



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
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May 2, 2010

Theme: The Fruit of the Spirit Is Joy

Text: Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 3:1; 4:4, 12-13

Outside observers of the Christian faith tend to think that believers have little or no joy in their lives. This observation may be somewhat biased and harsh. Yet, it is true that many believers are missing out on the second fruit of the Spirit, which is joy. How about you? Can you say with the Scriptures, "The joy of the Lord is my strength?" Are you manifesting this fruit of the Spirit in your life? Today we are going to think about what the Bible says about becoming joyful people.

When we confess Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our physical bodies. The Christian life then becomes an ongoing process of saying "No!" to the flesh and "Yes!" to the Spirit. Many non-believers believe that the Christian life is a matter of obeying rules which say, "Do this! Don't do that!" Then think that Christian living is a matter of following all the no's of the Bible which rob our lives of joy. There are rules to the Christian faith; but the rules are not the primary thing. The primary thing is that the believer has a relationship with the Almighty, Glorious Creator of the universe. God says, "Yes! You may have a relationship with me through Jesus Christ." The Christian faith is God's great big "Yes!" which comes to us through God's promises, which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

There are many promises that we could focus upon, but I want to focus on one that should blow our minds! Peter writes in his second letter, "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires." The apostle Peter says that believers share in God's nature! Jesus gives us a clue to what that means in a prayer as we have it in John 17: "May they be brought to complete unity so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." That verse says that God the Father loves us just as much as He loves Jesus, His Only Begotten Son! When we come to faith, we are caught up into the love relationship that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share with each other. That truth is really beyond our ability to comprehend.

I have written about love so far, so now let's begin to think about joy. Joy is a feeling that is a by-product of having the Holy Spirit live in us. It is also a by-product of what we think about. Paul mentions joy frequently in his letter to the Philippians. This is striking because Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter. Prison is not a happy place. Still, Paul managed to be joyful there. The circumstances of our lives often do not inspire joy. How can we have the joy of the Spirit even when our circumstances of life are not so good? There are two principles that can help us in this regard. First, joy is a by-product of



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the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The first thing we must do is to continually ask God to fill us with His Spirit and to surrender to His power. The second principle is this: Joy is also a by-product of what we think about.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commands his readers to rejoice. He doesn't command them to have joy, he commands them to rejoice. This is because joy is a feeling and rejoicing is an action. You can command people to perform actions; but you cannot command them to have certain feelings. So we can engage in the action of rejoicing whatever our circumstances may be. Rejoicing means that we think about and reflect upon God's blessings and then praise and thank Him for them. Our feelings tend to follow our thoughts. Therefore, if we constantly focus upon the problems and uncertainties of life we will most likely feel I worry, fear, anxiety, and doubt. But if we focus upon God's blessings and praise and thank Him for them, the feeling of joy is more likely to be present.

It is God's will that we work at becoming people of joy. I know this because joy is a fruit of the Spirit. We can become people of joy by asking God to fill us with the Spirit and by surrendering to His power. We can also think about and reflect upon God's blessings and then thank Him and praise Him for them.