

## The Joy of the Lord – Introduction

Scripture Reading: I Timothy 1:1-11

Our text has some very positive words in it – words like *“hope, faith, grace, mercy, and peace.”* But no clear reference to *“joy”* (I Timothy 1:1-2). There are plenty of topics that do **not** make us think of joy. Topics like false doctrine, fables (myths), endless genealogies, questions (disputes / controversy), vain jangling (idle, meaningless, fruitless talk), and ignorant teachers who misuse the law (I Timothy 1:4-7). Neither do we sense *“joy”* in the serious topics which need to be handled properly by the teaching of the law – very sinful things like murder, sexual sin, kidnapping (human trafficking), and lying (I Timothy 1:9-11). When the law is used properly it will lead to the presentation of the glorious gospel. The law exposes our sin so that we can repent and believe on Christ. The proper use of the law will lead us to be forgiven, cleansed, and made new by Jesus Christ’s offering on the cross and His resurrection power (I Timothy 1:5,8,11 cp. Romans 3:19-26; Galatians 3:22-24).

So, why is a series entitled *“The Joy of the Lord”* begun with this Scripture reading? The answer is in the incidental statement found in verse eleven: *“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God...”* Notice the words *“the blessed God.”* This could also be translated, *“the happy God.”*

Let’s compare this to Matthew 5:3-12, which is commonly called *“The Beatitudes.”* The word *“Beatitudes”* means *“supreme blessedness.”* Jesus started each statement of the beatitudes with the word *“blessed.”* This Greek word means more than just *“happy.”* It describes a joy that is not expected for humans in this life. The Greeks used the word to describe the ecstasy of their gods. It was attributed to what people might experience after they are dead. So, in Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus is offering a heavenly bliss to us, while we are here on earth!

See I Peter 1:3-9. In I Peter 1:8 the NIV uses the phrase *“Inexpressible and glorious joy.”* Try using that phrase as an equivalent idea, to replace the word *“Blessed”* in Matthew 5:3-12:

- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who are poor in spirit...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they that mourn...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who are the meek...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who hunger and thirst after righteousness...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who are the merciful...

- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who are the pure in heart...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they who are the peacemakers...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake...
- *Inexpressible and glorious joy* have you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake...

God is offering us blessedness through the gospel. When God offers us joy, he is not just offering a nice feeling of pleasure. He is sharing His joy. He is sharing Himself with us, for God is a blessed, supremely happy being! The Greek word for “*blessed*,” in I Timothy 1:11, is mentioned again in I Timothy 6:15. If we look at I Timothy 6:13-16, we see that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth to reveal who God is. Among other things, He is the only Potentate (sovereign ruler), the King of Kings, and the Lord of lords. But it is so easy to skip over the word “*blessed*.” It is just one of those “religious Bible words” that we say and often overlook without thinking about it. This all-powerful God who dominates the universe, is radiant with joy! How attractive that should be to us, who live in a world of austerity!

God is correctly described as righteously angry with sin and sinners (Psalm 5:4-5; 7:11). Yet, at the same time, our holy God is also full of joy. He delights in who He is and in all that is good! See Jeremiah 9:23-24. We humans are subject to swinging back and forth, changing moods from angry to happy, etc. God can be all things all at once. Each attitude and attribute of God does not conflict or interfere with another! “... *Our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:29). At the same time “... *God is love*...” (I John 4:8,16).

The purpose of this study is to understand the joy of the Lord that is offered to us. We are not talking about a feeling or mood that comes over us. We are talking about understanding our position – our relationship with God. We want to enter into the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21,23). We want to receive His joy and put it into practice in our life (John 15:9-11; 16:19-24; 17:13; I John 1:1-4; Galatians 5:22-23; I Peter 1:3-8 cp. Nehemiah 8:10b).

Behold the joy of the Lord and celebrate your salvation from sin, and from the sorrow and misery of this fallen world! See Luke 10:17-20; John 16:33; Psalm 16:11; Zephaniah 3:17 cp. Psalm 42:5,11.