

The Fruit of Joy

DAVE BAST

The great Christian writer, C. S. Lewis, who, by the way, is a favorite source of quotes for us here on *Groundwork*, titled his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. He was referring to the fact that as a young man, he had sought joy through his love of literature, but he actually only found it when he became a Christian. Lewis had grown up thinking that the Christian religion was dull, outmoded, irrelevant; but he discovered to his surprise that his deepest longings were fulfilled in the Gospel. He experienced true joy when he came to know Jesus Christ. We want to explore just how that works today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, today we come to the second in a rather lengthy series—in fact, nine programs long—on the fruit of the Spirit, because there are exactly nine fruit, or nine virtues or characteristics that Paul, in a passage in Galatians Chapter 5, describes as the fruit of the Spirit within us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And just as a reminder, those fruit he says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; and we should say that Galatians 5, of course, is sort of the classic location where they are called the fruit of the Spirit, but as we will see all throughout this series, these pop up as key Christian characteristics all through Paul and Peter's and all of the letters of the New Testament. So, they are kind of concentrated and called fruit only in Galatians 5, but they come up all over the place.

DAVE BAST

Right, absolutely; and we saw that supremely with the quality of love, the very first one, the head of the list because it is the most important; and that is *agape*. It is not just ordinary romantic love...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

It is not really even just friendship, but it is the love of God, that self-giving love, irrespective of its object's deserts or attractiveness, that simply gives and treats another in a loving way; and that is the first of the fruits in us, too. If we are children of God, then like our heavenly Father, we are going to want to love like that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And if we do that, we are also going to discover deep joy as a result of our faith; and so, we just mentioned, Dave, that these fruit of the Spirit are located in Galatians 5, and called as such, but they come up all over; and today, in fact, to get at the idea of joy, we are going to begin with Peter, from I Peter Chapter 1.

DAVE BAST

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁶In this, you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸though you have not seen Jesus, you love him; though you do not now see Jesus, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

DAVE BAST

Well, that is a pretty great passage; just listening to it again as we read it together, Scott, it sort of makes my heart beat faster; and so, Peter here is writing a general letter, really, to all Christians, although he addresses it in the very opening verses of I Peter 1, to the Christians who are scattered throughout what today is northern Turkey; and in writing to these little groups of Christians—little house fellowships—and they are way outnumbered by their pagan neighbors, even by the Jewish communities in many of their cities, nevertheless, Peter says, you can rejoice—you can have joy—because of some very basic truths that come to us through the Gospel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; we have, Peter says, been given a new birth, and that is sort of where we get the common term; of course, it came up in John 3, when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus; the idea that you get born again, which we should say, is not a particular kind of conversion experience. It is not just when you respond to the altar call and come forward, and now you are born again. Everybody who is a Christian is born again by the Spirit, and it has given us hope...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A living hope that is kept in heaven for us, and this, then, ultimately leads to a kind of deep-seated joy that the world really cannot take away from us because it is rooted in Jesus, who we do not literally see, Peter says, physically anymore; but by faith we do see him, and when we catch a glimpse of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, our hearts overflow with joy.

DAVE BAST

Yes; that is so beautiful. I love that 8th verse there, where he says: Though you have not seen him, you love him; though you do not now see him, you rejoice. I remember many years ago now, I was asked to preach in a little village in northern India, and it was a big outdoor setting, and there was a...you know, they had put a kind of tent up to block the sun, and I chose this passage to preach on to these very humble village Christians; and the idea that, no, we have not seen him; unlike Peter, Peter did see him. Peter spent years with him as his great disciple. Peter saw him after he rose from the dead; and we do not have that experience, but Peter said: It is okay, because through the Spirit, who has given you this new kind of life, you still love him and you are equally heirs with us of a future—this great inheritance that nothing can tarnish—nothing can take away—it is imperishable.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is really important, because Peter is writing to Christians, we think, who were suffering, a real common theme in both the letters attributed to Peter in the New Testament: I Peter, II Peter. It looks like the

people are suffering. You are suffering various trials, Peter said. Your faith is being refined by fire like we do with gold, even though your faith is more precious than gold. So, these are people who, what they can see with their eyes is a little bit unhappy at times, even grim and difficult; but with the eyes of faith, Peter says, none of that can shake the fact that Jesus rose again and is there in heaven, and has this inheritance for you. It cannot get ruined by what you see with your eyes. It is a deep, deep-seated joy. So, it is finally rooted in our faith.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and hope. There is a strong link between hope and joy—future hope and present joy...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Present joy.

DAVE BAST

Because Peter is encouraging us in the midst of whatever may be going on around us here—whatever sorrow we are experiencing—whatever conflict—whatever hostility even; and certainly, Peter's first readers had plenty of that. Nevertheless, as we look forward, we have this future—this inheritance—which is kind of made out in our name, and Peter says it is unfading and it is imperishable. I mean, just imagine that. No more wrinkles; no more age spots; no more arthritis; no more cancer; no more earthquakes; no more war. That is what he is encouraging us to always have that forward look, and that is going to feel joy in the present.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so, it is not just pie in the sky by and by, it is not just, you know, people who are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good; no, our current life is tethered to Jesus, and so that gives us a joy the world cannot take away; and that is an important point that we want to explore just a little bit more: namely, we often confuse or conflate or treat as the same, the idea of happiness and joy, but they are actually quite distinct, and we are going to explore that in just a minute.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and this is the second program in a nine-part series here on *Groundwork*, today thinking about the fruit of joy; and we were just saying, Dave, that the people to whom Peter was writing in the passage we looked at in the first segment, were suffering; they were persecuted; their life on earth was hard, and yet they had joy because they could still see that Jesus is the King; he is the Lord, and he is going to bring his kingdom fully; and so, that joy could not be taken away from them, and that is an important difference between joy and happiness.

DAVE BAST

Yes, exactly; because happiness does come and go. Joy lasts, if we properly understand our Christian faith and our Christian hope in particular, but happiness ebbs and flows; it comes and goes, because happiness depends on the circumstances of our lives. I just happened to re-watch a classic movie; it is a Mel Brooks comedy called *The Producers*, actually originally a film, it became a hit Broadway play, and there is a scene early on in the movie in which this sort of paranoid, neurotic accountant named Leo Bloom is out with his new friend, Max Bialystock, and they are kind of doing the city, and just ordinary fun things. He is skipping work; and at the end of the afternoon, they are sitting in a rowboat in Central Park in the lake, and Leo has his pants rolled up and his feet in the water, and he says to Max: I don't understand it. I feel strange. And Max says: That is because you're happy. And Leo goes: You're right! I'm happy! I'm happy! And it is just this wonderful thing; you know, he has never had fun before; and so, because of this enjoyable day, he is experiencing happiness. That is exactly what happiness is!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; happiness springs up pretty much where you would expect it: birthday parties, anniversary parties, you get a promotion at work, you take the day off and enjoy the sunshine. Happiness springs up where you would expect it; joy springs up where you do not expect it—where you are not happy...

DAVE BAST

That is a good point, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Joy can spring up at the graveside while you are committing a loved one's body to the ground. There can still be joy in the Lord at a moment which is not happy, it is sad; or as a loved one is dying, but is dying full of faith and eager to see Jesus. We are sad; we are not happy, but we have joy.

It reminds me...I remember a line by John Henry Cardinal Newman, who once said that happiness is children at Christmas getting presents, but joy is never a first feeling, it is always a second feeling; it is more refined. Joy is finding Jesus alive after the resurrection, but having been to the cross first, right? You are joyful because you have been through the sorrow; so, happiness springs up just sort of spontaneously; joy is more refined. It is not a first feeling, it is a second feeling...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which comes after sorrow, in the midst of sorrow, but it is a joy the world cannot take away therefore.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, happiness and sadness are mutually incompatible.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

You are either one or the...you cannot be happy if you are sad, and you cannot be sad if you are happy; but joy and sadness can coexist, and in fact, often do. I think of that great old hymn, *It is Well with My Soul*, you know: "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll;" it is still, I can say, "it is well with my soul," even when the world is crashing in on me. That is the idea of real joy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we see this sometimes come up in the New Testament, including in the book of Acts. So often after the disciples have been roughed up or the apostles have been thrown in jail, or in Acts 13 they have been kind of kicked out of the Temple establishment; and yet, in Acts 13:52, we are told that despite these grim circumstances, "and the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit." So, tough times for the disciples often in Acts, persecuted, and yet nobody could touch their joy.

DAVE BAST

Yes, and that is a great verse because it reminds us...it brings us back to the theme of this whole series. We have said that joy comes from knowing and loving Jesus; but it is also a byproduct of the Spirit's presence in our hearts and lives. The Spirit is with us now. It is a fruit of the Spirit. So, there is this wonderful line, as you quoted, Scott, where Paul and his companions are being run out of a town. They are headed for another place, where they are going to be beat up. Paul is actually going to be stoned—almost killed—and yet, they are filled with joy in the Holy Spirit because they have got it, you know? They have got this new life. They have been born again into this living hope.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and that is, I think, what John Cardinal Henry Newman meant about it being more refined. Joy is a little more sophisticated, and it is deeper than mere...you know...just being happy-clappy or something, because it has been through the tough times. I am reminded that at the end of the film series, but also the book series of J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a scene in which the two hobbits, Frodo and Sam, who finally destroyed the great ring of power, but they essentially went to hell to do it. They had been to Mordor, and both of them had almost died; but they get rescued, and eventually they wake up in this wonderful, bright city; and all of the companions come in that they have been separated from, and they start jumping up and down with happiness: Oh, we are all alive! They are reliving the antics, and then Sam comes in and meets Frodo's eye, and they both just sort of lock eyes, and kind of sigh...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then kind of smile. They are not just happy; they have a joy because they have been through the fire. They know the worst of the worst, and yet, there is a joy in them that cannot be taken away.

DAVE BAST

But, sorrow has marked them, too, hasn't it?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And that is something that is really true, too. I mean, people who have gone through...in *real* life...plenty of us have gone through the valley of the shadow of death. We have gone through terrible, deep, dark, painful experiences; and you do not come out of that happy-clappy. It can mark you. Sorrow has marked someone for her own; but yet, there can still be that joy, and that joy is real; but, you know, I think we need to say one more thing here before we close out the program. Joy is really a choice, in a sense, that we are confronted with. We have to choose joy; we have to opt for it; we have to commit ourselves to it. It does not just happen to us, and that is an idea we want to look at in just a moment.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this program on the fruit of the Spirit of joy. Joy is rooted in Christ. It is a fruit of the Spirit. We have it because the Spirit is in us; and yet, there is also a sense in which we have to choose for joy, or willingly tap into that deep-seated joy at times when we are tempted to be so disappointed that we are not happy, that we think joy is not going to be enough; and it kind of reminds you of a passage that comes up often in lots of contexts; I am sure it has come up before on *Groundwork* here: Philippians 4, where Paul urges the Philippians...and this is right after, of course, Paul had told two women in the congregation to stop arguing. There were some tough times in the Philippian congregation, so he had just said, you know, knock it off—get along, and then:

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So, here rejoice is like a command.

DAVE BAST

It is; it is in the imperative, and he flows from that into the idea of peace as a result of sort of casting everything on the Lord and letting our requests be made known; and that is a wonderful lead in to our next program, which will focus on peace; but let's back up and just think about the idea that we are commanded to

rejoice. So now, seriously, if joy is an emotion—if it is a feeling—how could you command anyone to have joy? Our feelings are often out of our control. They do go up and down depending on what is happening to us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As many of us know, it never works. You may...when you are in high school or college, you may want to date somebody really badly, but just to say to them: Love me, love me!

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You cannot command love.

DAVE BAST

Or cheer up! Cheer up! Why are you so sad? Well, it does not work that way. So, obviously joy is operating on a deeper level; and when we are commanded to rejoice, I for my own part, think that is tantamount to Paul saying: Step back and remember—remember the truths of your faith; remember your identity; remember who you are in Christ; remember the Spirit who is with you constantly, and guarding and keeping you; remember your future; remember where you are headed; remember the glory that is at the end. So, to rejoice is to step back and be filled with all this again...all this truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and again, this is not just Paul writing this from some villa, you know, on the Mediterranean coast somewhere comfortable. He is in...

DAVE BAST

He is kicked back with a drink at his elbow and his flip-flops on...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; he is in prison. So, Paul is not being unrealistic or pie in the sky or namby-pamby here; he is in prison; he is in chains; and yet, he is choosing joy; he is choosing to lean into his faith, and that will give him joy; and you know, there are different parts of the Bible that come to mind with that kind of thing when everything thing is lacking, can you still have joy; and it kind of reminds me of Habakkuk, which we have looked at before here on *Groundwork*; one of the twelve minor prophets, Habakkuk starts out as kind of a heavy book. Habakkuk surveys Israel in his day and sees nothing but injustice—nothing but violence; and wonders why God is not doing anything. God says: I will do something. I am still in charge. Do not worry, Habakkuk, I've got this. Don't worry about it. But it is still a tough time in Israel, and so the end of Habakkuk is so very moving and lyric, and ties in with joy.

DAVE BAST

Right; this is the closing verses from Habakkuk Chapter 3. So the prophet writes: ¹⁷Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines; though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food; though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls; (and here it comes) ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.

What a beautiful, beautiful passage; and notice that he sets it up by painting a very graphic picture of hard times—of scarcity—of...there is no food on the cupboard shelves; there is no money left in the checking account; the job is gone; it seems like the basic necessities of life are gone; and yet, I will rejoice.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think probably just about all of us have that experience of the bottom kind of dropping out on life. You work so hard to get a new job and it does not work out and you get fired. You have been trying to have a baby for years, and you have struggled a little bit with that, and you finally are pregnant, and then there is a

miscarriage; or you are just on the cusp right now... There is a man I know, as we are recording this, who is three months away from retirement and he has a fatal brain tumor that will probably take his life; and so, you sort of say: Wow, you know; how can we go on when everything is wrong? And yet, Habakkuk says: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will be joyful in God my Savior. It is not easy; and we are not trying to, you know, put little yellow smiley face stickers over the top of life's hardships, because there is no denying that they are hard. In fact, you know, the only reason to hang onto joy is by admitting how hard life can be.

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; you know, a lot of people in that situation say: Forget it! I don't believe in God, if this is what can happen. I don't believe in, you know...in a future, in heaven, and all that talk. All I am experiencing is this pain; but Habakkuk shows us something about the nature of genuine faith. Genuine faith is not trusting in God because of...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

It is trusting in God in spite of.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And there is something profoundly moving about that; and probably all of us have known people who have modeled that to us. It is not just something from the Prophets or the Apostles or way back when; but we have known and seen, maybe in our own families and in our own circle, people who have been able to model that kind of trust.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and Habakkuk did, and we all, in our minds right now, can list people who have inspired us in the same way; and what is interesting too, just to get back to the context of Habakkuk quickly, God did say: Yeah, I see the violence of Israel; I see the injustice; I am going to deal with it; but he says: I am going to deal with it by having you conquered by the Babylonians! You are going to go into exile for a while, and then I am going to bring you back. Well, that is a pretty bleak thing, too; so, Habakkuk has that in mind; and indeed, we do not always understand how God does what he does or why, right? But we do trust that he's got this thing; that Jesus is Lord, as we said at the beginning of this program...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have that inheritance that cannot be corrupted, and we lean into that.

DAVE BAST

Yes, we keep leaning...

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have to.

DAVE BAST

You know, I just think this forward look—this forward lean—a little verse about Jesus from Hebrews 12: ^{2b} For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross... For the joy that was set before him... You look through and past the struggles and the suffering, and toward the future. Here is a testimony. Maybe we can

wrap it up with this beautiful verse from Psalm 16:

¹¹You make known to me the path of life; in your presence (in God's presence) there is fullness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

That is where we are headed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is our hope and our joy, thanks be to God.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as Shiao Chong joins our conversation to discuss the biblical definition of peace, and explore what it looks like in our lives.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com, and let us know passages of scripture and topics you would like to hear discussed here on *Groundwork*.

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