

Lesson 23 JOY

These Things Have I Spoken Unto You, That My Joy May Be in You, and That Your Joy May Be Fulfilled - John 15:11

I. Introduction

- a. Have you ever asked the question, "How can I be a joyful Christian?" Our Lord provides the answer in this passage: "These things," about the Vine and the branches, "I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled."
- b. You cannot have Christ's joy without Christ's life. "Abide in Me, and let Me abide in you, and My joy will be in you."
- c. All healthy spiritual life is a thing of joy and beauty; live undividedly the branch life; you will have His joy in full measure.
- d. It is far too common in Christian experience for individuals to miss the simple joy and beauty of the life of Christ we have available to us as believers in the here and now.
- e. Often, the believer fails to comprehend the nature and quality of the joy that is our possession.

II. The Meaning of Joy

- a. The joy which the people of God possess rises above mere circumstances. It flows from a belief that overcomes the sensory world in which we live and focuses on the very character and acts of God. *Acts 7:55-56 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. KJV*
- b. In the Psalms, for example, the psalmist rejoices over
 1. **Salvation** *Ps 21:1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD ; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! KJV*
 2. **Mercy** *Ps 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: KJV*
 3. **The Kingship** of God *Ps 149:2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. KJV*
 4. **The word** *Ps 119:162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. KJV*
 5. **Faithfulness** *Ps 33:1,4 Sing joyfully to the LORD , you righteous; For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. NIV*
- c. The fundamental fact of the sovereignty of God and of the providence of the Divine government of the world, gives to the believer a joyous sense of security in this life. *Ps 93:5 Thy testimonies are very surer. KJV*
- d. The joy possessed by the redeemed is produced by the Spirit of God and is the triumph of faith and trust over circumstance. *Gal 5:22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, KJV*
- e. This kind of joy is unfailling and looks beyond the present to our future glory and to our sovereign God, who works out all things for our ultimate good. *Rom 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. KJV*
- f. This kind of joy is distinct from mere happiness which is always conditional and transient.
- g. Joy imparted by the Spirit is possible, even in the midst of sorrow. *2 Cor 6:9-10 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; KJV*
- h. Joy is a delight of the spiritual mind arising from the contemplation of a present or assured possession of a future good which transcends by a huge margin whatever temporal happiness this transient life can offer. *1 Peter 1:8 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: KJV*
- i. Since the promises of God are the basis for the existence of joy, then, to the same extent that the promises of God are unconditional and permanent then so too is joy. *Ps 119:89 Forever, O LORD , thy word is settled in heaven. KJV*

III. The Problem

- a. To many Christians, the thought of a life wholly abiding in Christ is one of strain and painful effort. These do not experience the joy and peace which are the promised possessions of the believer.
- b. What they are missing and what they cannot see is that the strain and effort only come as long as we do not yield ourselves unreservedly to the life of Christ in us. *Rom 6:19 for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. KJV*
- c. It is resistance to the natural branch life of the believer that results in the experience of strain and effort. Failure to grasp the significance of Christ's life in us means that one is relegated to a life of self-effort. *John 15:5 for without me ye can do nothing. KJV*
- d. One thing that limits the ability of many to experience joy in their Christian life is that they are misled by the natural operation of the process of perception and their carnal interpretation of experience.
- e. For example, if you are on your way to church on a Sunday morning and you have a flat tire that you must change on the spot, it would be quite natural to become upset and fume about having to get dirty to get the job done.
- f. As one experiences the feeling of upset and the concern for staying clean, by the exercise of this choice, this person may miss the experience of Christ. In stead, he has given himself over to the experience of the flesh.
- g. The law of response says that the way you interpret/understand an experience necessarily dictates your response to it. Change your interpretation and you change your response.

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- h. For the believer, every experience is given to us by our heavenly Father to accomplish His purposes in us. Since His will is always and everywhere perfect, any experience He permits must be perfect for us **in the moment**.
- i. If I have a flat tire on the way to church then that experience is Father filtered for His purposes and for my benefit. My task is to always interpret experience from **His point of view**. *Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. KJV*
- j. Because we always want what we want, when we want it and how we want it, we often fall into the trap of assuming that this life ought to be something **other than** it is. Therefore, we struggle with circumstance.
- k. So, when things don't go the way we'd like them to go, we tend to respond badly (in the flesh) instead of taking everything that the Lord gives us from His loving hand as a **gift** for our benefit. *Deut 26:11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, KJV*
- l. **Irrespective** of the experience of the moment, peace and joy ought to be the hallmark of true belief of the Christian. *1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. KJV*
- m. Let us **comprehend** what Jesus meant in this passage: *I am the true Vine; I undertake all and provide for all; I ask nothing of the branch but that it yields wholly to Me, and allows Me to do all. I engage to make and keep the branch all that it ought to be.*
- n. Ought it not to be an infinite and unceasing joy to have the Vine thus work all, and to know that it is none other than the Son of God in His love who is each moment **bearing us** and maintaining our life?

IV. Continuous Joy of Branch life

- a. *That My joy may be in you*-We are to have Christ's **own joy** in us. And what is Christ's own joy? It is the mature faith in the promises of God and the experience of His love in spite of circumstance that produces joy.
- b. Experiencing the love of Christ for us in the heat of battle is a function of **knowing** Him experientially over time.
 - 1. Knowing the character and nature of God leads to **trust** in all that He promises.
 - 2. This is faith in action that leads us to **obey** Him instantly and to accomplish His will for us.
 - 3. This results in our **abiding** in Him and crystallizes the joy and peace that emanates from such a relationship.
 - 4. This experiential **package** (knowing, trusting, obeying, abiding) is what we recognize as love.
 - 5. This love both fills us and exudes from us from glory to glory as we **operationalize** it.
- c. In the preceding passage, Christ had just spoken of the Father's love and His own abiding in it, and of His having loved us with that same love. This reveals to us the **connection** between love and joy.
- d. His joy is nothing but the joy that flows **directly from** being loved and from loving. His was the joy of receiving His Father's love and abiding in it, and then the joy of passing on that love and pouring it out to others.
- e. It is this joy He wants us to **share**: the joy of being loved of the Father and of Him; and having received it to experience the joy of loving and living for those around us.
- f. This is just the joy of being truly branches: abiding in His love, and then giving up **ourselves** in love to bear fruit for others.
- g. Our relationship with Christ is meant to be in everyday life a thing of **unspeakable** joy.

V. Application

- a. *My joy-your joy*. In this too it is: as the Vine is, so the branch. His joy is our joy-and our joy fulfilled. The joy of being loved and blessed with a divine love; the joy of loving and blessing others.
- b. Is your life joyful moment to moment?
- c. Which is more real to you: Your circumstance? Or, His life in you?
- d. What are you saying to yourself that limits your experience of joy?