

March 10, 2021 | Wholly Living

Week 3 | Gal. 5:22-26 | Joy

As we know, the 'Fruits of the Spirit' are virtues that correspond to the vices of the flesh Paul had indexed just a few verses prior in our passage. Paul's reasoning was that when the God of the universe takes up residence in a person's heart, some significant/obvious/undeniable changes will occur. And those specific changes are as follows:

READ: Galatians 5:22-26 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, as I've said each week in this study, we cannot cultivate nor can we produce these virtues on our own. Paul is insistent that each of these divine attributes *already* indwells the believer as they keep "in step" with the Spirit. They do not need to be worked on; instead, they need to be discovered.

Last week, we tackled the first attribute of the Spirit: love. This love is the Greek word *agape*, and it is the self-giving/unmerited love we see God so often exhibit (cf. Jn. 3:16). Love is that place from which all of the other graces flow. Without love, there is no joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control. It is without a doubt the first among equals.

Tonight, I'd like to tackle the second fruit of the Spirit: joy.

Like love, Paul spoke a ton about joy. In fact, four out of ten times "joy" is used in the NT, Paul is the one speaking.¹ Generally speaking, there are two Greek words used to describe what we'd call joy. The first is the noun version called **χαρά (chará)**, the term used here, in Gal 5. The second is the verb form called **χαίρω (chaírō)**. *Chará* is mainly used to describe a sense of inner-joy, while *chaírō* is used to describe outer-joy. Now, interestingly, the root for both *chará* and *chaírō* is **χάρις (cháris)** which is translated over

¹ Morrice, W.G., "Joy," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, Ed., Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, (Downers Grove, Ill; InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 511-512.

a hundred and thirty times in your bible as “grace.” This means that joy *cannot* exist without grace.²

Thus, to fully understand what joy is, we must understand what grace is. Grace is unmerited aid and assistance. For those who work on commissions, grace is that bonus at the end of the year. Generally speaking, tipping could be considered a “grace.” Every present you've ever been given was a tangible representation of grace. Grace is what you do over and above the bare minimum. It's that 10% in the 110%.

When God uses grace, it is always for our benefit, and whatever He gives us, it is still more than we deserve.

READ: Eph. 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

So, what would be the emotional response of one who has received grace? That's right, joy. Joy is an echo of grace.

Now that we know grace is at the heart of joy, how does this apply to the fruits of the Spirit? Lest we forget, Paul wrote Galatians to correct some erroneous teaching; namely, the burdensome requirement that a believer must be circumcised (cf. Gal. 5:1-6). This was utterly contrary to what Paul had taught the Galatians when he first came, as no act of the law can justify the flesh. To laden believers down with empty works does not produce joy, but anxiety, depression, discouragement. A choice that chains one to the law is a rejection of the grace freely offered through Jesus Christ. Christians are accepted by God not because of what they've done but because of who they believe in. The believer has joy and can rejoice precisely because they do not have to earn their way into God's good graces. God's graces are freely offered, and this truth, in turn, makes our hearts glad.

This truth that grace is being freely offered to us is why Paul could write from a prison cell...

READ: Philippians 2:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

² George, Timothy, *Galatians*, The Christian Standard Commentary, (Holman Publishers, 2020), p. 447.

And then later say to a church amid persecution...

READ: Philippians 4:4 (ESV)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice.

How can we have joy in the midst of dire situations? Because we are not rejoicing in our circumstances. We are rejoicing in our Lord. In the presence of the Lord, the bells of joy ever-ring.

This is utterly contrary to the contemporary understanding of joy in Paul's day. Aristotle defined joy as "finding the ideal mean between the excesses of pleasure and pain. Joy in this sense depends on an environment of pleasant circumstances."³ Meaning, the amount or existence of joy is directly dependent on the given state of one's affairs. If things are going well, then joy is the by-product. But if things are going poorly, joy is not present. However, the joy of a believer transcends circumstances and often is a direct response to unfavorable circumstances.

READ: James 1:2-3 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Our joy is not dependent on any one temporal thing but is utterly reliant on God and the ultimate destination of all true followers of Jesus Christ. Even dire circumstances can be cause for joy if they're looked at as an opportunity to strengthen your faith rather than break it. The one who does not want to grow or does not want to be challenged will be discouraged when trials inevitably come. But the one who does want to grow, does want to be challenged, will be energized, empowered, and excited when the challenges they knew were coming finally meet them on their way. They may even get some joy and satisfaction from the challenge because they know that they're becoming more and more like Christ with each passing hurdle. After all, it is the goal for all would-be followers, and that goal fuels the Christian's joy.

Even Jesus had this very same end-game mindset feeding His own joy.

READ: Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the

³ George (2020), p. 447.

race that is set before us,² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The knowledge of his own victory and vindication fueled Jesus' own joy to such an extent that he was willing to endure the shame and pain of the cross. The remarkable thing is that we know there was also sorrow in the heart of Jesus that day. But this means that even sorrow can be mingled with joy when we do not forget that God can take even the worst that life has to throw at us and use it for His good.

READ: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Joy is the natural response of one who's experienced God's grace.

Tim Keller put it best when he said, "There is a joy available that the deepest grief cannot put out. No circumstance or person can take away the joy God gives." To know God and be fully known by God is the greatest joy human beings can experience. This kind of joy can shine for us even in the darkest night and can warm us even on the coldest days.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | Wholly Living | Week 3

TITLE: Joy

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: