from the Lord Jesus. It is true that people in the world who don't believe in Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus still have joy, but their joy is very different from this joy of the Lord Jesus. What is the difference?

1. The joy of seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ

First of all, this is the joy of seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ.

^{NAU} **John 16:20 – 22** “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. ²¹ “Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. ²² “Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

Here the Lord Jesus says that the disciples would weep and lament, he compares their grief to a woman's labor pain, that is truly painful! But why would the disciples weep and lament? Let's look at the context of this passage, let's read a verse before that.

^{NAU} **John 16:17** *Some* of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father?’”

Here the Lord Jesus was talking about his death on the cross; when he died on the cross, the disciples would weep and lament; but the Lord says, “I will see you again”, he was prophesying about his resurrection, he said their grief will be turned to joy because he will be resurrected and will see them again, and no one can take their joy away from them.

This is the joy of seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ! When the disciples saw the Lord Jesus after he had been resurrected, they were overjoyed! People in the world definitely cannot have this kind of joy! Only the disciples who obey his teaching would see the resurrected Jesus Christ, only they have this kind of joy.

And this joy is not just for the disciples at that time, it is also for the disciples in generations to come, that means it is for us too! Today if you believe in Jesus Christ and obey his teaching, you will also experience the resurrected Jesus Christ, and you can also have this special kind of joy that the world cannot experience.

Joy in the Holy Spirit

I can testify that every time I experience the Lord Jesus speaking to me and teaching me, my heart is just filled with unspeakable joy, it is far better than any enjoyment in the world, it drives away all the sadness and pain! The people in the world cannot have this kind of joy and they don't understand it.

Let me tell you a story about a respectable woman, I will simply call her Auntie L. Many years ago Pastor Bentley and I were serving in a church in Asia, and we got to know Auntie L. Her husband had died many years ago, she could have remarried, but she was concerned that people might despise her two daughters. That's because in a traditional Chinese society, people despise a remarried woman and her children from the previous marriage, so she would rather remain single, she worked two jobs to raise up the daughters by herself. By the time I got to know her, her daughters were already grown up, she was living with her daughters and her own mother. One of her daughters was in the discipleship training program led by Pastor Bentley and me.

Sometime later our church organized a three-day Christmas camp, her daughter wanted Auntie L to attend the camp, because that would be good for her spiritual growth; but Auntie L didn't want to go. You know why? She said she needed to take care of her own mother who was very sick, she didn't want to leave her mother at home. The daughter tried to convince her to ask her own sister in law, that is her mother's daughter in law to come to take care of grandmother for a few days, so that she could attend the church camp. But Auntie L firmly refused, she even reprimanded her daughter, telling her not to be selfish, but should be concerned for grand mother. Her daughter couldn't convince her, she didn't know what to do, so she asked God to help to change her mother's heart. You know what happened? Auntie L had a dream, in the dream she saw a man dressed in white standing in front of her, this man was full of love and kindness, she had never seen anyone so kind and so loving, she just burst out in tears crying; this man said to her, "Daughter, you come with me!"; he took her hand and led her to a well, there was crystal clear water flowing out of this well, he scooped the water with a cup and gave it to her; she drank the water, it was very sweet; This man said to her, "Daughter, if you want to drink more, you should go to the camp!" Then Auntie L woke up, she knew right away that man was the Lord Jesus, she cried with overflowing joy and thankfulness. She obeyed the Lord's instruction and attended the church camp, she asked her sister in law to come over to take care of her mother while she went to the camp. In the camp she was in my Bible study group, she experienced the love of Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ; after the camp she decided to join the discipleship training program to learn more about the teaching of the Bible.

This is the joy of seeing the resurrected Jesus Christ.

2. The joy of receiving the things you ask from God

Secondly, the disciples of the Lord Jesus also have the joy of receiving things from God that they ask for.

^{NAU} **John 16:23 – 24** “In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Here the Lord Jesus encouraged the disciples to ask Yahweh God for anything in his name (that’s in the Lord Jesus’ name), and God would give it to them! Of course the Lord’s disciples would not ask for money and prosperity etc; if they were interested in that kind of things, they would not become disciples of the Lord; they would only ask for spiritual things or things they truly need.

I can testify this promise is true. In all these years of walking with Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus, quite often the things God gives to me is better than what I ask for! My Father in heaven knows what is best for me! Sometimes I don’t even need to ask, I just think about certain things I need, He knows and He would give them to me, because He knows I need them. That’s why I truly have this amazing unspeakable joy of living in the kingdom of God!

In year 2009 I came back to Canada by myself while Pastor Bentley was still in Hong Kong, because I needed to do some very important work for the Lord in Toronto, Canada, and Pastor Bentley had other works to do in Hong Kong. The flight between Hong Kong and Toronto was a 16 hour non-stop flight; the night before the flight we logged on to the airline website to try to book an aisle seat for me, because an aisle seat would be more comfortable and more convenient in such a long flight, but all the aisle seats were already booked. We committed this matter to God in prayer; Later on we tried again, amazingly there was an aisle seat available this time! You may wonder what is so amazing about this? Because usually the later it is, the more difficult it is to get a good seat; we tried to book an aisle seat earlier on, we didn’t get it; later it would be even more difficult to get one; but somehow someone decided to give up an aisle seat, and we came at the right time and we got it! I knew that it was not an accident, it was arranged by our Father in heaven; but that was not the end of the story yet! Next day when I got on the plane, it was very packed, the whole plane was full; I found my aisle seat and sat down, my heart was so thankful to our Father in heaven; But He had prepared something even better for me. Suddenly a gentleman asked me whether I would like to exchange seats with him, because he and his wife got two separated seats, he wanted to sit with his wife, and his wife’s seat was next to mine. You know

where was his seat? His seat was on the first row! The first row is the best row, because there's a lot of space in front of the seat, I could stretch out my legs, I could stand up and walk around, it was important in a 16 hour flight, it was much better than an aisle seat! I happily exchanged seat with this gentleman! I knew in my heart that it was my Father in heaven who had made this arrangement, because the purpose I flew back to Toronto by myself was to do His work, He saw that the aisle seat was still not good enough, He wanted me to have the best seat in such a long flight! It was exactly like what the Lord Jesus says:

^{NAU} **Matthew 6:31 – 33** “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

3. The joy of giving

We have just seen that the disciples of the Lord have the joy of receiving things they ask for, but do you know that there is also a lot of joy in giving to others? The disciples would have the special joy of giving.

Now let me tell you another story. When we were preaching the gospel in Asia, we also got to know another woman, we just call her auntie S. Auntie S was very weak and frail, because her health had been badly damaged during the second world war when the country was occupied by the Japanese army. Despite her health problem, she never complained about it. On the contrary she was always joyful; She wanted to serve in the church, but she was old and weak, she could not do much, so we didn't assign work for her to do; but she would try to find things that she could do, for example on Sunday she would volunteer to decorate the pulpit with fresh flowers. Fresh flowers are expensive; She was not rich, she took from her own pocket to buy fresh flowers; And she liked to buy gifts for people, she would cook very delicious food for the brothers and sisters. When Pastor Bentley and I had to leave that place to go to serve in another country, auntie S cried, that was the only time I saw her being sad. Auntie S was truly an example of joy in the Holy Spirit.

4. The joy over the repentance of sinners

The disciples of the Lord also rejoice over the repentance of sinners.

^{NAU} **Luke 15:7** “I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Joy in the Holy Spirit

In all these years preaching the gospel, I have experienced this joy of seeing the repentance of sinners. There was one time 6 people in one family repented and were baptized at the same time. Three of them were senior people, namely, the parents and the mother in law, the other three were younger people, namely, two sons and one daughter in-law. Each one of them went forward confessing their sins, they made a pledge to be faithful to Yahweh God, then they were baptized one by one. The senior people were in the Chinese Bible Training group, and the young people were in the English Bible Training group. My heart was just filled with joy, and the whole church was also filled with joy. This joy is definitely only for the disciples of the Lord, the people of the world certainly don't understand this joy and they cannot have this kind of joy.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. If you live under the kingship of God, you would have joy in the Holy Spirit, this joy is different from the joy that the world can offer to you. You will experience the love of Yahweh God, you will experience the resurrected Jesus Christ, you will receive the things you ask for, sometimes what you receive is far better than what you ask for! Sometimes you don't even need to ask, your Father in heaven knows what is best for you! Also when you give to others, you will have this unspeakable joy in your heart, that's the joy of giving. When you experience this kind of joy in the Holy Spirit, you know that the word of God is true, Yahweh God is real and the Lord Jesus Christ is real, you can entrust your whole life totally to God without fear, you know that you are living in the spiritual kingdom of God even now.