

## Enjoying God IV – Justified for Joy

1. Review
  - a. What is joy?
  - b. Reason for it?
  - c. Barriers for it?
  
2. Why don't we experience joy?
  - a. We are trying to earn God's love or forgiveness.
    - i. Most folks I talk to about "getting to heaven" generally think they have a pretty good answer why they think they will go there someday. Do you know what it is?
      1. "I give to my church" "I try to be a good person" "I don't hurt other people on purpose." "I do the best I can."
      2. This answer is about THEM. It is about trying to make God accept them.
      3. Some people do a pretty good job of trying hard to get God to forgive them.
      4. But its all relative and its impossible.
  
    - ii. There is a huge gulf between God and man caused by sin. .
      1. There are people who are trying to get across to God.
      2. Some of the hardest workers would be like championship athletes.
        - a. They get a few dozen feet out there on a long jump. But it can never be far enough.
      3. Others are like someone who is handicapped in a wheelchair. They just try a bit...and they roll over the edge.
      4. But regardless of how hard they tried, they all end up the same.
      5. That is because sin created this gulf between God and man than no man can cross.
        - a. Nothing we can do is sufficient to pay the price of the debt we owe.
        - b. Death is the consequence of sin.
  
3. Let me tell you a story of doom.
  - a. Most of us are familiar with the doomed ship, Titanic.
    - i. Imagine you are on the Titanic just hours before it hits the iceberg. And the captain says, "we have discovered that we are going to sink in exactly 3 hours."
      1. All the celebrating and merrymaking might cease, except for those deluded enough to believe that the ship can't sink! (which actually might be more than a few).
  
    - ii. But the captain then announces, "there is a fleet of rescue ships which will arrive on time and they will rescue all who are willing to follow the instructions we give you."
      1. While the merrymaking has ceased, something else would happen.
      2. There would be a seriousness that would spread over the ship, as well as a sense of thankfulness for the rescuers who are coming to their aid.
      3. Some might panic, doubting the promise of rescue. They might even go so far as to try to save themselves.
      4. Others would refuse to believe, thinking their ship invincible.
      5. But for those who believed and obeyed, they would perform acts of love and sacrifice on behalf of others in preparation for the coming destruction.
  
  - b. The bible tells us that every human being is destined for destruction. We are all riding on a doomed ship.
    - i. In Romans 3:9-10, "*All are under sin, none is righteous, no not one.*"

- ii. **We are on a doomed Titanic because of sin. Our sin.**
  - 1. Sin in its simplest form is **choosing less than God's best for us.**
  - 2. But at its core, **sin is choosing to be gods of our own lives.**
- iii. The bible says that "*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23)
  - 1. The key word here is ALL. All human beings are born into sin.
  - 2. It is a birth defect every human being has. It is the birth defect of sin.
- iv. **The consequence is that we are on a doomed ship.**
  - 1. Romans 6:23 "*The wages (result) of sin is death.*"
  - 2. By death, we are speaking not just of physical death, but of spiritual separation from God for eternity.
  - 3. *Your sins have cut you off from God.*" (Isaiah 59:2)
  - 4. That spiritual death is manifested by the spiritual blindness which we spoke of last week, an inability to comprehend and experience the supernatural things of God.
- c. And there is no room for sin in heaven. **There is only room for one God in heaven.**
  - i. God will judge every sinner because He alone is Holy and righteous. One must be sinless to enter His presence.
    - 1. "*Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27)
    - 2. "*Those who do not know God ... will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)
  - ii. This is a truth that we must shut out of our minds if we are to continue to act happy on the Titanic of this world.
    - 1. We must be blinded to the future ahead in order to continue to "party" in this world.
- d. But there is good news for the Titanic! There is help on the way! The help has already arrived!
  - i. We have a Savior!
  - ii. God knew this and did what none of us can do.
    - 1. He sent His only Son, Himself, in the flesh, to live among us a sinless life, to demonstrate His love for us, then to take the sins of all mankind on his body and to take the wrath of His Father as well, on the cross.
    - 2. *God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8)
    - 3. Our Savior, God's only begotten Son, Jesus, came to earth to take the penalty for our sin.
      - a. "*For our sake he made him to be sin who know no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" (2 Cor 5:21).
  - iii. **The cross becomes the bridge between man and God. (Slide with Bridge)**
    - 1. "*This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. 5 For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.* (1 Timothy 2:3-6) NLT
    - 2. But to cross this wondrous bridge, it requires that we acknowledge that we are not god.
      - a. You must acknowledge that you need God.
      - b. That is the scandal of the cross.
      - c. No one can get over this bridge except through faith and trust in Christ.
      - d. Any reliance upon your own abilities is to believe yourself equal to god.
      - e. And as we said before, there is only room for one God in heaven. And guess what...it ain't you!

3. *“For God so loved the world (you) that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”*. John 3:16)
  - a. “God gave” so that “whoever believes in Him” - is an offer of Joy.
    - i. It is an offer of relationship.
    - ii. God offers to do what you and I cannot do for ourselves.
    - iii. He takes away our sin and its penalty when we trust what Jesus did on our behalf.
    - iv. When we receive His work on the cross, we begin to experience eternal life.
    - v. *"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12)
4. This is the birthplace of JOY. The new birth.
  - a. When we realize that we don't have to go down with the ship is when we can experience the joy that belongs to God.
  - b. God's intent in making you and I, was so that we would find our delight in Him. And as we do so, we experience His joy, His plans for our lives. Our lives take on meaning and purpose.
- iv. I want to pause for a moment and ask you today...Have you ever asked Jesus Christ to forgive you for your sins? Have you experienced the new spiritual birth that comes from trusting in Christ and giving yourself to Him? Would you like to experience the joy that comes from God?
  1. You can today. We are going to pray quietly right now. I will pray a prayer that I would like you to pray with me if you want to know the Joy of Jesus today. Just repeat it to God because He is listening.
    - a. **God, I want to know You. I have been living my life like I am god of my life. I have sinned. I am a sinner. You alone are God. I am not. I need your forgiveness for my sins. I believe that Jesus, Your Son, died for my sins. I believe He took my place on the cross and took the penalty I deserved. I believe He rose again. I choose to trust in Him today. Come into my life Jesus. Make me a brand new person. Thank you for your forgiveness!**
    - b. With every head bowed and eye closed still, if you prayed that prayer, just slip up your hand. Thank you. If you prayed that prayer, it is important that you tell someone today. The bible says that *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* You just became a Christian. The Spirit of God now lives in you and there is a celebration in heaven. Tell another Christian what you did today. Let them celebrate with you! Your name is written in the book of life in heaven!

#### 4. Joy and Justification.

- a. We mentioned a few minutes ago that when a person trusts Jesus Christ as their savior that they experience the birth of Joy in their lives. This is because an important action has taken place in heaven. It is something the bible called “being justified.”
- b. Justification, or being justified, is a legal term used to describe our legal standing before God as a result of a transaction made on our behalf.
  - i. When we are “justified” our position changes from being an “enemy” of God to being “in Christ.”
  - ii. You the sinner are declared “not guilty” because someone, sinless (Jesus Christ) took your place.
  - iii. You get HIS righteousness and He takes your sin and the penalty you deserve.

- c. **The act of justification is always by grace through faith.**
  - i. The concept of grace is receiving something that you don't deserve.
  - ii. Our being made right with God is a free gift. It is grace.
  - iii. It is not something we deserve credit for. He did the work. We simply received it.
  - iv. If we did the work, then we could take the credit. But the bible says, that (Ephesians 2:8) *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."*
  - v. Wages are paid to workers, gifts are given to sons.
    - 1. Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
    - 2. What are the wages of sin? Death.
    - 3. What is the free gift of God? Eternal life.
    - 4. Did you notice that it says, FREE GIFT?

vi.

- 5. Open your bibles to Mt 18:23-27 *"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 "When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' 27 "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt"*

- a. Lets look over this passage for a minute.
  - i. We have a person who owes 10,000 talents, which is the equivalent to an amount of several millions of dollars, something that a person couldn't repay in a thousand lifetimes.
  - ii. It doesn't say how the man came to owe such a great sum, but just that he has this great debt.
  - iii. The day of reckoning comes, the day when the debt is due. And the man does not have the means to pay. The sum is beyond his ability to pay it. So the master banker commands him to be sold and all that he has to be sold to get some payment.
  - iv. So he begs and asks the master to *"have patience with me and I will repay you everything."*
  - v. Now, at this point, we could expect one of several responses from a good banker:
    - 1. *"Okay, you got a 10 year extension on your loan."*
    - 2. Or, *"No way Jose, you got your term and you missed it. I'm collecting it now."*
    - 3. But the master does something no good banker would ever do. Not even a bankruptcy court would encourage someone to do this. He *"felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt."*
    - 4. The debt he could not pay was forgiven.
- b. The parallel for us in this illustration that Jesus uses is that we are that person who owes millions, or billions. Our debt has been incurred toward God.
  - i. It is the un-payable debt of our sin.
  - ii. The only way a debt of this nature can be paid is by death.
  - iii. And God generously forgives us this enormous debt, but it costs Him something far more costly than we ever realize.
  - iv. It costs Him the life and suffering of His own Son, who bears the penalty of this debt on the cross on our behalf.

- 6. There are several **responses** we can make to such a great act of compassion.

- a. **We can express our gratitude.** We live a life of thanksgiving, forgiving our own debtors who owe us a miniscule amount in comparison.
  - i. **Gratitude is a form of joy that rises in our hearts in response to the goodwill of God who does something that we do not deserve or warrant.**
  - ii. This “joy” possesses a desire to demonstrate the value of what it has received.
    - 1. Not unlike someone a young lady getting a expensive and beautiful diamond necklace from her boyfriend, she immediately puts it on and shows it off.
    - 2. The greater the value of the gift, the greater our joy is in receiving it.
  - iii. The nature of God’s love in giving His son is that it was an act that was unconditional and undeserved.
    - 1. The purpose of this act was to release the power of forgiveness and renewal in our lives that would transform us into reflectors of His glory.
    - 2. Awareness of the cost of this gift, this forgiveness is always in our mind and we live our lives mindful of the wonderful gift we have been given.
  - iv. One who knows grace feels the pleasure and the displeasure of God. They know the joy from obedience and the absence of joy from disobedience.
  
- b. **We can take it lightly** and go about our merry way, acting as if nothing had happened.
  - i. This action is what is called, “Cheap Grace.”
  - ii. It is an action that says “Cool Beans” and goes on racking up the debt because their big Daddy in the sky is going to forgive it.
    - 1. They say, “All my debts, past, present and future are forgiven, so why not spend, spend spend!”
    - 2. It is like a person who goes to bankruptcy court, gets their debts forgiven, and then immediately goes out and racks up some more with the INTENTION of going to back to the bankruptcy court.
  - iii. This is a person who when they unwrap the diamond necklace, neglectfully tosses it in a pile as if it was just an ordinary, worthless gift.
    - 1. This person is one who doesn’t take seriously the cost of sin.
    - 2. This person is one who isn’t broken when he fails or falls short.
    - 3. This person is one who has no regrets when he disobeys God.
    - 4. This person is one who doesn’t feel the DIS-Pleasure of God when he goes his own way.
    - 5. This person is one who doesn’t apply the cross, the death of their old man, but instead, continues to live the way he did before he heard about his debts being forgiven.
  - iv. In fact, one can wonder if they really experienced forgiveness of their debt in the first place, because everything in their life contradicts it.
 

In fact, someone like this will replace thankfulness with religious duty, preferring to jump through religious or church hoops and traditions instead of surrendering to the life changing work of God in their life
  - v. **By taking forgiveness lightly, we make our peace with sin instead of God.**
    - 1. There is no joy in this. Only a hiding from God. They seek to receive forgiveness but then they make peace with their sin instead of with God.
    - 2. They say, “I can’t change” (which actually means, “I don’t want to change). I want forgiveness, but I can’t change.
      - a. It is like the unhappy husband whose marriage is struggling. He is approached by his pastor and he says to his pastor, “I would do anything to save my marriage.” The pastor says, “I can give you the name of a good counselor.” The man replies, “I’m out of a job and I don’t have the

money for a counselor.” The pastor looks around and spies a beautiful Honda Goldwing motorcycle in the garage. “You could sell that.” The man replies...”No, that is too valuable to me to sell.” The pastor then says, “I guess you lied to me about doing ANYTHING to save your marriage.”

3. Imagine getting content with your sin. “That’s just the way I am.”
    - a. Folks, that is a contradiction of the new birth, a contradiction of the gospel.
    - b. The new birth says, 2 Cor 5:17 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*
    - c. There is no such thing as the way you “are”...only what you are becoming.
    - d. It is a contradiction in terms for a Christian to stay the way they are. They are continually being renewed 2 Cor 4:16 *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day”*
  4. We must never make peace with our sin. We must make peace with God. If this is speaking to you, I encourage you to recognize that you have gotten more comfy with your sin than with God. Turn to God. Admit that this is your struggle. And let God change you.
- c. **We can try to make installment payments on the debt that was forgiven.** We can assume the debtor’s ethic.
- i. We do good deeds and religious acts as payments on the unending debt we “owe” God.
  - ii. After all, He paid the debt for us, so we owe it to Him don’t we?
    1. How many of you got Christmas gifts this past year? Most of you?
    2. How many of you tried to pay the person back that gave you the gift? Why wouldn’t you do that?
    3. It would be an insult to the giver to try to pay for a gift, wouldn’t it?
    4. It would contradict the gift’s nature as a gift.
  - iii. In fact, to try to repay God for His gift on the cross would be to become God’s benefactor, one who is trying to give God something when God alone can give and we can only receive. This makes null the cross.
- d. The only way to making our joy full is to admit we don’t deserve it and then put our entire hope and future in that gift given to us.
- i. Good deeds don’t pay back grace. They only borrow more.
  - ii. The bible says, “faith works through love” not “gratitude works through love.”
  - iii. Our motivation for serving God isn’t loving because we “owe it to God” but rather because we want to experience His joy through faith. His Joy is our motivation. Not thanksgiving. Not payments on a debt He paid. Not continuing to live for ourself.
- e. Too often I have heard (and maybe even I have said it)...”God has done this for you, so much... now what will you do for Him?” or during offering time, “God gave His all for you, how much will you give him?”
- i. Folks, that is a debtor’s ethic.
    1. It is an attempt to pay Him back, even if it is done from the veiled motive of gratitude.
    2. Gratitude gives rise to Joy which is our motivator.
    3. Gratitude is not trying to pay something back.
  - ii. Young men give gifts to young women and young women think, “hmm, what does he want?”

1. God is not like that. God only wants you. He gives freely. He gives because He is the giver.
  2. You can only receive. When you serve Him wholeheartedly, you and I must do so out of pursuit for the joy He promises. We pursue His pleasure. His joy. His presence. That is our motive. He is our reward.
- iii. Romans 11:35 says, "*Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?*"
  - iv. How often have you tried to give something or do something for God in hopes that He might do something for you?
    1. I call it the "tit for tat" gift.
    2. Its common in sales circles, I give you a free gift and you will feel obligated to listen to my presentation.
    3. My motive in giving was to get you to feel obligated to do something for me.
  - v. But God doesn't work that way. You can't give Him anything that He doesn't already have. You cannot do for Him anything that He cannot do for Himself.
    1. And you can't rub the genie's bottle just the right way. In fact, why would you want to?
  - vi. Romans 8:32 says, *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*
    1. God has already given us His most costly gift, He has adopted us as His children, why should we be trying to manipulate Him when He is more than willing to give us all we need?
    2. The joy that should, that could fill our lives as a result of this verse should overflow us and drench us if we could ever get our hands around it and believe it and understand it!

## 7. The Cross of Christ is the basis for all joy we can experience.

- a. The Cross of Christ is the good news to those on the doomed Titanic.
  - i. Yes, we will sink! It is all our fate. But a rescuer is coming.
  - ii. If we place our faith in Him and do as He says, we will be saved!
  - iii. But all who try to save themselves will perish.
  - iv. We have reason for joy. Christ will count us righteous because of what He did in His great love for us!
  - v. Let His joy be the motivation for your life today.