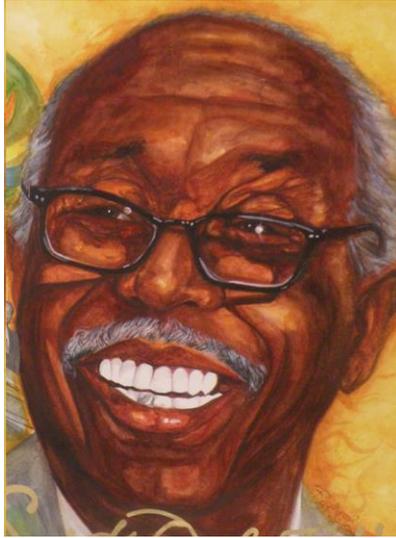


THAT THEY MAY HAVE MY JOY FULFILLED IN THEMSELVES



Read Galatians 5:16-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Second only to love, the most important fruit of the Spirit is Joy.

Joy is deeper and more permanent than happiness.

Happiness depends on things that happen, and like the weather, comes and goes.

Joy is a gift from God which remains even through life's storms.

Joy is the knowledge that I am safe and strong in the will of God, regardless of my circumstances.

I am doing the will of the Father, sustained by his joy.

When I stumble and come back to him, joy returns.

Joy is knowing that God has put me into his family; I am no longer alone.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift which we receive by faith

Joy---God's joy---rises up within us, as we walk in the Spirit, in unity with God and with each other.

Notice that when Jesus started gathering disciples, the thing that marked them as different from the scribes and Pharisees, or even the disciples of John the Baptist, was joy.

In the early church, people were drawn to the joy that visited every time they gathered.

Heaven was among them.

They were celebrating the presence of Jesus in their midst.

To this day, when the Spirit of the Lord is allowed to have his way in a fellowship, there is Joy.



The Body of Christ includes people with problems, people with great needs, people who are suffering. And yet, you cannot miss the joy among them.

When joy is missing, when it's nothing but a dull "church routine," ... when it's merely "bless me" time and joy is lacking----something is wrong.

Because when Jesus is truly recognized and served as Lord, there is joy, even in the midst of sorrow.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

2 Cor 6:10

Holy joy supplanting human joy

Read John 16:16-24

You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy.

For them this joy began at the Resurrection...and was sealed at Pentecost. They experienced persecution, they suffered loss, but they never lost their joy.

They imparted this joy of the Lord to all who received their witness.

For us, this joy begins when Jesus becomes real to us....when we know the risen Lord, not as a "concept" but as our Master and Lord.

This joy is sealed to us as we receive and walk in the Spirit.

The joy of knowing that I am safe and strong in the will of God, regardless of my circumstances.

That I am doing the will of my Father, sustained by his joy.

The joy of repentance.

The joy of being joined to sisters and brothers in the Body.

The joy of asking and receiving

I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy. (NLT)

Asking in Jesus' name is not using his name as a formula---"In Jesus' Name, Amen."

To ask in Jesus' name is to be *in his mind, his nature, his will of mercy.*

When I am one with Jesus, when I'm abiding in him, whether I say the words, "In Jesus' name" or not.

Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

Why is my joy abundant? Because I'm able to get goodies from God through prayer?

I have joy in asking and receiving when my asking brings God's life down into the ones I am praying for.

It's the joy of knowing I am granted the privilege of bringing heaven down into these earthly lives.

Do I see heaven come into these lives? Only by faith.

What about my own needs? Can't I pray for them too? Of course! But increasingly we find ourselves simply trusting the Father to provide and bring healing on his terms.

Joy in the midst of external misery.



Read Psalm 43

In spite of the trouble pouring down on me and the evil being done to me,

There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God!

In the midst of persecution or suffering of any kind, I have an anchor. God is still my exceeding joy. The joy of the Lord is my strength.

I worship and praise him---by faith. And his joy sustains me.

***Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!***

The joy of abiding in him

Read John 15:1-11

The essential lesson of discipleship:

"Abide in me.....Let my words abide in you."

Keep your connection with Jesus fresh, dwelling in his words...walking in his words...bearing fruit through prayer.

Live this way, and your joy will be full.

When you call on his name...when you talk with him...you are talking to God who has come down to your level, who has entered your world.

You listen to his words, you take hold of them, soak your soul in them...walk in them....do them.

Now you are abiding in the Vine.

You are drawing strength from the Risen Lord.

The issue is not: What are you accomplishing for God? That question will side-track you every time.

The issue is: Are you abiding in the Vine?

If you are, you will bear fruit as naturally as grapes form on the branch.

If you abide in the Vine....dwelling in his words...walking in his words....bearing fruit through prayer, the Father's love will burn within you as an eternal flame, and the joy of God will hold you through any storm, empower you for any challenge.

We do not pursue joy.

We pursue God....



.... and as we walk in the Spirit, whom God gives generously, we have union with Jesus.... union with each other....

.... And a holy joy which no one can take from us.

Prayer: Oh Lord, that we may pursue you, pursue you with all that we have. We choose to abide in you, walk with you, talk to you. We choose to lay before you ... our hearts, our struggles, and our concerns for those around us, as well as our weaknesses, and sins. May we come before you asking in your name, your nature, your mercy, asking in all that you are... for you to pour your life, your healing, your provision into those we pray for, as well into our own hearts. Lord what joy, what joy that you bring heaven into their lives. What joy that we have hope in you, that we can trust you...that no matter what, no matter what ... you are our joy. May we continually pursue you and have your joy fulfilled in us as we dwell in the joy of your presence. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber Unknown Date but found in the study booklet "The Holy Spirit, the Ultimate Witness" Session 11.

Featured Art: Courtesy of Rex Deloney...artist, teacher, pursuer of Jesus, and colorist who portrays the struggles faced by African Americans ...at rexdeloney.com. Also on Facebook and Instagram.

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