

this fruit of true Christian joy.

From Psalm 51 in the words of David, we may know his prayer, "Make me to hear joy and gladness....Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities....Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit" was heard by God in mercy. And surely the Lord will hear such prayer today from you and me. Jesus says in John 16:24, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." There is remedy with Jesus from all sin and evil not once only but time and again, as often as you and I come to Him. Indeed, and again this is the work of the Holy Spirit which He is ever diligent about and joyfully involved in, namely, through the Word especially, showing us Christ in all His glory and riches exactly as suited for us as lost sinners by nature. I can't help but think here of the words of the song based on Psalm 89,

"How blessed Lord, are they who know the joyful sound.
Who, when they hear Thy voice, in happiness abound!
With steadfast step they walk, their countenances beaming
With brightness of the light that from Thy face is streaming;
Exalted by Thy might from depths of desolation,
They praise fore'er Thy Name, Thy justice and salvation."

Will you live without the fruit of the Spirit, also this fruit of joy? Outside of union with Christ and following after Him you cannot find nor have true joy here and you will be without joy forevermore. Will you perish in sin or come to Jesus and live under His blessing and being a blessing too, by His grace, living in the joy of the Lord? In promotion of the latter think yet of the eternal future of joy for God's people in heaven. We read in Psalm 16:11, "Thou [O LORD] wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Can you imagine that? This is the prospect for God's people. Fullness of joy eternally enjoyed in all fullness all the time without anything ever to diminish our joy and with so much more always to increase it world without end.

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Inasmuch as I am sure none of you would want to eat rotten fruit, don't settle for anything less than the fruit of the Spirit, joy, or you will never know true joy. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Will that fruit, by God's grace be something present and growing in your and my life this summer season? Amen.

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August 6, 2006

Publication No.270

BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy. This is the second of the nine fruits of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22&23. I am praying as I preach about this particular fruit, joy, that you will be so attracted to it that you will reach out to have this fruit, and to have it more and more. Let me first describe this fruit, and then tell something of its details, and end with just mentioning something of its delightfulness or deliciousness.

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. What is this fruit? Joy, let us notice for one thing, is something different than fun and laughter, and it is different from happiness and pleasure, for all these things are dependent on favourable circumstances of one kind or another. People are happy when things are going well, but their happiness is flawed in that it is dependent on good circumstances. If things happen against us, and not in our favour, then happiness disappears too, and then people will not be glad. Having joy, the joy of the Spirit and being joyful in God's way, however, is something quite different from and more than all the happiness and gladness, or merriment or joy even, that this world can offer anyone.

Maybe I can put it this way. The world at best can offer merriment which in all cases is so short-lived, and superficial, and often also senseless. But the joy of the Holy Spirit is something deep and lasting, rational and invigorating, and refreshing, and this fruit of joy is not dependent on pleasing circumstances in our lives, but can even be very much realized and enjoyed in most difficult times. Indeed, the highest joy of Christians has often been experienced in their times of greatest distress. It is the unique privilege of God's people, trusting in Jesus and led by the Holy Spirit while in distress and trouble still, to have fullness of joy! Paul says in II Corinthians 6:10 that while being sorrowful because of all kinds of sad situations and trials, yet he was always rejoicing too. In II Corinthians 7:4 he states even, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." Peter likewise speaks of Christians in I Peter 1:8 who were going through great trials and yet, he says, having reason to "rejoice with joy unspeakable." Think here, too, of Paul and Silas, falsely charged and badly beaten and placed in prison in a most uncomfortable position with their feet locked between wooden blocks. But what were they doing at midnight? They were praying and singing in praise to God, filled with joy even while suffering so.

Do you see how special this fruit of the Spirit, joy, is? It doesn't come from what people have, but from what they are; not from where they are, but whose they are; not from what they enjoy, but from that which was suffered and accomplished for them by their Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. The fruit of the Spirit, joy, is a beautiful, bountiful fruit that gives hope and contentment and a peace that passes understanding even under the most trying of times. Truly the Bible tells of having a deep and all encompassing joy that holds for all times, and that is not artificial but real and doesn't diminish over time but increases even as the years go by. In summary, as the late Philip Keller put it, "The concept of [the fruit of the Spirit] 'joy,' throbs throughout the Scriptures as a profound, compelling quality of life that surmounts and transcends the events and disasters which may dog God's people. Joy is a divine dimension of living not shackled by circumstances. This joy springs from the presence of God in a person's life...It is in no way dependent either upon people around me, the course of events in my experience, or the circumstances in which I find myself, be they ever so tragic or happy."

Are you interested in this fruit of the Spirit, joy? Do you know of an aching void in your life which all the happiness and fun of this world cannot remove? Do you know and feel, more and more even as the years go by, that by nature man cannot find nor have true joy for this is a fruit from God above? Do you agree this joy is something most special indeed and how wonderful to know and show this fruit also in our lives? Having drawn something of its picture to you, let me now give some more details about this fruit of the Spirit, joy, also for your further encouragement.

For one, notice with me, that this fruit, joy, is knowing and trusting Jesus, having Him in your heart and life as Saviour and Lord. This is the Holy Spirit's work, time and again, to convince and convict of sin and to draw us to Jesus, the only Saviour from sin. The Bible teaches us with God Triune is infinite joy, within Himself and from Himself, and it is in and through Jesus Christ, belonging to Him by grace through faith, that we come into a close and salvation relationship with God, and we may become partakers of His joy. Of ourselves by nature we are living in alienation and at enmity with God on account of our sins and sinfulness. But Jesus came to be the Saviour of sinners, the complete Saviour for helpless, hopeless, guilty, undeserving sinners and there is full salvation from sin found in and with Him and His finished work on behalf of sinners as crucified and risen Saviour. Think here just of how the gospel message of Jesus' coming and His salvation work is described. In Luke 2:10, the angel announced to the shepherds concerning the birth of Jesus, who came to be the Saviour of sinners, "*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*" In Romans 10:15 also, where Paul speaks of preaching the gospel, he describes it as bringing "*glad tidings of good things!*"

It should be clear too the fruit of joy the Holy Spirit works and produces is a Christ-focused joy, a joy in the crucified and risen Jesus as Saviour and Lord. In Romans 5:10&11, Paul says, "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy [rejoice] in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement.*" There is reason for so much rejoicing in view of Jesus Christ as Saviour for us, even for as many as repent and believe. Notice what Paul says in Romans 15:13. "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*" Joy and peace come in believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, how He came to save sinners and how through His person and work there is complete salvation for as many as come to Him. Thus Jesus says in John 15:11 to His disciples, "*These things have I spoken unto you, [that is about the whole way of salvation in and through Me and following My Word] that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

What the Holy Spirit makes clear in and through His Word especially is that there is no sin problem, or sin need, or sin consequence, or sin punishment that He can't and won't give help and remedy for. Where sin abounds with us, yet in and through Christ Jesus grace does much more abound. And this is God's Word in Luke 15:11, the heavens rejoice over one, and any, sinner that repents. This is God's invitation that we can read also in Isaiah 12, that with joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation opened for us in and through Jesus' shed blood on sinners' behalf. This fruit of the Spirit, "joy", is a joy in and with Christ, an unspeakable joy, for in and through Him we find forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, adoption in God's family, and we become heirs of eternal life. In and through Christ, God the Father guides all things for our good in life, and He withholds no good thing from us, and He makes all things, including our afflictions, work together for good for us. Belonging to Christ we have comfort in every detail and season and experience of life, and we have comfort in death and comfort for eternity.

The Holy Spirit brings deep joy in showing us Christ and having us realize the riches of God's blessings for us in life and death, for body and soul, for now and forever, having Christ as our Saviour and Lord. This Christian joy in and through Christ is a delicate fruit which cannot be enjoyed if you will live in any sin and conscious disobedience before the Lord. Which Christian hasn't also painfully experienced this, and maybe even now is experiencing it? Will you allow this to happen in your life? Can a confessing Christian be content with only going through the motions without a heart on fire for God and good? To be a joyless Christian is living the biggest contradiction that can be. Don't let it be so. May God use this message even to lead you to pray God, the Holy Spirit, in true repentance and faith also for