

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY

Galatians 5:22-23

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5

Intro: Our schedule for the Christmas holidays is usually different from the rest of the year because I bring a brief series in December on Scriptures which deal with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This year my schedule got changed because we had three Sunday in which we are not able to meet because of the heavy snow that we have had. I spoke on the last Sunday of November '08 on the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit, which, as all you know, is *love*. Love is practically an inexhaustible subject and really could call for a series of messages of that one word. But today I want to go on to the second word we find in Galatians 5:22, the word *joy*. But before I get into that let me remind you of some basic points that we need to keep in mind as we go through “the fruit of the Spirit.”

The first point is that the nine words in these two verses together make up a single fruit. Paul did not say that he was writing about the *fruits* [plural] of the Spirit, but the fruit [singular] of the Spirit. And this is in sharp contrast with “the works [plural] of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19. I am sure that none of us is guilty of all of these sins. And Paul indicated in the words, “and such like,” that this is not a complete list of the works, or sins, of the flesh. But by “the fruit [singular] of the Spirit,” Paul was indicating that the Spirit is working on all of these all of the time in the life of every child of God. If we are deficient in any of these (and we are), we are deficient in all. God’s answer to “the works of the flesh” in the life of a Christian, is “the fruit of the Spirit.”

The Galatians were under attack from false teachers who were trying to put them under the Law in order to conquer the sins, or the works, of the flesh. Turn back with me to the third chapter of Galatians and I want to show you the questions that Paul asked the believers in the churches of Galatia which would help them to understand how much they needed the Spirit of God, not the Law, to bring them to maturity in their walk with the Lord. You follow in your Bibles as I read to you the first five verses of Galatians 3. (Read Gal. 3:1-5, ask and answer the questions.)

We were not saved by the Law, nor are we sanctified by the Law. We are saved by Christ and we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We are told in Galatians 5:16 that “if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of

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the flesh.” To walk in the Spirit is to walk in fellowship with the Spirit (which calls for our obedience to the Spirit). It is to walk in dependence upon the Spirit. From the moment we are saved the Spirit of God begins to produce fruit in our lives. That fruit is described for us in our text. And if you stop to think about the fruit of the Spirit for a moment, and what that fruit is, you will realize that the One Who perfectly manifests love, joy, peace, and on down through those nine characteristics, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. So as the Spirit bears fruit in our lives, He is making us holy; He is making us like Christ. This is God’s main purpose in saving us.

At the head of the list is love. He produces love in our hearts for God, and for the Lord Jesus, and for the Word of God, and a special love for the people of God. The Holy Spirit also produces in our hearts a love for people who do not know the Lord. But on our part it means that we read the Word, that we pray, that we go where the people of God are (which means to church where the Word is being taught. It means that we seek the Spirit’s help in obeying the Word –doing what the Lord wants us to do as He has told us in the Word.

The Message

Now we come to “joy.”

The Bible makes it very clear that the Christian life is to be a joyful life. When the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds the birth of the baby Jesus, he said,

10 . . . Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people.

What was the great joy?

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-11).

Their joy would be in what the Christ child had come to do, but even more in Christ Himself. When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi while he was a prisoner of Rome, his epistle was the expression of a man who had found his greatest joy in the Lord Himself. And so he wrote to them, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). This showed how important Paul knew that it was to rejoice in the Lord. But what does this mean? How are we to rejoice in the Lord? He must have been thinking primarily about the Lord Jesus, but since the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the holy Trinity, are all one in nature though

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separate persons, we can rejoice in all of them, and we can be rejoicing in them all of the time.

Although we can rejoice in all of them all of the time, since the Father is revealed in the Son, let us think for a moment about rejoicing in Christ.

We can rejoice in Who He is. By this I am thinking about His glorious attributes. Have you ever thought about how you would like to change the Lord if such a thing were possible? Is there anything about the Lord in which you have been disappointed? Think of His love for us. Think about His grace. Think about His patience. Think about His wisdom. Think about the fact that He never changes, that He is the same yesterday and today and forever. Think of His presence. He never leaves us, not will He ever forsake us. Think of His power, the power that brought our universe into existence by the spoken word. Think about all of His attributes, and you will find yourself rejoicing in the Lord.

But think about what He has done. He humbled himself to be made in our likeness, without our sin, but in order that He might bear our sins at Calvary where He put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. How long has it been since you rejoiced to thank the Lord for saving you from the penalty of your sins, and also from the power of sin. You and I can rejoice in the Lord that when our hearts grow cold and we wander away, He seeks us and brings us back. He is faithful even when we are unfaithful.

In looking at verses in the Bible which speak of joy and rejoicing, I was interested to learn that when the Lord gave Moses the instructions for the Feast of Tabernacles which took seven days every year, that the Lord told Moses that the people that they were to rejoice before the Lord *seven days!* See Leviticus 23:40.

In Psalm 5 when David was praying that the Lord would destroy their enemies, and to let them fall by their own counsels, he prayed also this prayer:

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever should for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in Thee (Psa. 5:11).

To rejoice in the Lord is a theme that is repeated several times in the OT. For example in Psalm 33 we are told to rejoice in the Lord, how to rejoice

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in the Lord, and why we should rejoice in the Lord. Listen to the first part of Psalm 33:

- 1 Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.
- 2 Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.
- 6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth (Psa, 33:1-6).

Isaiah said in Isaiah 61:10:

- 10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Recently we had in our Sunday School memory work those words at the close of the Prophecy of Habakkuk where he declared that he would praise the Lord regardless of his circumstances. Listen to his words again which are found in Habakkuk 3:17-19:

- 17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:
- 18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
- 19 The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

But this leads me to my next point. Is the life of a child of God without anything to disturb our joy in the Lord? All of us who know the Lord can answer that question without any hesitation. There are plenty of times when trials and testing threaten our joy in the Lord. But the Word of God assures us that even in those difficult times we need to rejoice in the Lord.

Again we have examples of this in the Word, The Apostle Paul gives us

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several examples of his joy in the face of trials. One of these is in Rom 5:1-5:

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Paul did not glory in his sufferings as such, but he could “glory in tribulations also because he knew that God was doing a work in his heart which really could not be accomplished in any other way. (Review the verses above.)

We also have his statement of joy in connection with his thorn in the flesh, a matter that he prayed about until the Lord showed him what was going on. We find all of this in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul had the experience of being caught up into the third heaven. He didn't know exactly how it happened, but he saw things which he was not allowed to tell. But there was a danger that through that experience his heart would become proud since he had experience something that no one else in his acquaintance had experienced. And I think that we are safe in saying that no one had experienced it. But this is what he said about it. I am reading now from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10:

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Again we can say that Paul did not rejoice in his suffering because he

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enjoyed in this case, having a thorn in the flesh. But he rejoiced for two reasons: one, that he learned about the sufficiency of God's grace, and secondly, that when he was weakened physically, he was strengthened spiritually. So look again at the latter part of verse 9 and all of verse 10.

I could cite other instances in the lives of others whose story is given in the Word. For example, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Peter in the NT, and incidents we have seen in the life of Paul. Even the Apostle John as an old man experienced the goodness and sufficiency of God's grace when he was exiled on Patmos. The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ came out of that experience.

In closing let me mention one more way in which we need to be glorying in the Lord, rejoicing in his provision for us. For this I want to take you back to Romans 5 and a verse which we read together a moment ago. I am thinking of what Paul said at the end of verse 2: "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Now he could have meant that he was rejoicing in his trials in the hope that it would glorify God. But he seems to contrast rejoicing in hope of the glory of God with what he said in verse 3 about rejoicing in tribulations. I wonder if by rejoicing in hope of the glory of God he was speaking of the coming of the Lord, when he was going to see the Lord in His glory, His resurrection glory. That seems to make sense because there isn't anything that we should be more thankful for than that we have "that blessed hope" in the glorious appearing of our Savior. Paul spoke of our hope in Titus 2:11-14:

- 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
- 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
- 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
- 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Concl: "The fruit of the Spirit is joy" – joy in our Savior, Who He is, what He has done for us, and what He continues to do for us. Even in our trials we can rejoice, not because we like to suffer, but because we know that God has gracious and wonderful purposes to

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accomplish in our suffering. And, although there is much more to be said about our joy, yet what can equal the hope that we have in Christ that some day, and it may be soon, we are going to see our dear Savior, become like Him as the result of the fruit of the Spirit. And then be with Him forever.

I want to close by reading what the Apostle Peter had to say about our joy in the Lord in 1 Peter 1:1-9:

- 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
- 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.
- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
- 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
- 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:
- 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:
- 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”