

The Fruit of Joy



Fruit of the Spirit (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I'm sharing with you on a very rich and beautiful theme, "The Fruit of the Spirit." The nine forms of spiritual fruit that are listed in Galatians 5.

Yesterday, I dealt with the first form of fruit, the fruit of love. Today, I'm going to speak about the second form of fruit, "The Fruit of Joy."

"Joy" is a beautiful word. When God blesses parents with a beautiful baby girl, a name that they often choose for her is "Joy." Altogether, there is something beautiful about joy. However, in order to experience its beauty in our lives, we need to understand the real nature of joy. And, in order to understand that, we have to know something about human personalities.

The Bible reveals that the total human personality is made up of three distinct areas: Spirit — Soul — Body. Paul states this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where he says this:

> "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Notice, when Paul talks about our entire personality, he specifies three distinct areas: the spirit, the soul, and the body.

Now, there is a different type of satisfaction for each area of our personality. If we understand this, we can begin to understand the true nature of joy. For the body, the type of satisfaction that we look for I would call pleasure. In the soul, the type of satisfaction that we look for I would call happiness. But in the spirit, the type of satisfaction that we look for I would call joy. So, pleasure is in the body, happiness is in the soul, and joy is in the spirit.

It's important to distinguish between happiness and joy as I have defined them there. Of course, they can be used differently, but I'm just choosing to use them that way to bring out this distinction. What then, is the difference between happiness and joy? Let me give you a very simple, every day example of happiness. It's a young man and his

new sports car, his girlfriend is beside him, it's a beautiful spring day, he is driving down a beautiful highway. Everything is going right, the birds are singing, he's got money in his pocket, his girlfriend is holding his hand, and he's very happy.

But now let's change the scene. Let's look at the same young man. His beautiful sports car is broken down, his girlfriend has jilted him, it's a cold winter day, it's raining and he has no money. Do you think he's happy now? Definitely not. His happiness has evaporated. Why? Because happiness depends on circumstances. But the great fact that you need to grasp is this, joy does not depend on circumstances.

You say, "How can that be?" The answer is because joy depends on something that never changes with situations, or circumstances, or finances, or the weather. There's only one source of joy and that is God Himself; and because God never changes, joy never needs to change either.

Now, if we are living only in the realm of the body and the soul, we can know pleasure and can know happiness, but we cannot know joy. For joy has only one source and that's God. Joy comes from a direct, personal, continuing relationship with God. Without that relationship, it is impossible to know true joy.

Now, I want to give you the testimony of some men who found the secret of joy. I want to give it to you in their own words. The first man is, of course, the psalmist David. Listen to what he says in Psalm 43:4. The background to this Psalm is that David is oppressed, his enemies are after him, he's under pressure of circumstances, things are not going well, the future is very uncertain. So he makes a decision and this is his decision.

> "Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, my God."

David says to himself, in effect, "What's the way out of all these troubles? Where's the answer?" And he says, "There's one place I have to go to. It's the altar of God. When I get to the altar, I can begin to worship and praise God. My contact with God will be renewed and my joy will be restored."

And notice what David says about God. He says, "God, my exceeding joy." So David's joy was not in any situation, or circumstance, or experience, or achievement, or blessing, but his joy was in his God. And he said of God, "My exceeding joy."

Do you have that kind of relationship with God so that in the middle of all trouble and pressure, the way is still open for you to receive joy? The channel between you and God is clear; and even if you're not happy, and you're not experiencing pleasure, and everything around you is dark and insecure, you still have joy—joy in your spirit; because your spirit is in direct contact with God's Spirit, the source of joy.

All right, listen to the testimony of another man who was in a very terrible situation. In fact, in a certain way, you could hardly be in a worse situation than this man who is the prophet Habakkuk. This is Habakkuk's testimony in chapter 3:17 & 18:

> "Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult [or rejoice or joy] in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

Habakkuk is confronted with a situation where everything material that he could rely on has been cut off. The list is really impressive. The fig tree doesn't blossom; there's no fruit on the vine; there's no olives; the fields are producing no food; the flock isn't there; the cattle aren't there. So for a man who made his living by farming, not much was left. What did Habakkuk do? Did he sit down and say, "Well, everything's over. God's forgotten me. I might just as well give up." What would you have done in a similar situation?

Habakkuk, like David, made a decision. David said, "I will go to the altar of God." Habakkuk said, "Yet I will exult in the Lord." I want you to see that this does not rest in the emotion, it rests in the will. It's a decision. Everything has gone wrong, but I can still go to the Lord, and when I go to the Lord, I have joy, because the Lord is my joy; and though situations and circumstances may change, the Lord doesn't. That's how it is possible for a believer to have continuing, uninterrupted joy. Not in his body, not in his soul, but in his spirit.

In Romans 5, Paul states an interesting progression of joy. In verse 2 he says, "We exult [or we hope, or rejoice] in hope of the glory of God." The first source of our joy is hope of the glory of God. The next statement in verse 3 is rather surprising to the natural mind. He says, "We also exult in our tribulations," [in our troubles]. We joy in them. How could that be?

Well, in the verses that follow, Paul explains it. Because tribulation produces certain results in our character which cannot be produced in any other way. And so even though we don't like the tribulation, we joy in it, we exult in it,

because we know what it is doing to our character.

But the third stage of the progression is in verse 11 of Romans 5 where Paul says this, “And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” The ultimate climax of exultation of joy is in God Himself. And, of course, as I have said already, that can never be taken away from you. I would say the mark of true spiritual maturity is to find your joy in God Himself; not in an experience, or a blessing, or a provision—although those things are wonderful—but in God Himself.

Just in closing, let me read you one verse from Acts 13:52. It says there, about the disciples in the city of Antioch in Pisidia: “The disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” If you look at their background, those disciples were new converts. They were under great pressure, there was persecution in the city, the men who had led them to the Lord—Paul and Barnabas—had to move on, so they were left on their own under persecution.

What was their response? Was it to give up and be despondent and say, “Well, God has failed us”? No, their response was amazing. The disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. As long as you can be filled with the Holy Spirit you can be filled with joy.

Let me just close with two parallel statements. Number one, it’s impossible to be filled with joy without the Holy Spirit and, number two, it’s impossible to be filled with the Holy Spirit without joy.

All right, my time is up for today and I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow, I’ll be speaking on the third form of the fruit of the Spirit, “The Fruit of Peace.”

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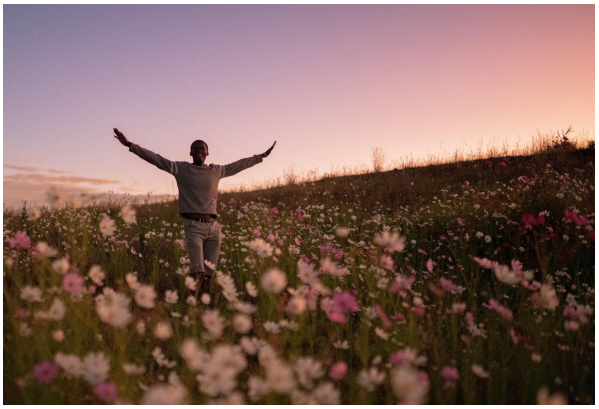

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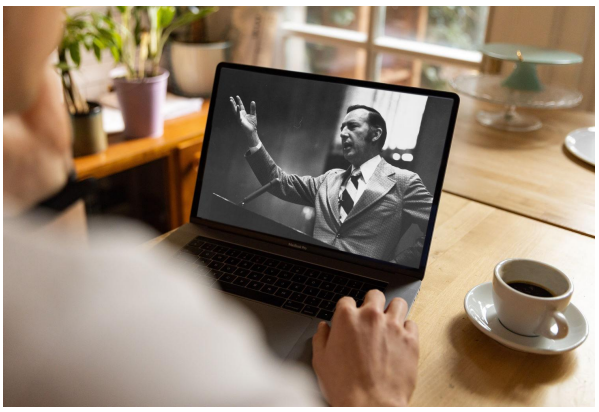

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