

## Joy

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by Wayne Goff

***The fruit of the Spirit called “joy” in Galatians 5 comes from a Greek word which simply means “joy, delight.”***

It is used about sixty times in the New Testament and its verb “rejoice” appears another seventy times. Jesus explained in John 15:10-14 that joy is a by-product of love. Love is defined by Jesus as keeping God’s commandments, and that way of life will produce **joy** in the heart of the obedient believer, a joy which is “full.” This means that the joy which is found in serving God is not a meager, temporary emotion, but a spontaneous response of the heart that trusts in a faithful, loving God.

Too often we are willing to give *little* in order to receive a *little* joy! We refuse to be fully committed for the long run, afraid to invest too much of ourselves, and too impatient to spend what it takes to have true joy — peace of mind, contentment, and right relationships. So we *substitute* instead **things** which give us a momentary “high,” a brief emotional charge, and are content to have this kind of “joy” from time to time.

But the joy that comes from God is a joy that is “full” or complete. It is the joy that comes from the forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:8, 39; 16:34); the joy that exists in a right relationship of acceptance with God; the joy that result from being freely loved in order that we might love others freely. But this is **the joy of commitment**, which requires of us trust, obedience and changes in our lifestyle. Are we afraid to make this commitment, and then follow up on it? If so, then we are afraid to experience true joy. How sad if we spend our lives seeking joy from *things* instead of joy from God.

The world defines joy as hilarity and frivolity which comes from self-gratification without regard for the consequences. But if we gullibly accept that definition of joy, then we will never learn the joy that comes from God’s love, our faith, and a trusting hope! Beware lest we be deceived from pursuing that which is good and right.

Joy is associated with living. It is not the absence of sorrow, stress or difficulty. This is obvious since Jesus promised us complete joy without the promise of a utopian world here. “*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (Jn. 16:33). Does that sound like a trouble-free existence on earth? No, but we may still be of “good cheer.” Joy is the result of **love** and is marked by its characteristics.

Joy is the contentment which comes from learning how to suffer long, to be kind, to be considerate of others, and to rejoice in truth rather than iniquity (1 Cor. 13). At the core is the sense of fulfillment and worth which comes from God’s redemption.

Jesus said, “*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you*” (Jn. 16:14). While this statement was made to the apostles, it extends to us through the revelation of the Gospel provided us by the inspired apostles and prophets of the New Testament. Jesus shares His thoughts, heart and will with us through the Word.

Finally, the joy of God for us is one which begins **now** in the things described already, but which finds its ultimate consummation in eternity. “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, . . . through the word of God which lives and abides forever*” (1 Peter 1:22-23). There can be **no greater joy** than being loved by a God of Perfect Love and by the sincere, pure love of His saints. I look forward to the best expression of that in heaven after awhile.

“*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 15:13).

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