

# Title: The Only Path to Joy

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9

## Introduction

### *How Many People Experience Depression?*

*About 280 million people worldwide live with depression, according to the WHO.*

*“A recent study by Gallup showed that 29% of Americans have been diagnosed with depression during their lifetime—with women and young adults more likely to be diagnosed with it,” says Adam Scioli, D.O., medical director and head of psychiatry with Caron Treatment Centers in Pennsylvania. - <https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/depression-statistics/>*

And Christians are subject to seasons of depression as well. C.H. Spurgeon wrestled with it over the course of his ministry.

*“I suppose that some brethren neither have much elevation or depression. I could almost wish to share their peaceful life. For I am much tossed up and down, and although my joy is greater than the most of men, my depression of spirit is such as few can have an idea of.”*

And nearly suicidal.

*“I could say with Job, ‘My soul chooseth strangling rather than life’ [Job 7:15]. I could readily enough have laid violent hands upon myself, to escape from my misery of spirit.”*

And surprised that more aren't in “Chastisement.”

*“I wonder every day that there are not more suicides, considering the troubles of this life.”*

Of course, as all Christians should, Spurgeon turned to Christ during his miseries, and sometimes he felt relief, sometimes he did not.

Here is one of his prayers from his autobiography.

*“Thou art my Father, and I am Thy child, and thou as a father, art tender and full of mercy. I could not bear to see my child suffer as Thou makest me suffer; and if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do what I could to help him, and put my arms under him to sustain him. Wilt thou hide thy face from me, my father? Wilt thou still lay on me thy heavy hand, and not give me a smile from thy countenance?”*

So to finish — are we prepared to say that Spurgeon didn't pray, study the Bible, or seek God enough? Are we prepared to say that the Lord often “withheld joy because Spurgeon wasn't following Christ?” Because if we tell that to Christians struggling today, you'd have to tell that to Spurgeon, as well. - <https://thewearychristian.com/spurgeons-greatest-hits-on-depression-anxiety-and-panic/#:~:text=For%20I%20am%20much%20tossed,can%20have%20an%20idea%20of>”

Do you struggle with depression, the blues, being downcast, or just looking at the negatives of this life and feeling overwhelmed? David asks this question in Psalm 43:5 “Why so downcast, oh my soul, put your hope in God...”

This really is the answer for us that follow Christ, isn't it. God is our only hope in a world that is wracked with sin and pain...

Peter understood this all too well. And as he pens this letter to the dispersed church that is under growing persecution, he wants them not to question God for the persecution they are enduring but to trust him.

### **Main Idea: The Only Path to Joy is Jesus !**

There are three thoughts I want to embed in your mind on how to develop joy when you find yourself mired in discouragement and depression.

#### **1. Grow Your Joy by Knowing Where You are Going (vs. 3-5)**

##### **1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV**

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Peter starts these verses with a blessing to and for God. And within this blessing to God is a clear declaration of Christ's familial relationship with God. Father and Son. Two persons of the Godhead.

By the way, this understanding of God, that He is three persons, differentiates us from every other religion - even Judaism.

And it is this Godhead, including the power of the Holy Spirit, that had doled out a profound, merciful act.

Remember, mercy in this context is withholding just punishment. And Peter calls this "Great Mercy." Why is it so great? Because of your great sin against Him!

You have sinned against the God of the universe over and over again. And God has every right to punish you in Hell for eternity. But because of His GREAT MERCY, "He has caused us to be born again to a living (not dead) hope. (How?) through (the agency) of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

It is not simply the crucifixion of Christ that gives us a living Hope. The crucifixion of Christ was His wrath-satisfying action where God poured His punishment on Jesus.

Necessary? Absolutely! Does the cross completely save us? No! It is Christ rising from the dead that opens eternal life for those of us that believe.

##### **1 Corinthians 15:20-22 ESV**

*<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

No resurrection, no hope! Believe in Christ's resurrection, eternal hope!

**The reality of Christ's death delivers the opportunity for God to show His power over death (Resurrection) thus giving us a Hope that is alive!**

You have a living hope because you have a living Savior!

**John 11:25–26 ESV**

*<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

And that living Savior will one day return for His own...

**Titus 2:13–14 ESV**

*<sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

Do you sense the encouragement and hope Peter is offering these churches? He is reminding them what has happened to them and now, he is reminding them what is in store for them. And the same is true for us! Look at verse 4...

**You have an Amazing Inheritance** – *"an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..."*

**Inheritance** - *money, property, etc., that is received from someone when that person dies (MW Dictionary)*

An inheritance implies something profound; it signals that the one receiving the inheritance has a special relationship with the one giving it. Usually, it is a family relationship.

And so it is with God. He is our Heavenly Father and He is promising an inheritance not when He dies, but when we die in this life and enter the next. There is something very special about the inheritance our Heavenly Father has for us. Something far better than any inheritance one can receive in this life.

*Can you imagine Bill Gates kids? On that day when Bill dies, sitting around the table, waiting to hear the Last Will and Testament of their dearly departed father...and as it is finally read realizing Dad's entire fortune is bequeathed to their dog fluffy? I just made that up!*

But folks, our fortunes might as well be bequeathed to fluffy in comparison to the inheritance the follower of Christ will receive! Check out the three powerful words Peter uses...

**Imperishable** – *"Not being subject to breaking down, thus lasting forever."*

I love bananas! I really enjoy them when they are just past green and have turned yellow without any dark spots on the peel whatsoever. But, as you well know, it doesn't take long for

those lovely, delectable pieces of goodness to turn to hideously putrid brown/black grossness. The only thing they are good for then is Banana bread!

If you are in Christ, your inheritance will NEVER turn to a hideously putrid, brown/black grossness! It is absolutely, 100% Everlasting! Permanent! Never-ending! IMPERISHABLE! Doesn't that encourage you this morning? Well, it gets better. Not only is our inheritance IMPERISHABLE, but it is...

**Undefiled** – *“Free from stain or blemish...untainted in the eyes of God”*

**Unfading** – *“Characterized by never losing quality or beauty”* Like a withering flower...

Three words that have similar definitions mean Peter is making a powerful point here that is more potent than simply putting an exclamation point at the end of sentences...

These three words are a *triad* of hope! Do you get the sense that the inheritance for the follower of Jesus is a sure thing?

But there is yet another promise from God that Peter points out...

**Kept in Heaven for YOU!** – *“Guard, hold, reserve”*

*Identity theft is a big challenge in our world today. I had my credit card number stolen before and they started purchasing items with my money!*

Your inheritance is secure because whatever God secures is fully secure!

Why can Peter make such a bold claim? Look at verse 5...

**You have a Salvation that WILL be Revealed** - 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven **for you**,<sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Did you notice what this passage says? Not only is your inheritance being guarded for you, but you are being guarded for your inheritance!

Do you see it? God's power is guarding you! What do we know about God's power? For one, we know God is Omnipotent...That is, ALL POWERFUL!

Some of you remember the song, “My God is so BIG, so STRONG and so MIGHTY! There's NOTHING my God cannot do, for YOU!

Now we grin when little kids sing that song, but that simple limerick contains profound theological truth.

**Job 42:2 ESV**

<sup>2</sup> *“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

**Isaiah 43:13 ESV**

*13 Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"*

### **Jeremiah 32:27 ESV**

*27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"*

It is God's power that is guarding us. *And if God is for us, who can be against us?*

How does God choose to guard us? Through (preposition) called FAITH! Faith is the key. For those without FAITH, there is no Salvation. But those of us with FAITH, we have the promise of a Salvation ready and waiting for us.

### **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

Faith is the key that unlocks the Salvation that we have already tasted, but one day will fully see when we see Him face to face ([1 Cor 13:12](#)).

What Peter is telling his readers is that if they have faith, they have a SURE Salvation.

What are you frustrated by these days? The way you've been treated? The difficult circumstances you face at you job or home? The absolute craziness that is happening in our world around us?

If you are not careful, these things will easily steal your joy! Allow me to shift your perspective on this life...

Christian - When this life is over and it is all said and done, true life will have only begun.

**C.S. Lewis's last book in The Chronicles of Narnia series, "The Last Battle." The quote goes:**

*"And for us, this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them (Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Susan, Eustace, Jill, Digory, and Polly), it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."*

When you find the joy being sucked out of your life because of any number of circumstances, stop, take a minute, and purposely remember where you are going. This life, as James tells us, is really just a vapor, a mist that will be enveloped in eternal joy with Jesus.

**Review** - The Only Path to Joy is Jesus!

- Grow Your Joy by Knowing Where You are Going

### **2. Grow Your Joy by Not Trivializing Trials (vs. 6-7)**

Life is hard and full of trials. You just never know when your will get a left hook out of nowhere. This is Peter's point in verses 6-7. Yet those left hooks out of nowhere don't have to steal your joy!

### **1 Peter 1:6-7 ESV**

*<sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

What are we rejoicing in? We rejoice in the fact that we are rescued from eternal Hell by the shed blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Peter is making the clear point that our future destiny because of Christ should profoundly impact our current life for Christ.

Various trials will grieve you.

Various trials related to living for Christ.

These trials are purposeful - they test the genuine of one's faith...

### **The Bible Knowledge Commentary 1:7**

*These various trials—which seem to refer to persecution rather than life's normal problems—have two results: (a) they refine or purify one's faith—much as gold is refined by fire when its dross is removed, and (b) trials prove the reality of one's faith. Stress deepens and strengthens a Christian's faith and lets its reality be displayed.*

What happens as a result of one's faith (which is far superior to the most precious treasures this earth can offer) being tested by various trials?

It results in your response to the revelation of Jesus Christ - What does this mean?

ἀποκαλυφθῆναι (apokalyphthenai) - revealed or revelation or to be revealed.

You, my friend, if you are in Christ, you will one day have the opportunity to praise and glory and honor Jesus Christ when he appears!

Those who faithfully follow and serve Christ in this life will not shrink back when He shows up.

### **1 John 2:28 ESV**

*<sup>28</sup> And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.*

Those who reject Christ in this life may have everything this life has to offer, but will eternally suffer loss.

### **John 3:36 ESV**

*<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

Trials will come as you stand for Christ.

We dare not trivialize trials by complaining and whining.

We are to maximize trials by praising God and rejoicing in the privilege of suffering for Him.

Remember the disciple's attitude when they suffered for the Lord?

#### **Acts 5:34, 38–41 ESV**

*<sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while...*

*<sup>38</sup> So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, <sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

We are called to rejoice when we suffer for the Name of Jesus Christ.

In order to suffer for the Name you need to stand up for the name.

If you stand up for truth, you will suffer.

#### **John 15:18 ESV**

*<sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.*

Stand up, Christian, and lovingly speak the truth to those around you. Why? Because only the truth will set them free.

And there is nothing more joyful than to see those around you come to a living faith in Christ.

#### **Luke 15:7 ESV**

*<sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

**Review** - The Only Path to Joy is Jesus!

- Grow Your Joy by Knowing Where You are Going
- Grow Your Joy by Not Trivializing Trials

### **3. Grow Your Joy by Loving Jesus! (vs. 8-9)**

#### **1 Peter 1:8–9 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Do you love Jesus? I'm not asking you if you love the Bible or if you love church or if you love the gospel. These are all wonderful and you should love them.

But do you love Jesus? This is another great distinction between biblical Christianity and every other religion. Other religions are about appeasing a deity.

Biblical Christianity is about a loving relationship with our Savior and God.

Now, from a human perspective, this may seem a little silly. After all, who of us has seen Jesus?

Those to whom Peter is writing had never had the opportunity to see Jesus Christ. Yet, strangely, they loved Him!

### **John 20:29 ESV**

*<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

### **2 Corinthians 4:18 ESV**

*<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

But we have a faith that is not by sight...

### **2 Corinthians 5:6-7 ESV**

*<sup>6</sup> So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight.*

And what does this love and belief result in?

### **1 Peter 1:8-9 NLT**

*<sup>8</sup> You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. <sup>9</sup> The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.*

*"a rejoicing with JOY that is inexpressible and filled with glory" because it is focused on "the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

Do you understand the weight of what this passage is revealing for us this morning?

You and I go through various trials. And we will go through more and more of them as we enter an increasingly secularized culture.

Fifty years ago, Christianity was accepted as a cultural norm, and people were sympathetic to this worldview.

Today people are growing increasingly antagonistic to this worldview.

Don't believe me? Go on Facebook or Instagram and simply quote [Romans 1:18-32](#) and see what kind of response you will get. Don't just send it out so your friends can see it, but put it on a public setting.



Talk with someone about God's wrath against sin or that there is an eternal Hell.

Tell someone that there is a real Heaven and the only way one can be guaranteed of Heaven is by faith in Christ alone. See what kind of response you will receive.

You will, most likely, be mocked or ridiculed or, at least, marginalized and ignored.

I believe a day is coming soon when you and I will suffer for speaking the truth about Jesus and what it means to follow Him. This suffering is not new...

### *Hezekiah/Laos/2001*

*Hezekiah's life had been so transformed that he had to tell someone. When he returned to the village he grew up in, he told the thirty-five relatives and villagers who met him and demanded to know why he had converted to Christianity, "Jesus is the only way I can be saved from my sins. Jesus is the only way I can have eternal life."*

*They didn't like this. As Hezekiah reasoned with them about the truths he had found studying God's Word and being disciplined by other believers in the safe haven he had left to bring them the Gospel, tempers began to flare. Suddenly someone lunged out and grabbed Hezekiah. Others followed. They dragged him to the ground and beat him until he blacked out. Then they left him in the street, bruised and bleeding.*

*When the crowd had gone, a friend took Hezekiah to his own home, where he nurtured him back to health. It was four days before Hezekiah could raise himself off the bed.*

*Hezekiah eventually left his village and to this day is not welcome either there or in his family's homes. Instead, he now travels from village to village sharing what he has learned from the Bible and showing the way of salvation to as many as will let him. He said that he would not deny his countrymen the Good News.*

*Because of this, he has been beaten and thrown out of at least ten other villages. Some of the beatings were so bad that he thought he would not live through them — and some were so bad he wished he would not live through them. But his testimony remains strong: "As I have matured in my walk with Christ, I have more faith to endure these hardships. The trials I have gone through have served to strengthen my faith, as I see God's faithfulness in delivering me. I thank God I have been able to bring thirty people to the saving knowledge of Jesus." (pg. 279-280, Jesus Freaks)*

Living for Christ will get difficult!

### **2 Timothy 3:12 ESV**

*<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Listen to Jesus' own words...

### **Matthew 5:10–12 ESV**

*<sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil*

*against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

And this is the secret to true joy!

You will actually have a glorious, inexpressible joy if you focus not on your circumstance but instead on loving Jesus. Why? Because we have an eternal perspective regarding the trials we face today. We have hope because of the love of Christ.

Do you see what you and I should focus on? We shouldn't focus on changing the culture. We should focus on loving Jesus more and more. And the more you and I love Jesus, the more we will change and the stronger influence we will have for Christ.

How can you love Jesus more and more? By understanding the kind of love Jesus has for you!

*"One who has been touched by grace will no longer look on those who stray as "those evil people" or "those poor people who need our help." Nor must we search for signs of "loveworthiness." Grace teaches us that God loves because of who God is, not because of who we are." - Phillips Brooks*

*"Though our feelings come and go, God's love for us does not." - C.S. Lewis*

#### **Romans 8:37-39 ESV**

*<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

When you truly realize that...

- a. You are a great sinner
- b. Christ has an immutable and profound love for you

Your heart will grow warmer with a great affection for Christ.

For the next 30 days, I challenge you in your personal worship time to meditate on the fact that Christ loves you with a profound and deep love.

Use the [Romans 8:37-39](#) passage to move your heart to warmth for Christ.

Do this for 30 days and see what happens to your joy. I believe it will grow greatly as you truly understand Jesus' love for you.

#### **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this sermon, I mentioned the great sadness that plagues our world and nation. At a time when we have the most affluence, we have the most sadness.

Maybe you came to church today with a hopeless lack of joy. Just going through the motions in your walk with Christ.

Maybe you're so joyless that you are not even bothering to go through the motions.

I get it. I'm a pastor, and I have these kinds of seasons as well.

But you know what? God doesn't want you to walk through this life lacking joy.

He also doesn't want you trying to find your joy in food, sex, drugs, alcohol, entertainment, or anything else. Those things will never bring lasting joy.

There is only one thing, one person that will fill the JOY void in your life and that is Jesus - walk toward him this morning because the only path to Joy is Jesus.

**Review** - The Only Path to Joy is Jesus!

- Grow Your Joy by Knowing Where You are Going
- Grow Your Joy by Not Trivializing Trials
- Grow Your Joy by Loving Jesus!

### **Connection Group Reflection Questions**

1. **Who are you praying for daily?**
2. **Who are you engaging with weekly?**
3. **Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?**