



## **Summer Fruit-Part 2**

### **Fruit of the Spirit: Joy**

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, if you are into fitness and weight training, which is becoming increasingly clear I have not been this year. But if you happen to be you might be familiar with a, actually a famous author and a weight training expert who wrote a book with a very clever title. The title reads, "If You Like Exercise, Chances Are You're Doing It Wrong." And I get that. I think I must be doing it right because I don't like it. I'd like to take that title, very clever, and I'd like to flip it on its head and apply it to the passage that we're studying here in the next couple of months. Galatians 5:22. Particularly as it relates to this second thing on the list, this second virtue, this Christian virtue that should characterize the Christian life. It's the word "joy." And if I turn that on its head, I would put it this way, that if you don't like the Christian life, chances are you're doing it wrong. If you don't like it, if you don't enjoy it, there's not cheerfulness and gladness in it, then there's something wrong with the way you're doing the Christian life.

You have to say, well, wait a minute, the Bible's pretty clear. You teach about this all the time that in this world we're going to have tribulation, we going to have trials, we're going to have troubles. So how in the world are we supposed to be happy? How are we supposed to have joy? What's this talk of gladness and cheerfulness? Well, speaking of clever, I think G.K. Chesterton, who was always clever in his writings back in the day, he put it this way. He said Jesus promised his disciples three things in this world. Number one, that they would be completely fearless. Number two, that they'd be absurdly happy. Number three, they'd be in constant trouble. That's an interesting juxtaposition of things. I think the modern Christian would say, well, two out of three ain't bad. I may be growing my Christian faith. I feel more bold and confident. Certainly, I'm in a lot of trouble when I speak up for Christ. I have persecution in this world and tribulations and trials. But that absurdly happy thing, I certainly don't see that in my life and two out of three ain't bad.

Well, two out of three is bad, according to our list, because when God wants to tell us what should characterize the Christian life, there is nothing higher on the list than love as the ultimate virtue. But then this second one comes right behind it, and that ought to be joy. And again, the objections come, "Well Pastor Mike, don't you know that joy is not happiness it's not gladness it's not cheerfulness? These are two different things. I graduated from Sunday school and Sunday school is very clear about that." I understand that. I understand that what you're taught is that joy and happiness are two different things and that you shouldn't see those as the same because the world is all about happiness and Christians are all about joy.

Even as I've begun to state that you're saying, "Well, wait a minute. Don't you talk about the fact that, you know, the goal of our life is holiness, not happiness? Don't you say that if we say to our children, I just want them to be happy? I mean, you just quoted that, that that's a problem." Now, listen, I don't mean to say ever when I'm trying to present that the Christian life is not cutting people loose to do whatever it is that they think might make them happy. That's not at all taking



away from what the Bible's very clear about, and that is that the Christian life should be characterized by joy, a joy that is something more than just a deposit of a mindset.

Matter of fact, I'll quote the objections to what I'm about to preach on. Here is a Christian author. He writes this: "Joy is something entirely different from happiness. Joy in the biblical context is not an emotion, not something you feel. Joy is something that God deposits into us through the Holy Spirit. Happiness is an emotion and it's temporary. But joy is an attitude of the heart. It's a mindset. It's a mind-frame. It's a way that you think and see that's different than being happy. The Bible not asking us to be happy," he says, "it's emotional over here. It's worldly, it's temporal. It's vapid. It goes away. It's joy that we're looking for and joy is something that can be deposited in our life, like an account that has something transferred to it and bam, it's there. If you're a Christian because you have the Holy Spirit, there it is. That's the mindset of the Christian life."

Here's the problem. I don't want you or I to get through the Christian life at the end of time, stand before Christ and think that we characterized a virtue of Christianity that we never did. If you misdefine, if you redefine joy into something that God did not intend, then you're going to say, "Well, I'm sure I did it. I have it." But in fact, many of us don't have it. We don't have it because we misunderstood it. We don't have it because many of us push away and we sacrifice the concept of gladness and cheerfulness and happiness in the name of joy, because joy is something so radically different. At least that's what we were taught. That's what you just quoted from Christian authors. That's what they say.

Let me give you my conclusion upfront, at least as it relates to the dichotomy of the way we define this concept. Let me have you jot this down if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would, put it down this way. We must not dismiss happiness in the name of joy. "Don't Dismiss Happiness In the Name of Joy." And here's the reason, because when I look at the word joy in the Scripture, it's usage in the Scripture. And I think that's the most important thing. How is a word used?

We can play word games with any word and we can try and come up with some meaning based on component parts and all the rest. But you've got to understand it in context. So let me help you with that. What is joy biblically? If I'm supposed to know what I'm supposed to be characterized by, what the Holy Spirit is supposed to produce in my life, I better know what it is. I'm all for biblical definitions. So let's think about the usage of the biblical word, joy, both Old and New Testament. And it's often given in contexts. So let me give you one. And I'll modernize it for you. Today, you go home, you realize your dog has gotten out. Your dog is lost. Your kids are in tears. You don't have any clue where your dog is. You spend the rest of the afternoon putting up signs. "Fluffy is lost. Please, you know, here's our number. Call us. We want our dog back." Monday goes by. Tuesday goes by. Wednesday goes by. You're absolutely losing hope that you're ever going to see your beloved family pet. On Thursday morning, Fluffy comes trouncing back to your house, standing on your front porch. There he is. You have your dog back. My question is, how do you feel at that point? How do you feel? The Bible characterizes that in Luke 15 as joy. Whatever that experience is, that's joy.



Old Testament, First Samuel. You want a child, you desperately want a child. You and your spouse have been trying and trying and trying. You're buying pregnancy tests in bulk through Amazon. Right? You've gone through so many of those. You're tired of the pain and the absolute dejection of not having a child. Your infertility has just led you to a bottom-like despondency. And one day the pregnancy test comes out and there's that plus sign. There it is. You have a child, a child's on the way. How do you feel at that point? What is your feeling about that? The Bible uses the word in the Old Testament, joy, to describe that experience.

You have a friend, maybe a family member. They've had a chronic illness for 18 years. It's caused them great pain. It's actually disfigured their body. They can't even stand up straight. They're in so much pain. You've watched them. You've tried..., you have to help them get in the car. You have to lead them into the shower because there's so much pain in terms of their body. They're just crippled just about. They can't even make it through the day without chronic pain. And in one day, all of that goes away. There's completely restored health.

The gal that was afflicted that way in the book of Luke, who then is healed. The Bible describes her feeling and the feeling of those who loved her and knew her as joy. How do you feel if that were to happen to you? You got an enemy pressing in on the borders of our country. You think about the kind of despotic oppression, whether it's in the book of Judges or in any Old Testament scene where you've got the Philistines perhaps pressing in on your nation and you've got a great leader who goes out and leads a war that though it's costly, you win and you're freed from the oppression of a foreign army and you come back. You have spoil from war. You have victory. It's the modern equivalent of a ticker-tape parade.

I mean, we have statues in San Diego of sailors, you know, kissing a girl on the street. Right? That famous photo that he didn't even know her. Right? How do you feel when World War II is over and there are people everywhere now knowing that the war is over? How did how do you feel? The Bible describes that in the Old Testament as the word joy. Joy.

He's got an account that's frozen. If you don't have that money and access to that money in that bank account, you are in big trouble. You cannot pay your bills. You are absolutely dependent on the income that's there and it's there and it's been frozen. You don't know why. You can't understand why. You work, you write letters, you email, you go down to the bank, you work, you work, you work. For weeks that that account is frozen and you're afraid of your financial future. Then all of a sudden in one day, you get an email, you have complete access. The password's been reset and you have access to all of that money in that account. How do you feel at that moment? What is your feeling? The Bible enlists in the New Testament, the Greek word, joy, for that. You feel joyful.

You hear of a bad accident. You get a call from someone who says there's a bad accident near your house. Cops are there, paramedics are there, flashing lights, flares set up. You call your loved one. You can't get a hold of them on the phone. You think maybe they've been killed in that car accident. You heard it's a fatality. You think you've lost a family member or someone you dearly love in that accident and you wait for two hours wondering if they're dead or alive. Then all of a



sudden your loved one walks up to your front door. You thought they were dead, but they're actually alive. How do you feel at that moment? What's your feeling? The Bible enlists the word joy for that.

I don't know. Let's get back to what Christians write about joy again. Let me just read it to you. Here's what they say. "Joy is something entirely different from happiness. Joy in the biblical context is not an emotion. Joy is just something that God deposits into you by the Holy Spirit. Now, happiness, that's an emotion, that's temporal. Joy is an attitude of the heart, it's a mindset. It's a frame of mind." Do you want to challenge that very common definition just by me explaining the usage of the word joy throughout the New Testament?

Here's a verse for you. As long as I haven't turned you anywhere yet. Let me turn you to this, just one verse, Psalm 68 verse 3. Let's get there, because one of the ways we understand a word in Scripture is not only its usage in context, which I've given you plenty and I could give you many more. But the way you see parallel words used, particularly in the Psalms and what we call Hebrew parallelism, where the phrases are stacked on top of each other and it gives us a sense of what we're supposed to understand those words to mean.

Here's the word joy and its surrounding words and the parallel concepts within one verse. Here's one example, and we could spend all morning doing this. Psalm 68 verse 3. It says, "But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult." Do you know that word "exult?" Something you do after a war where there's triumph and you're having ticker-tape parades, you're having a jubilant kind of celebration. You exult. It's not a word we use very often, but that's the definition of the word. "The righteous shall be glad." I think you know what that word means. "They shall exalt before God; they shall be," here's a word you don't use very often, "jubilant," expressing some kind of great cheerfulness. Matter of fact, jubilant usually has something to do with the volume with which someone responds to a situation. They're jubilant. They're making a lot of noise. They're shouting.

Then here's our word throughout the Bible, joy. Let the righteous be glad, "But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exalt before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!" I could go on all morning looking at parallel words like gladness, rejoicing, celebration, exulting, happy. Look it up. It's in your Bible. Happiness, cheerfulness, elation. These words are all the time grouped together. It is the word group and the word in the center of it all that God raises to the top of it all, is a word that sadly has been so redefined, it has absolutely little resemblance to what it actually means in the pages of Scripture when we think it's a mindset that's been deposited like some kind of transaction on your phone.

This should be all over, I would think, in our minds, in Luke 6:23 when Jesus says we ought to "leap for joy." I don't know that there are very many things that are simply non-emotional, passive, impassionate things in my mind that God has deposited that are going to make me jump off the ground. Leap for joy. Joy is an emotion. Joy is a feeling. I know that causes all kinds of questions. "How in the world can God command me to feel something? What am I supposed to do if I have a lot of bad feelings and you're telling me I'm supposed to feel a certain way? I don't



understand. What if I have bad things in my life? What if I have a predisposition to being negative? What if I'm an analytic and I always see the glass as half empty? I don't see how God would expect me to be a joyful person. That doesn't make sense."

You may have a lot of questions about joy, but I'm just trying to define for you biblically what joy is. Joy is an emotional state of positive, optimistic gladness, cheerfulness, happiness. That's the picture in Scripture. I don't want you to sacrifice happiness, which I think summarizes something you would say is emotional, is a feeling, is a positive disposition because you're saying, "Well, I got joy. Well, I got joy. Therefore, happiness is not the goal. That's not the standard." We could get into the linguistic discussions of all the words in the Bible, whether it's "Asher" in the Old Testament Hebrew, "Makarios" in the New Testament, this Greek word that is translated blessed like asher is translated blessed. Most people have no idea what the word glory means. They have no idea what the word blessed means. These are Bible words, church words. We just disconnect them from reality. But the case can be made, not only because of the cognates, not only because of the context, not only because of the descriptions, not only because of the word groups. This has to do, blessed, with a happy, joyful, cheerful, smiling disposition.

So the Bible is calling Christians to be characterized by joy. Let me say this as strongly as I can even though this may raise a ton of questions. Just because it raises questions is no need for us to dismiss it. If you've taken note here that says don't dismiss happiness for the sake of joy, let me give you this second point as we develop this concept. This will be all we've got here with a lot of sub-points. You need to understand this. You need to know that "Christians Must Be Joyful." They must be. It is an absolute necessity that you are a joyful Christian. That's what God expects.

Let me give you reasons, number one, because the Holy Spirit says that's what I'm working to accomplish in your life. That's the whole point of our passage. Galatians 5:22. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those are the things the Spirit wants. But here are the things that your flesh wants. Something different. Your flesh is going to fight it, even though most people would say, of course I want to be happy. Everyone wants to be happy. Well, there is a sense in which you want to be happy. I get that. But your flesh is going to come up with a ton of reasons not to. Particularly if it's not the imitation that the world provides, but the reality of it and the reality of it is not a non-emotional, passive, non-feeling virtue. This is a feeling virtue.

The flesh that you have is going to, the Bible says, fight against the Spirit's intent. So here's what I would say. If you don't have joy, the kind of cheerful, joyful, jubilant, positive, optimistic attitude in your life, I would say this, the Spirit wants just the opposite of that, there must be one of two things going on to use biblical words, you're either quenching the Spirit's work or you're grieving the Spirit. First Thessalonians 5, "Quenching the Spirit." Ephesians Chapter 4, "Grieving the Spirit." The Spirit is pushing in the direction of making you smile more often, of being joyful and positive, and your flesh is going to fight that.

The Spirit of God wants to accomplish in your life what the Spirit of God is. The Spirit of God, believe it or not, is a joyful spirit. Jot this one down, if you would, Zephaniah Chapter 3 verse 17.





Zephaniah Chapter 3 verse 17. Perhaps you remember this verse. It has been around the church for a while. Occasionally it's pulled out of the drawer and people quote it. It seems a little sentimental. It seems a little emotional. Maybe it's not said as much in contexts of churches like ours that are all about the serious study of God's Word. But listen to this statement about God and his disposition, verse 17. Zephaniah 3, "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness." There are some great Hebrew words translated for us. "He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love." If there are problems, if there are issues, if you're unsettled, if you're nervous, if you're anxious, he's going to settle you with his love and "he will exalt over you," as though we needed this next phrase because we know exalt, as I said, is a kind of triumphant, loud response of joy. He says, "he will exalt over you with loud singing." James says if anyone is cheerful, let him sing.

I don't know if you think of God as cheerful, but the Bible's very clear on this. "Yeah, but we've just read Psalm 7 verse 11. Right? 'God is a righteous judge and he expresses anger every day.' So I know he's angry every day. And after all, I'm a student of the Puritan tradition in American theology. I know Jonathan Edwards. I mean, he's known for that sermon, 'The Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God.'" Smile at me, ironically, if you've heard of that sermon? "Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God." Which, by the way, is even taught in high schools and junior highs, as an example of those mean, frowning-faced, puritanical early Christians and that's why we don't like people like Jonathan Edwards.

We can't get away from the fact that God is angry. He's angry, but that is not his default disposition. As a matter of fact, let me read from Jonathan Edwards about God. The author of the sermon, "Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God." Here's what he says about God, speaking specifically of Christ. I don't usually quote extended quotations, but listen carefully as Jonathan Edwards writes. "The glorious Son of God is theirs," is God's people's. "That lovely one who from all eternity is God's delight. Rejoicing always before him. In his beauty is their portion and his dying love is theirs. His very heart is theirs. His glory and happiness in heaven is theirs. So far as their capacities will allow them to partake of it for he has promised it to them." Promise what to them? Happiness. "And has taken possession of it in their name. And the Saints are also rich in the principle that is in them, and they have inward riches," context is happiness, joy, "which they carry about within them in their own hearts." I could go on all morning with quotations from Jonathan Edwards that understands this, that the default disposition of God is a joyful, cheerful happiness. A gladness and a rejoicing, in particular over the redemption of his people. And he gives them joy. That's the picture.

If you are a theologian among us and you think, "Well, what about the impassibility of God, the doctrine of the impassibility of God? God doesn't have human emotions like we have." I would say that is not what the impassibility of God means. God, yes, I believe and I affirm the Orthodox doctrine that God is impassible. That means that he is not the kind of person who just reacts the kind of way that we would react just by slight provocation and has a negative emotional reaction to things, and we somehow control that by our behavior. Well, that's not God, but it doesn't mean that God isn't angry at sin and defers back to and defaults back to a joyful, emotional feeling.



To say he's impassable is not to say that he is non-emotional. We are created in his image. Not only do we have intellect that we can reflect the ideal intellect of God and not only do we have volition and willful decision-making powers that reflect the decision and creative making powers of God. But we also have emotion. Emotion is a feeling. Emotion is something we experience in our hearts. It's a kind of sentient reality that is beyond just tasting food and feeling something that's smooth or soft or something that makes me feel good, like a warm breeze. That's not just what we feel. We feel the spiritual emotional capacities of a God who is not physical, he's spirit and in his personality the emotions of God are undeniable.

Is he angry at sin? Yes. Was Jesus a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Yes. Well, what's the context of that? In Isaiah 53 it says, because he's despised and rejected and becomes the sacrifice, the guilt offering on which sin was set. Is that a negative feeling? Of course it was. Was he a negative feeling Messiah? There were times certainly when he was negative in his feelings in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having such travail that he was sweating so much sweat, it was pouring off of him like someone poured water over his head or like something was bleeding on his forehead. It was dripping off of him. The stress of the Garden. But do you know before he went out to the Garden that very walk across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible said he sang a hymn. "Let him who is cheerful, let him sing, James 5 says. He was able to sing a joyful song, a hymn, as he went off to some of the most difficult times and he's experiencing the weight of our sin on the cross. I understand there was sorrow in the life of Christ.

But his followers said, listen, we've got to follow this example. Not only does the Spirit want this, but Christ has modeled this us that he is a God of joy. He is the incarnate human expression of joy in the sense that he wants good, he experiences that good and he sees from our perspective what it is to express the good the God has in all of eternity before sin existed and will express it after sin is beyond us and behind us. Paul and Silas could in Philippi have the same experience of a grievous, terrible, painful night, and yet at midnight in stocks with open wounds on their back be able to sing hymns in a Philippian jail. The experience of circumstance obviously is not what we're dealing with. The happiness that God calls us to, and I can use that word interchangeably, though it's not very popular to do so. There's a happiness that can be experienced even in the midst of pain.

There are children who have been promised to go to an amusement park, let's say, not that any of them are open right now. The night before, they may have a hard day. They may have done a lot of chores. They may have blisters on their hands from working in the garden. I don't know if kids ever have that experience anymore, but let's just say they've had a rough night, their stomach hurts, they're tired, they're cranky. But in their mind, they know where they're going tomorrow and they go to bed giddy even though they're in pain.

Let's turn to Ecclesiastes, please, Chapter 5. Ecclesiastes Chapter 5. We need to understand what God is trying to impart to us that detaches from simple circumstances and pleasurable experiences. God is not against pleasurable experiences. As a matter of fact, let me quote for you First Timothy Chapter 6 while you're turning to Ecclesiastes 5. The Bible says that if you have stuff in this world, it speaks of people who have a lot of stuff, "The rich in this present world,

don't be haughty." Right? "Put your hope in God who richly supplies us with everything for our enjoyment." More on that in a minute.

So God is not against us having good experiences that produce a kind of joy that's godly and good, but a kind of joy that is empowered not by how much we have, but the goodness we experienced by knowing who the giver of these gifts are and therefore making the gift, whatever that gift is, a source and a catalyst for joy, happiness, gladness. Matter of fact, in the Bible and we're about to start quoting here in verse 10. It says in Exodus Chapter 20 that you should not covet. That's the tenth command. Coveting is me imagining the pleasures of things I don't have, longingly imagining the pleasures of things I don't have. Stop longingly imagining the things you don't have, the Bible says. That's coveting. Instead of coveting, you need to have contentment, which is not saying I don't have any joy from what I have. It's just that I don't need more to enjoy what I have.

That's what this whole passage is about. It starts with people who are never satisfied with what they have. Look at verse 10, Ecclesiastes Chapter 5. It says in verse 10, "He who loves money will never be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this is all so vanity. It's a guy that he's got stuff, but he doesn't enjoy that stuff. He just wants more stuff. He says, "if I just had something else, if I just had a healthier body, if I just had better friends, if I just had a better spouse. If I just had a better house, if I just had more money in the bank, if I had more toys I could play with. Well then I would be happy." This is vanity. Matter of fact, when they find out that they get more of what they want, they realize "When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes." And that's a, I think, a rough translation of a phrase that has to do with fixing our eyes on them. I think the fixing our eyes on them has to do with the kind of protection that we want to give the things that we have.

The nicer your car, the more you're concerned about where you park it and how close you park it to other cars. The bigger your house, the more concerned you are with a good security system. The more you have, the more those things start to own you. He says, here are people that just want more, more, more, more, more. They don't enjoy what they have and because of that, they try to get more, they get more and they find out those things don't bring the happiness that they wanted. What advantage do they have? They're always trying to keep what they have with a shotgun across their lap.

Yet look at someone like a minimum wage worker, verse 12. "Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats little or much." He didn't have caviar. He bought a fifty-nine-cent taco, but he seems to be OK. "But the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep." Sometimes all this stuff doesn't come with the advantages that we think. "There is a grievous evil," verse 13, "that I've seen under the sun: riches that were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture," because that can turn on a dime. The uncertainty of riches is, First Timothy 6 says. "He's the father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand." He can't give it away. He was trying to be rich, but he has nothing to hand down. "As he came from his mother's womb." Well, here's the thing about riches, all kinds of riches. Right? You come into the world with nothing. You leave with nothing. "Naked he came and he shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry





away with his hand." You can stuff things in a coffin. You can put things in the great pyramids. You can put wealth and riches next to a corpse. It doesn't benefit.

"This is a grievous evil," verse 16, "just as he came so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness with much vexation and sickness and anger." The addiction of wanting to have more. That's not the point. Here's the point. Verse 18, "Behold, what I've seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment," whether it's caviar or a fifty-nine-cent taco, which I think are more now. How much are they? "In all the toil with which one toils under the sun, the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot."

As a matter of fact, if you want to build some sub-points under this "must be joyful," let's put it this way. You can be joyful, you must be joyful because you have a Father who is sovereign. Can I make that statement here this morning? God is sovereign. That means his management of things in your life is not outside of his control. As Sproul liked to say, there's not a molecule of the universe that's maverick. God is the one controlling everything. In that sense he's working everything after the counsel of his own will, including the things that you have, the spouse that you have, the house you live in, the one you rent, the car you drive. All of those things, including the health or the lack thereof in your body is under the purview and management of God. He's a sovereign God. "This is your lot." God has given it to you.

It says it would be good for you to take your lot and whatever it is you have to eat and whatever it is to have to drink and to find enjoyment. As a matter of fact, that's a purposeful statement. If you have an English Standard Version, what does the footnote say there? It says "and see good." In other words, you have these things and you see the good in them. You purpose to see the good in them. Which, by the way, is the commitment throughout the Scripture. You are supposed to see the good in your wife, it says in Ecclesiastes 9 and Proverbs Chapter 5. And if you don't have one, First Corinthians 7 says you ought to see the good in singleness and celebrate that, if that's the stage of life that you're in. You should see the good in your wealth. I've already quoted First Timothy Chapter 6. I see that all of these things are given by God for my enjoyment. So what I have, "I will seek to find the enjoyment that God has purposed in those things." That's the purpose statement of the passage. He's given you all these things for your enjoyment.

Also, your work to "find enjoyment in your toil." That's the passage here, is it not, the toil that you have. That's your lot, your job. Find the joy in that, whatever joy you can find in it, find it. Look at verse 19. It gets so good here. "Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions," whatever the extent of that, "and," here's the fruit of the Spirit, "the power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil -- this is," the fruit of the Spirit, "the gift of God. He will not much remember the days of his life." He's not sitting here pondering and spinning into self-analytical depression. "Because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart."

Chapter 6 verse 1, "There's an evil I've seen under the sun and it lies heavy on mankind: a man to whom God gives wealth and possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them." Lend out your car.



They enjoy it more than you do. Lend out your pool. They enjoy it more than you do. Lend out your stuff. They enjoy it more than you do. "What a vanity that is; it's a grievous evil." God expects you to enjoy what you have.

You say, "Well, that didn't sound very godly." Here are some godly things I can put together for you. Isaiah Chapter 6, the Seraphim are flying around and saying this. Right? Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. And the whole heaven is full of his glory. Is that what it says? Correct me if I quote that wrong. The whole heaven is full of his glory. Wink, wink. "The whole..." What? "Earth is full of his glory." Oh, wait a minute. I've been down here for a while now. It doesn't look like it's full of his glory. No, it is full of his glory. Does that mean that every last thing in this world reflects the glory of God? No. Sin, crime, injustice. That doesn't reflect. But you know what? Keep looking. You'll see it. The glory of God. It's here. It's here. It's here. It's like the night sky. To get a good look at it without all the distraction of the other lights of the city, you can start to see, oh, it's a lot of black, but there are a lot of shining stars. There are a lot of planets that float by that are even brighter than those stars. There's a moon out there that is the brightest of all. And all it does is reflect the glory of the sun. Yeah, you have to look for those things in between the darkness. But you see that his glory is all over the planet. What is his glory? His greatness, his good.

Now, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to see it in everything you do, the toil that you toil in and even the meals that you have. First Corinthians 10:31. Whatever you do, "Whether you eat or drink, do it all for the glory of God." So you're making the connection. If I have a good lunch today, I'm supposed to make the connection between this is part of the reflection of the glory of God. The greatness isn't in the stake. The greatness isn't in the burrito. The greatness isn't in whatever we're eating today. It's really that it reflects the greatness of God, and therefore, it's a gift that is to be catalytic in making me joyful. He's given them to us for our enjoyment. That means we smile because of it. Those are the reflections of God's grace. A walk on the beach, a Sunday afternoon nap, connections of relationships, playing a game, laughter, joking.

The default position of God is joy. Are there things that bring him sadness? Yes. Was Jesus cracking jokes at Lazarus' funeral? The answer is no. He wept. That doesn't mean the default disposition of Christ wasn't joy. Matter of fact, he says this: "My joy, I'm going to give to you. You've asked for nothing in my name." I'm going to leave. Here's the thing. "It's like a woman," he quotes this, he says, "who's having a baby. All that sorrow is over when the baby comes." Basically he's saying this whole thing of earthly ministry that culminates in the cross is the travail of childbirth, but the resurrection. I'm going to go away. You're going to be sorrowful, but you're going to see me again and you're going to have joy and no one will take that joy away. That means it's not in an episodic period of our life, that's in the history of redemption. In other words, the sorrow was when darkness fell over the face of the earth. That was the apex of sorrow. Then we had a resurrected Christ. When he sees him again, the Bible says, what? Joy. People of God will be characterized by joy. Why? Because Christ is risen. Because we have Christ. He says, "Ask anything in my name that your joy may be full."

Now, if you say, "Well, then I just want to chase the yachts in the harbor and I want a bigger house. And why can't I drive a Maserati or a Ferrari? That would be great." The point is this, as it



says in Ecclesiastes 2, before we even get to Ecclesiastes 5, if you chase those things and you think that in them there is the joy, you've missed the point. The moon does not radiate light. It reflects light. The car that you drive is not the source of joy. Here's Jeremiah 2, people have dug for themselves cisterns, wells, and they don't hold any water. The travesty, the reason that heaven is appalled and the earth should be shuddering at this is because they have the spring of living water. And instead of going to that spring of living water and seeing the things that flow from that, they're digging into these holes.

It's like a child who gets things from his mother and his father, a little tiny toddler, and decides just to leave and walk out the door. And again, I'm not trying to fall back into the old Sunday school definition of joy, that it's about the giver and not the gifts. It is about the giver. But it's also about the gifts, no matter how small they are. That's the redemptive way that we approach life as Christians, because we can see the glory of God, even in the small things. Just like God sees the glory even when I give a cup of cold water to someone in his name, there is the glory of God that is present and the thanksgiving and the sanctification of that making it holy, the separating of that from common and mundane. It is a reflection of the goodness of God. Even a meal can be that. God is sovereign over your circumstances, and we can find joy even in the things that he gives us. Christ modeled it for us. I was quoting John 16, by the way there. That whole section about travail in childbirth, the joy that God says he will grant us. He doesn't give something he doesn't have by the way.

I should make it very clear that you're never going to have this perspective if you feel entitled. You will never be a joyful person if you feel like everything in life should be yours and you deserve it. I hear people say this all the time. I deserve it. I deserve it. I deserve it. What does the Bible say about what we deserve? The Bible is very clear about that. Romans 3:23. Romans 6:23. The idea of us falling short of the glory of God leaves us in a position of saying that the wages of my sin is death.

The illustration that Jesus gave in Luke 15 is this: that the squandering of the wealth of the father in the prodigal son story. He's there having taken everything that the Lord in this scenario had given him, and he squandered it. He was not willing to see God for God in this case, his father in the illustration, and so he's out there without the source of joy, without the source of provision, without the security of his father. And he's longing as he's feeding the pigs as a bad Jewish boy in an unclean pen of pigs. He wants to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating. We all say and so did everyone who heard the illustration the first time, "gross." But in that passage and it's a pivotal passage, it says "he came to himself." And here's the keyword. He said, I know what I'm going to say to my father. "I am unworthy to be called your son."

That's called repentance. If your perspective is biblical, your perspective is this. I am not good before a holy God. I am unworthy to receive anything good from him. You're not entitled. That's the lie of the enemy. You don't deserve anything good, the Bible says. But the Bible says in your unworthy state, to recognize it, that's called confession, is then to reach out to the father, as that son did in the story, and then to watch the father do what? As he stands there by his doorway, seeing his son on the horizon in a very undignified thing for a first-century Middle Eastern man to



do, he ran to greet his son and he embraced him and he kissed him and he said, "No more pig pods for you. Kill the fatten calf. Put a robe on him. Put shoes on his feet. Celebrate the one who was dead is now alive."

That picture of reconciliation is recognizing the unworthiness of what we deserve from our Father and then having... How did that feast go? It's a humbling experience to be treated like royalty when you should not be even a hired hand in his house. And yet he's treated like a king, like a prince.

If you know that you're unworthy, you're not going to be an entitled brat. You'll never have joy if you're an entitled brat. Are you an entitled brat? Do you think that all the good things in life that you don't have, that you fall into the sin of imagining the pleasure of something as you long for something you don't have? If you say, "Well, wait. Even what I do have, I don't deserve." And therefore I can celebrate the goodness of God in the gifts that he gives. Every good and perfect gift comes from God, whether you have a dozen of them or 12 dozen of them. We recognize those things with goodness and God then empowers us to enjoy what he gives. Such a good thing.

Oh, and by the way, if in your heart you continued to object, saying that I have a predisposition to being down and depressed and despairing. I'm not denying that, we are enmeshed souls. Your soul that it's to be joyful is enmeshed in a body. All I have to do is keep you awake for the next two days and the joy in your body will certainly drain out and your joy in your spirit will be greatly impacted. When Elijah was down and despondent and depressed, what did the angel do back in the Old Testament? Fed him. Gave him rest. Put him under a tree. He needed the chemistry of his body to be rectified. I say that advisedly and cautiously, because a lot of people are toying with their body chemistry to try and feel differently when they're not dealing with the real issues of their life.

Like what? Well, like the Psalms say, "Why are you," here's what the psalmist says speaking to his soul. "Why are you, O my soul, all so downcast within me?" This is a great text. Psalm 42:5. There's the reference. "Why are you downcast, O my soul. Why are you in turmoil with me? Hope in God," he's talking to himself, "for I shall praise him. He is my salvation." This kind of returning to truth. You've got to work in your spirit to say, OK, I do have a disposition. I'm a highly analytical person. I tend to see the glass as half empty. But I am going to, number one, recognize that I need to be in my psychosomatic hole as a human being, I need to be careful about the fact that I'm not neglecting my body because my body has an effect on my spirit. I know that a lot of that can't be changed.

Which, by the way, like a kid who is getting cranky near the end, you may be old saying, well, I have a lot of pain. I know a little bit about that. I got systemic arthritis and bursitis and tendinitis and every itis that's have been created apparently with increasing pain in my life every single quarter, it gets worse and worse. I know pain, maybe not as bad as yours, but I understand discomfort and pain. Not to mention a lot of the pain that goes with leading a church in these times in Orange County. I understand pain. But I am saying that in all of that, God says, do the best you can with this body that you're in and then recognize that you have to tell yourself the



truth. The truth has to do with the fact that we're headed to a place that is really, really good. When he says to us, "Enter into your joy." There's the consummation of joy. And I have to think about that. And I have to pray to this God.

It says in Psalm 62, I have to pour out my heart to this God because he is "my rock and my refuge." So I'm going to pray and I'm not going to pray by myself alone. I'm going to get other people, Second Corinthians Chapter 1, when Paul was despondent and despairing even of life, he said, I reached out to you so that you can know it, so that you could pray with me and I'd been helped by your prayers.

I love it later in the book. Do you know the sequential nature of God comforting the depressed or the despondent? That's really the word, "God who comforts the downcast," Second Corinthians 7:6. He comforted us "by the coming of Titus." I often just quote verse 6, but let me quote verse 13 later. He elaborates on it. "We were comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoice still more with the joy of Titus because his spirit had been refreshed by you all." You encouraged Titus. Titus encouraged me. We need to get together as Christians. That's why some of this shut down is so satanic, and I don't say that to simplistically talk about civil disobedience. I'm just saying this: keeping Christians apart is a bad thing overall. We need each other. Figure out a way to do it. Buy a spacesuit or something. Deal with your body. Remind yourself of the truth, draw near to God in prayer, not away. Call others to be in with you in your life. They are the source of encouragement. Don't isolate yourself.

Let me read for you a passage as I wrap this up. Isaiah 65. There should be a future reality that should bring into our lives real happiness now. God says this about the future, "Behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." God's default is joy and gladness and happiness. All the theologians from all of church history have noted that in the Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. Is he angry at sin? Yes. Is he a God of judgment? Yes. His default, though, is joy.

The book ends of Genesis 3 to [00:47:54] Revelation [0.0s] 20, that is the sinful reality. It's a blip on the radar. And all of that, it says the former thing is not going to be remembered. Barely a distant, foggy memory. Instead, right now, in the midst of all of this parenthetical time between Genesis 3 and Revelation 20, "Be glad and rejoice and do that forever," do it always, "in what I'm going to create," when all this is behind us, "for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem. I will be glad in my people. And no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping or the cry of distress."

If you knew that today was going to be bad but tomorrow was going to be great. Matter of fact, the Bible speaks of that. Right? "Sorrow may last for the evening but joy comes in the morning." There is a hopeful future that is characterized by a God who unleashes his joy on a people who should be waiting for him with joy.

I love J.C. Ryle. I remember a read a book on holiness. You're going to go, "Well, that's a severe and stern book." If you've read it, it's really not. But of course, God has called us to holiness. J.C.





Ryle wrote this about joy. He said, "It is a positive misfortune to Christianity when a Christian cannot smile. A merry heart and the readiness to take part in innocent mirth," things that make us happy that are biblical, that aren't sinful, "are gifts of inestimable value." You can't even estimate the value of that kind of positive, merry, joyful, smiling Christians. We often take the analogy of Christ being the groom and we are his fiancée, the bride of Christ. How sad to be a groom who has a fiancée who never smiles. Would that be bad?

So let us do our best to be joyful Christians taking as a cue the good things that God has provided. Not only is it good for Christ and brings pleasure to him, it is a good thing for us. May God produce fruit in your life. The fruit not only of love, but of joy.

Let's pray. God, we don't want to be a fiancée who never smiles. We'd like a merry heart, as J.C. Ryle says, a joy that cannot be taken away, as Jesus said. As Proverbs 15 says, what a good thing it is, a "cheerful heart has a continual feast." Let that be the reality for us, even today. If the feast is in paltry food or in an elaborate banquet, give us joy in this life as we connect the gifts to the giver in our own minds, see the reflection of God's glory in this earth, whether today, it's a great lunch, a good brunch, a restful nap, a walk through the park or on the beach. Let us see your glory in this world and find joy in it all. Let us know that even the bad and the difficult and the terror in this world really is something that's going to be gone. "The former thing shall not be remembered, nor shall they come to mind. But let us be glad and rejoice now and forever in what you will do, what you will create as you rejoice in your people and are glad in your people." And let that begin now in our lives.

In Jesus name. Amen.