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*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23).*

“The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” Galatians 5:17

We simultaneously have the ability to be righteous or sinful...

The flesh – which still remains because we have not been glorified. We yet have remaining flesh (sinful nature; Rom 7:18; 1 Cor. 9:27) even after our conversion and transformation. A Christian possesses a new nature, a new creation, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10); but it is incarcerated in our remaining humanness.

The flesh - produces and manifests very evident and clear vices- immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing.

The deeds of the flesh are plural; however the fruit of the Spirit is singular. Walking and/or operating in the Spirit, the fruit comes in a package deal. Virtue is produced collectively.

Psalm 1:1-6; Ho 14:8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. **From me is thy fruit found.** God is the source of all virtue; fruit is seen as a metaphor for virtue, like “a tree produces fruit,” or “a vine produces fruit,” or “a plant produces fruit.” The life of God in the believer produces spiritual fruit.

In Matthew 13 the Lord says, “The word of God is like seed that’s planted; and when it finds good soil it brings forth fruit, some thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold.” And by that He means spiritual virtue, spiritual results. In Romans chapter 7 and verse 4 it says, “Christ was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.” Philippians 1:11, “The fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Colossians 1:10, “Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work.” So these are just general statements about fruit being good work, being righteous behavior. And then James 3:17, “The wisdom from above is full of good fruits.”

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There are some behaviors that are indicated in Scripture to be fruit. Hebrews 13; “The sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name.” Worship is fruit. That is an activity that is fruit. When you praise the Lord, when you give honor to His name, you are bearing fruit. In Romans 15:28 Paul thanked people for the gift that they sent him. They sent him a financial gift, to support him; he said the gift was “fruit that abounds to your account.” So giving is fruit, worship is fruit. Matthew 3:8, Jesus said, “Bring forth fruit connected to repentance.” Repenting of sin is fruit. Romans 1:13, Paul said, “I want to come to you that I may have some fruit among you.” Leading someone to Christ is fruit; Worship is fruit, giving is fruit, repentance is fruit.

Joh 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. The distinguishing mark of your life. That fruit will remain for it result in what the Holy Ghost is doing in us. The fruit is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is in us. The fruit is the proof of our salvation (Matt. 7:17-20).

Joy. As defined, joy as other aspects of Spiritual fruit, we receive joy from the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). Our experience with God is “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Peter 1:8). We can have God’s joy no matter what happens to us. This kind of joy is not the joy that the world gives; for it is not dependent on circumstances. Regardless of external conditions, we can always rejoice in our salvation and in the God of our salvation (Luke 10:20; Habakkuk 3:17-18). Joy is a weapon we can use and a source of strength in times of trial. “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). When discouragement comes we can draw upon the joy of the Spirit and gain strength. The way to overcome is to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). We can praise our way to victory.

How do we obtain joy in time of need? As we have just seen, we can always get joy from our salvation. “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD” (Isaiah 12:3-4). Psalms tells us about two other sources of joy. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5). If we plant good seed with tears and prayers we will reap good results with joy. Also, the Psalmist says “in thy presence is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). If we will draw close to God and enter into His presence we will have perfect joy. We can enter into His presence with singing, thanksgiving, and praise (Psalm 100).

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There is a River

Joy is like a well containing sweet water. It is not enough to know the water is there or even to drill the well. If the well is to be useful, the water must be brought to the surface. Joy is much more than happiness. It is “exultation of spirit” says the dictionary, “gladness; delight; a state of felicity.” The Psalmist expresses “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God...” Psalm 46:4. For the spirit-filled believer, God is with him and dwells in him so there is complete, continuous, and abiding Joy. (Re 22:1)

There have been recent archeological discoveries which have uncovered letters written by martyrs during the time of the first three centuries following Christ. Just before death one saint wrote, “In a dark hole I have found cheerfulness; in a place of bitterness and death I have found rest. While others weep I have found laughter, where others fear I have found strength. Who would believe that in a state of misery, I have had great pleasure; that in a lonely corner I have had glorious company, and in the hardest bonds perfect repose. All these things Jesus has granted me. He is with me, comforts me and fills me with Joy. He drives bitterness from me and fills me with strength and consolation.”

Paul wrote to Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim 4:7-8). These words were written just before his martyrdom. The prison where he was confined is described as walls that are cold, rough rocks; the dungeon is so damp you feel chills at midday. Only a tiny hole lets in light and air. There is no heat, and the ceiling is so low a person cannot stand up straight. Paul being incarcerated in that condition for at least two years; wrote his last epistle, Second Timothy.

There is not a word of melancholy in Paul’s letter to young Timothy, but has triumphant rejoicing throughout. There is a joy that transcends trouble, leaps over walls of circumstances, and abides through death. This is not just burst of joy or moments when it slips on us, but a lasting, ever abiding, enduring exultation of spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” In John 7:38, 39 we find this promise of Jesus: “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

A Walk with Destiny

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Lu 24:26; Php 2:8; 2 Co 4:17; 2 Th 2:17; 3:3; 1Ti 6:12; Heb 13:21; 1Pe 1:3-8; Jude 1:24-25

There are days when physical pain prevents us from keen appreciation of the pleasures about us. Tragedy walks into our lives unannounced, taking from us someone very dear. Circumstances weigh on us until our eyes are too heavy to hope. There must be something deeper and more meaningful if joy is to remain during trying times. There is- when we realize we are entities for eternity. Each of us have our own walk with destiny.

All who are in Christ walk daily with Destiny. At eighteen Jeremiah trembled as God's finger wrote into his soul, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5)

Men of destiny suffer the same, and sometimes more, setbacks and frustrations that plague all men. The difference is that they know there is an ultimate scheme of things and a master plan. Therefore the pains and problems of the present do not seem as important to them. They maintain their unconquered spirit, an Apostolic Attitude¹ in the full face of failure.

As humans we often misunderstand the meaning of destiny. To us life becomes an end within itself and the success or failures of now are looked upon as ends within themselves.

Our problems center in the fact that we lose our perspective. When tragedy hits, death comes, or failure consumes our ambitions, there is temptation to lose sight of the eternal. Yet, it was the sight of the eternal that was key to the great joy of the apostles. According to tradition, eleven of them died martyrs, with only John closing his eyes in natural death. Paul, speaking for all the apostles, could say, "These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things that are really permanent." (2 Cor. 4:17-18) Phillips. We must keep in mind that it is not only the seventy years (Psalm 90:10) of earthly life that is before us, but we are creatures of eternity.

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Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul states that because his eyes are on the eternal, the immediate problems can be relegated to their proper place. “We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!” (2 Cor. 4:8-9) Phillips. But lest we merely set our goals on that eternal life and just “suffer” through this one, he adds, “So long as we are clothed in this temporary dwelling we have a painful longing, not because we want just to get rid of these “clothes” but because we want to know the full cover of the permanent house that will be ours...It is our aim, therefore, to please him, whether we are “at home” or “away”. (5:4,9) Paul was not a suffering saint just moping through life until God delivered him. Rather a joyful, exuberant, vital child of God who could not be stopped by kings, priests, jails, or beatings (2 Cor. 11:23-28). He was a person overtaken by the joy of God’s presence.

It is crucially important that man believes in the ultimate purpose of creation. As a preacher once noted, “If indifference or hostility to a divine creator were only disbelief, we might stand it; but complete sustained disbelief - reducing the universe to protons and electrons, going it blind; no God behind it nor spiritual purpose in it - is not disbelief in God alone, but fundamental disbelief in life itself.” The logical result of such skepticism would make people think, “What is the use anyway.” The psychological result would be personal cynicism. Carl Jung, noted Swiss psychologist, once had a patient state, “If I only knew that my life had some meaning and purpose, then there would be no silly story about my nerves.” Human personality cannot prosper on any such pointless idea of life.

The seed of joy is sown by the Spirit. We must recognize the source of joy and keep our perspective that we are creatures of destiny.

The Apostolic Attitude¹

I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Ghost power. The dye has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I will not look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished with low-living, sight-walking, small planning, smooth knees, Colorless dreams, tamed vision, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need prosperity, position, promotion, or popularity. I do not have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by present tense, by faith, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is

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heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, deceived, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of my enemy, negotiate at the table of the adversary, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I will not give-up, let-up, or shut-up until I have stayed-up, stored-up, prayed-up, paid-up, and preached-up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until he stops me. And, when he comes for his own, He will not have any problem recognizing me, because I will not be discouraged- and I refused to quit!!