

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

The next “**fruit of the Spirit**” that we want to study is the word “**joy**” which is the Greek word “*chara*”. It is a word that signifies rejoicing and gladness.¹ Whenever we use the word “**joy**” in a biblical sense, it is always the way that believers view the present in light of God’s plan for the future.² As we will see as we progress through this study, “**joy**” is never dependent on a believer’s circumstances, but is fully rooted and grounded in God’s sovereign control of all things. It is knowing as [Romans 8:28](#) says that “**all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose**”. Stated another way, joy is something that a believer can have no matter the circumstances in which they may find themselves. Sometimes, God allows believers to be placed in the most difficult and trying of situations, but in those times the believer is still able to experience genuine joy. This is the obvious difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is a by-product of a person’s circumstances. If their circumstances are good, then they are happy. However, when their circumstances are not good, then they are unhappy. So, happiness is something that is very fickle, fluctuating, ever-changing, unpredictable, and erratic. It can change in just a moment of time based on a person’s circumstances. Joy, on the other hand, is not rooted in the believer’s circumstances, but it is securely grounded in the promises of God for that believer. In fact, they can have great joy in the midst of very difficult circumstances. For instance, [James 1:2-3](#) says,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**

[1 Peter 4:12-13](#) says,

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**

Peter is saying that as believers that we can actually rejoice when we suffer for Christ and when very fiery trials happen to us. The reason that we can rejoice is because of what awaits us. The joy is not based on what is actually happening to us at the moment, but at what is awaiting us in the future. We have all met people who are outwardly joyful when things are going great, but the moment that something does not go their way, they immediately lose their joy and become discouraged and depressed. They begin to doubt God and question His goodness. All that simply reveals is that the individual has no understanding of God’s sovereign outworking in their life or of the great and precious promises that make up the Christian life. When a Christian has joy, it means that they fully recognize that God ultimately and finally will have the ultimate victory over every difficult circumstance in their life, as

¹ Zodhiates, 1467.

² Harris, *chara*, ep.

well as over the very powers of sin and darkness that so often create the difficult moments in a believer's life.

Joy is something that comes from being able to see and be fully satisfied with God's sovereignty and with His dealings with our life. Joy comes from knowing that God does all things well in our life, so we never have to be discouraged and afraid of what may happen to us or of what the future may hold for us. If I can say it this way, God is the foundation of our joy. We rest our life, our hopes, and our joys in our great God. If we place our hope in anything else, we will surely lose our joy.

When I think about the word "**joy**", I know that it is not something that I can just have or just produce in my life. To the contrary, it is a spiritual "**fruit**" that has to be developed in the believer's life as they walk with God, as they spend time with God, and as they learn God's ways and avail themselves of His promises. [Hebrews 12:2](#), speaking of Christ, says it this way,

Heb 12:2 (NKJV) **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Christ fully knew that all of the suffering that he was to experience was something that fully a part of God's great plan of salvation, and because of that understanding and spiritual perspective, He was able to have great joy in the suffering that was a part of God the Father's plan for His life. [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#), speaking of the Thessalonian believers, says this about their life and how they responded to very difficult circumstances,

1Th 1:6 (NKJV) **And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,**

The problem for the lost person or the immature believer is that for them their joy is based on their well-being, on the measure of success that they are enjoying, or on some good fortune that they may experience. So, when the world defines joy, it does so by making it virtually synonymous with what happens to the individual. If it is good, they can have joy. If it is difficult, they have no joy. Their joy is always based on their circumstance, always based on what is presently happening to them. The believer on the other hand is able to experience joy in the midst, and sometimes even because, of their circumstances. I am always intrigued by the phrase "happy hour" that we hear so often. It is a phrase that is used when someone gets alcoholic beverages at a reduced price for a period of time in a bar. The people never look too happy when they go in and they rarely look happy when they come out.

So, here is one of the overriding principles of "**joy**". It is NEVER dependent on our circumstances, but is completely independent of them. God's joy is not dependent on what happens to us, but on what will happen for us. Jesus told his disciples this on the last evening that he was with them in [John 15:11](#),

Jn 15:11 (NKJV) **These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.**

He told them in the very next chapter, [John 16:33](#), that in the world that they would have "**tribulation**". He never once told them that because they were Christians that everything would be great for them while they were His disciples in the world. To the contrary, He actually promised them the exact opposite. Listen to what He told them in [John 16:20-22](#),

Jn 16:20 (NKJV) Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ²¹ A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

There is nothing rose colored in what Jesus is saying to His disciples. His promise to them, though, is that in the very midst of the most trying of times that they can have His joy. Joy is something that is embedded deep down in a believer's heart, in their mind, in their soul. It is a deep sense of their spiritual well-being and security. It is a sense that in the most difficult and trying of circumstances, that God is still there with them and has promised them great blessing for their endurance. It is knowing that we are saved and eternally secure in Christ. These are things that the world can never take away from us as believers. It is something that governs and controls our life and that gives us a kind of spiritual strength of which the world knows nothing.

Joy is so much deeper than just an emotion. Many theologians teach that joy is an emotion that is acquired by anticipation – such as a woman in labor. The problem with making joy an emotion is that emotions fluctuate and change constantly. You can be in a good mood one day and in a horrible mood the next day. You can be really happy one day and utterly miserable the next day. However, the person who truly sees life from God's perspective, rarely has these kinds of debilitating fluctuating moments in their life. We all have good days and bad days. In fact, the Bible says that there are “**evil days**”. For instance, [Ephesians 6:13](#) says,

Eph 6:13 (NKJV) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

There will always be very difficult days – always. No one is exempt from the trials and pressures and difficulties that is simply inherent in life. Joy, however, is God's supernatural gift and the fruit of His outworking in the believer's life. If joy is primarily an emotion, then I wonder if the other attributes given in the “**fruit of the Spirit**” are emotions as well – such as longsuffering or faithfulness. I doubt it. These are attributes that are gifts from God, and each one of them may produce emotions within us, but in and of themselves they are not emotions, but the by-product of a believer's walk with God. Most of them are not only gifts of the Holy Spirit that are being developed in our lives, but also qualities that are constantly being developed and matured in us by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

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