

Fruits of The Spirit Part 3
Plugging The Leak In Your Joy
Galatians 5:22-23

In 1937 architect Frank Lloyd Wright built a house for industrialist Hibbard Johnson. One rainy evening Johnson was entertaining distinguished guests for dinner when the roof began to leak. The water seeped through directly above Johnson himself, dripping steadily onto his bald head.irate, he called Wright in Phoenix, Arizona. "Frank" he said, "you built this beautiful house for me and we enjoy it very much. But, the roof leaks, I am with some friends and distinguished guests and right now it is leaking on my head." There was a pause on the line, and Mr. Wright said, "Well, Hib, why don't you move your chair."

This morning we are going to be talking about "JOY." I had not realized until I started studying for this sermon how central JOY Rejoicing is to the people of God. It appears to me the Word of God seems to focus heavily on JOY.

Both the Old and New Testament stress the value of JOY. Psalms 16:11 says, "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with JOY in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." 1 Thessalonians 5:16 commands us to "be joyful always." Romans 12:12 says, "be joyful in hope." And Phil. 4 states "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice."

Now I know there are many Christians who struggle with the idea of having "JOY" in their lives. The Evangelist Billy Sunday once said, "If there is no JOY in your religion, you've got a leak in your faith." In other words, you have a problem.

Some will point to specific reasons they have no JOY, for example: They aren't satisfied with their job, or family problems are to blame, health isn't good. They just can't see a reason to be joyful.

I can't blame people for feeling that way. I've felt that way and so have you at some point or another in your life. It's hard to be joyful when life is going against you. It's hard to be joyful when you're struggling with depression or overwhelmed by pain or unsure of your future.

But there's a problem with that approach to life. If we wait till everything turns out the way we want them to in our lives, if we're not going to be joyful until all the leaks are patched in our lives, then we are never going to experience JOY. Or, if we do have JOY, it will be a rare occurrence.

Didn't Jesus himself warn us that "In this life you will have trouble." John 16:33. The good news is this. You don't have to wait until you're happy with your life to have JOY in your life. The kind of JOY God wants you to have in your life will bring you happiness. But the pursuit of happiness will not always bring you JOY.

And do you know why??

Stay with me. The word "Happiness" actually derives from the English word "Happenstance" which means "something that happens because of a circumstance."

See, worldly happiness is almost always reliant on some situation or event to make us feel good. But God's kind of JOY does not depend upon present situations. In fact, God's JOY often exists despite our circumstances.

See, God doesn't want us to be controlled by being under our circumstances, God wants us to be overcomers!!! He wants us to be set free from the chains and shackles that life can impose on us. Jesus said, "If the Son has set you free then you are free indeed."

Scripture often tells us to rejoice even when it doesn't seem to make sense. Peter tells some Christians of his day, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

In other words Peter is saying, "If the roof is leaking and you can't seem to get anyone to fix it right away then move your chair!!! Change your perspective. Take some control over your life by rejoicing.

It's not so crazy is it?

I read about an elderly lady in the nursing home who had a bad stroke. It left part of her face paralyzed and caused her to cry no matter the news. She couldn't help it. But one day as the pastor came to visit her, he found her sitting at the table in her room writing letters with her good hand. She was writing encouraging letters to the people back in her home church that were struggling. A woman who's only form of verbal communication is crying refused to let that rob her of the JOY of Christ. She took control of her situation by doing the only thing that her body would allow her to do.

That reminds me of Paul and Silas's story. Acts 16 tells us that the magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped and beaten publicly. They were then thrown into jail and locked in stocks. They hadn't done anything wrong. All they had done was preach the love of Jesus to a demon possessed girl. How would you have responded to that?

Maybe with, "That's not right, or that's not fair." But that wasn't the response of Paul and Silas. Acts 16:25 tells us "about midnight They were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."

They could have allowed their situation to control them. But instead, they took control of their situation by rejoicing!

So how do you apply all of this? Let me wrap it up for you.

1. Ephesians 5:18,19 Speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord." What does this mean? It means surround yourself with music that glorifies God and He will give you His JOY!! That's what Paul and Silas did.
2. Ephesians 5:20 "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." In other words spend your time in prayer thanking God for all He has done. We have a very bad habit of forgetting all that He has done when we are in the thick of it.

3. Ephesians 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ." Find ways to serve each other.

For Christians, JOY is more than an emotion. JOY is a tool that God gives us to overcome our circumstances, to empower us to rise above the sorrow and pain in this life.

Hebrews 12 tells us to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

Fanny Crosby wrote over 8000 hymns in her life time. Songs like "Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word," Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, and "To God be the glory, great things He has done."

But Fanny Crosby had been blind since she was a baby. When she was eight years old she wrote this poem.

"O what a happy soul am I! Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world content I will be; How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't! To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot and I won't."