

The Joy of Christmas—and Beyond

Joy is defined in different ways; but as a fruit of the Spirit, is not an emotion or feeling that comes and goes depending on circumstances. It is a product of Christ's Spirit within us. As such, it has the same permanence as the rest of the fruit. Unlike the manifestation of the Spirit, fruit is not parceled out where one person may have a specific fruit, and another person a different one. I believe that they are all different facets of the Spirit of Christ. As such, they are not easily distinguishable as separate things. Joy is an aspect of the mind of Christ that comes to us from the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit enables us to know those things that are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. 2:12). The natural man cannot experience this type of joy.

Jesus spoke of this joy before His death and resurrection; but it was not available before Pentecost (John 16:22; 17:13). The Pentecost Holy Spirit is what enables us to fully receive the things of God. When Christ is in us, we don't receive of Him from a distance. He is within us to empower us and give us His own joy and peace that He has from His humility toward the Father (Matt. 11:29). This humility is a function of Jesus' humanity. His humanity requires Him to be humble toward the Father and pray even though in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This is how the Father worked through His Son's humanity to accomplish redemption.

The availability of Christ's Spirit is a great advantage that we now have even over those who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. They were not able to have His Spirit's presence within them during that time. Jesus had to ascend into heaven and be seated at the right hand of the Father before His Spirit was poured out.

The Godhead now has the human component of Jesus Christ that it did not have before His birth. His Spirit presence, available at Pentecost, brings us the benefits of the redemption through His faith in the Father that resides within us through His Spirit. This is how we have righteousness by faith. We do not get it from the Father directly. It is a product of Christ's faith in the Father within us. It is what brings us the joy that can remain in us, along with everything else. Christ's deep-seated benefits from His presence within us are not subject to the circumstances of life. Our emotions can be temporarily disrupted by circumstances, but the effects of the Spirit are not. They are there to moderate us (Philippians 4:5). The Holy Spirit is the comforter (Gr. *paraklētos*), who is there to accompany us. He also moderates our human joy and sadness.

This joy was spoken of in the Old Testament; Peter refers to it in Acts 2:28. Paul, in Romans 14:17 says: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." In Romans 15:13, he says: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [faith], that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." In 2 Corinthians 1:24, Paul says: "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." In Philippians 1:25, he says: "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." In Philippians 4:4-8, He relates joy to unconditional trust and peace. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul speaks of joy in the Holy Ghost. Paul connects joy with faith and the Holy Spirit. In 1 Peter 1:8, Peter speaks of joy resulting from faith. There are ample texts that speak to the importance of joy and its source.

Joy comes when we trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and not lean on our own understanding. When we cast all of our care, we present God with a void to be filled by the Holy Spirit. It is not a product of our rationalizations. It is a

surrender of our rationalizations that makes room for the Spirit, who enables Christ's joy to remain in us.

You can download Peter Aiello's book, Hidden Treasure by visiting his web site: .

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