

Galatians- Good News For Uncomfortable Times

Part 6: Joy

GM // newbies & online ...

Continuing in our Galatians series looking at the different Fruits of the Spirit.

Let's read what they are ...

Galatians 5:22-23

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.

Today we are going to focus on Joy.

Now, before we begin let me briefly explain the term "Fruit of the Spirit".

Even if you grew up in church it may not be all that clear what it means.

But here is a helpful metaphor.

If you are a lamp you have no capacity to produce light until you are plugged into an outlet.

That plugging in happens when God saves us.

He plugs us into His power.

But still, like a lamp, you don't know it's "plugged in" until you see the light bulb shine.

[shining bulb proves the power.]

In this same way the Holy Spirit's power is seen by the fruit of our lives.

[power may be hidden, but the fruit of our lives makes it undeniable.]

As a Christian, this equivalent plugging in comes through God the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

He will produce fruit in our lives.

And his fruit can't be hidden ...

Take the fruit of Joy.

If you have it others will know it...

Not b/c your joyful 100% / perma-grin.

It's a disposition change. A brightening of countenance.

People can tell a joyful person vs. a non-joyful person.

Now, it's worth noting that there are a lot of joyful people who aren't Christians.

And I wouldn't argue with that.

But, I do wonder what they are happy/joyful about?

Because ...

Joy Is Always Tied To Something

I can still remember my 6th birthday B/C I got THE GIFT.

A \$10 Lone Range mask, pistol and holster set.

I had everything I needed to take on the bad guys.

I remember my response ... I ran around yelling “It’s the Lone Ranger!!” for way too long.

My joy was tied to that gift.

But as you can guess [hopefully are right] ... I’m not getting any joy out of it anymore.

But that is life on planet earth ...

It is scattered with joyous moments that come and go.

- new toys
- new cars
- new homes
- vacations
- weddings
- births

Those are great moments ... we want them to last forever ...

Which is why we have photo albums, and flash drives, and Instagram and Facebook full of these pictures and videos.

It lets us go back and relive the joy.

But that is the beauty of remembering ...

Remembering Our Blessings Brings Joy To Our Hearts

Remembering doesn't just look backward to what was ...
It counts the blessings we have right now.

I have this little routine when I take Rory and Sierra to school in the morning.

I ask, "What are you thankful for today?"

They rattle off a list of things ...

- **Friends, teachers, toys, family**

Then we pray, and we give thanks to God for who He is and all the ways He has blessed us.

Being grateful or giving thanks is meant to be a regular rhythm of life for God's people.

Many of the songs in Scripture are giving thanks to God for who he is and what he does.

Psalm 100:4-5

**4 Enter his [God's] gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!**

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

**5 For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.**

You see the movement in this Psalm.

--- We are commanded to give thanks to God ...

--- Then we are given a list of compelling things to give thanks for.

Praise is the practice of gratitude.

It names the goodness of God and his many blessings.

This is pivotal ...

**A Joyful Heart Sees And Receives God's Gifts In All
Circumstances**

There's a story a pastor tells that illustrates this point. It happened while volunteering at a hospital during his time in seminary.

- ***One night a man was moved to his ward from the emergency room.***
- ***He was in such pain that he groaned all night.***
- ***The nurse assigned to him came in to change bandages, give medication, and so on.***
- ***Despite his severe pain, the man managed to thank the nurse each time she left his room.***
- ***At one point, the nurse turned and said, you don't need to thank me, its my job.***
- ***At which the man replied:***
- ***"It's nobody's job to take care of me. Nobody OWES me that! I want to thank you!"***

Despite his circumstances, this man could see the gift. In the middle of terrible circumstance he could see the gift of this nurse tending to his wounds and pain.

He easily could have felt entitled to the nurses care.

But then he would have missed out on the joy of receiving it as a gift.

It's easy for us to become entitled.

We live in an era where we count our rights more than our blessings.

While progress isn't a bad thing ... we are plagued by blindness to our blessings.

Along with our growth in medicine, technology, and general standard of living ... There has been growth in depression and anxiety.

This seems counterintuitive ...

But there is a very real reason ...

Entitlement Blocks Gratitude And Kills Joy

Whenever we believe we deserve something ... that is a spirit of entitlement.

Entitlement is part and parcel of the original sin.

The motivation behind Adam and Eve taking that fruit is that they felt entitled to more than what God had provided.

God gave A + E everything, except one little tree.

Isn't it amazing that with all that wealth ... the perfect environment ... entitlement could still creep into their hearts.

If we're honest ... that story exposes our hearts.

We all have a sense of entitlement.

And b/c of this we fight to find joy.

The things we don't have often overshadow all the blessings we currently possess.

And here is the kicker.

Even when we get what we want ... our joy in it doesn't last very long.

- Kids go off to college and get married.
- Your new iPad becomes “the old model” in 2.1 seconds.
- The new car smell doesn't last.
- Beauty and strength fade.
- The honeymoon phase is gone.

Life on earth is ever-shifting, ever-changing.

And b/c joy is attached to these things ... our joy ebbs and flows like the tide.

But what if there was something unchangeable?

If that was true, then we could conclude that ...

Joy In The Unchangeable Means You Can Have Unchangeable Joy

Imagine you receive a letter that states an uncle you didn't know existed is leaving to you his vast estate.

Tomorrow you have to go to the estate lawyer so that your uncle's will can be executed.

**You go to the lawyer's office and sure enough it's real.
Everything is true.**

You are getting \$100M's, but you have to wait 1 year.

Now imagine in that 1 year the following happened:

- **Wreck your car ...**
- **Investments tank ...**
- **Get the flu ...**
- **Stub your toe ...**
- **Have to social distance and wear a mask. :)**
- **None of your candidates got elected.**

Now, any of those scenarios would bum you out for a moment ...

But still you would have an unshakeable joy ...

**B/C there is a greater, unchanging set of circumstances
that overshadows all the rest.**

That is the good news of the Gospel ...

We have a greater unchanging set of circumstances.

Our sins are forgiven.

God's wrath against our sin is satisfied.

And we have the unchanging promise of eternal life.

But the good news of the Gospel gets even better.

While we wait for our future in heaven ... we live in a preview of it now.

The Christian life today is a foretaste of what awaits us in eternity.

It's like tasting cake batter.

We all want to lick the bowl clean while the cake is in the oven.

Now cake batter is delicious ... but its not better than the cake.

But in tasting it you get a preview of the cake ...

It makes you more excited about the cake!

The cake batter experience today is life in the Holy Spirit in the community of God's people.

Which is why church and the Holy Spirit are an integral part of following Jesus.

It's by these that we experience the future gift of eternal life now.

If you are a Christian ... be a "cake batter" Christian.

The Bible says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

So as a Christian ... how do you “taste the cake batter?”

There are two legs we walk on:

- **(1) Private and (2) public worship**

What do we do in private and public worship?

We taste and see Jesus through prayer, Bible reading, praise, serving others.

In private worship we do this through the week by ourselves.

In public worship we do this together: like right now ... CG ... family devotions around the dining room table.

As we press into these things we press into life in the Holy Spirit.

Which is pressing into the Spirit's fruit of unchangeable joy.

The reverse is also true ... less public and private worship leads to less unchangeable joy.

The great obstacle isn't the devil ...

It's our busyness.

We don't press in b/c we don't have time ...

Let's be more honest ... we don't make time.

Why are we so busy?

We work harder ... to make more money ... to buy more stuff and more experiences ... b/c we need more joy.

Maybe you don't do it for yourself, but you do it for your kids.

Guess what ... childhood depression and anxiety is also on the rise ... BIG TIME.

We are told if we give them the right toys, the right opportunities, the right experiences ... they'll be happy.

Parents ... does your kid have any time for public and private worship?

We are too busy chasing the wrong joy-source.

You can't pursue a life of wealth and pleasure, and life in the Spirit.

Which is why...

Unchangeable Joy Only Comes Through Living In Surrender To God

This is the testimony of the saints throughout history.

Those who lived surrendered had joy despite their circumstances.

Paul in a Philippian jail could worship with joy.

Many Christian men and women have been imprisoned, tortured, stoned, burned, fed to wild animals ...

Still they could praise and pray and forgive until they passed on into eternal with Jesus.

When you look over church history ... at the many who lived the Gospel ... lived in surrender ...

You find a legacy of unchangeable joy.

And it began with our Savior ...

Hebrews 12:2

“... 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.”

Jesus surrendered to the cross for the joy that awaited him on the other side.

CALL UP BAND

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- You can't have this unchangeable joy without faith in Jesus.
- You have to receive salvation as a free gift.
- But you also have to surrender to Jesus as Lord.
- But in that surrender, you will find unchangeable joy.

CHRISTIANS:

- Joy comes through surrender for us too.
- When we take communion we are remembering that.
 - (Going to take communion in a moment.)
- Take out the communion cup you were given, and start working on getting out the wafer at the very top.
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- We don't take this because we are entitled.
- Communion is received as a gift of grace.
- It is remembering the cost of surrender Jesus went through so we could live in the joy of God's salvation.
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- This wafer represents the body Jesus surrendered to the Father's will by dying on the cross.

- Let's eat it together.
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- Now, we consider the blood.
- We give thanks and count our blessings because of what Jesus' blood shed for us means.
- Our sins are forgiven. No guilt, no shame, no condemnation.
- The power of sin over our minds and hearts is broken.
- His blood means healing from our past, our present, and a bright hope for the future.
- That never changes ... and so his blood shed for us means unchangeable joy.
- Let's drink together.

Now, with this joy ... let's praise Jesus and give thanks for our great salvation.