



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Part 3)

Lasting Joy

«Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord». Matthew 25:23

Joy is often defined as a sense of deep satisfaction. It is also associated with the things that cause delight. Psychologists admit that none of us is born with a joyful state; they proposed some ways to develop joy by daily contemplating nature, including laughter and humor in our life, being active and engaged, helping others, having friends; these things improve one's worth and generate happiness; Christians too can enjoy such clean pleasurable activities, but remember that none of them offers true and lasting joy.

True and lasting joy is a joy that has no disappointed hope; it is a joy that only God can offer (My Life Today p.158). When our soul finds satisfaction in God, His name is glorified. He wants us to rejoice in Him because He puts upon Himself not only to save us, but to give us a joy that will have no end; for He so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son for this salvation and eternal gift to be fulfilled (John 3:16).

The joy of Jesus was to see us in an eternal happy state. It was His source of motivation to endure the cross for our sake (Hebrew 12:2). This divine joy of Calvary constitutes the source of the Christian joy, knowing that he is forgiven by God and having in view the divine recompense.

When Paul was seized by this Calvary love on the Damascus road (Act 9:1-7), he wanted everybody to hear about it. In Calvary, he saw the joy of being forgiven and contemplated the eternal reward. From prison, he sent letters of hope to believers in the churches at Philippi; he commanded to “always be joyful in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4). So how God developed this kind of joy in our life?

To develop in us this divine lasting joy, God uses our hardships and trials; because through them we can:

1. **See and understand the depth of Calvary love** and the forgiveness God has given us through Jesus. “Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope...when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the one who died for to save him, he may rejoice with fulness of joy” (AA 209.4). Looking at Calvary, the heart of Paul was moved with joy as he wrote: “As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died” (Galatians 6:14). When we look at Calvary and remind ourselves of God’s immovable love, when we think on His amazing grace, greatest joy will increase in our heart. The joy of Calvary, the joy of being unconditionally loved and reconciled;
2. **Rest assure of God’s promises** (Romans 15:13). Calvary has made us known who God is and what He can do for us. (Isaiah 12:6; Mathew 28:20). “Believing bring peace and trusting bring joy! (Testimonies for the Church 2:319,320).
3. **Recall the time God delivered us in the past** (Esther 8:17). Counting His blessing in the past helps us to go through difficulties. It gives joy to know that He is faithful. Have you remembered the beginning of your Christian journey? When we newly came in the faith, it looked that all the answers of our prayers came easily. Then comes the times in our spiritual journey when God seems

silent, responses delay. During these moments, the joy arises in looking back where God has led us through. In the community of faith, we can strengthen each other's faith by sharing our Christian journey experiences. By hearing how God is working in the life of a fellow believer will give us joy to trust in Him more and more.

4. **Contemplate the eternal joy Jesus died for.** The heroes of the faith looked ahead in time for this joy awaiting the redeemed. Dungeon, fire, lion's den, boiling oil... were powerless to take away the joy of the disciples and the martyrs during the early Christian church. Some sang until the fire consumed them. *"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."* (Hebrew 11: 39,40). In our hard times, we are to always remember there is an eternal joy set before us.

In these last days where life throw perplexities, depression, disappointment on God's children, we need divine joy to carry us through. Jesus calls the trials we go through today the beginning of sorrows. When comes the time when everything we enjoy: possession, job, family, friends...is taken away from us, the joy of the Lord, the eternal reward promised by God is still to be our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Amidst all the trials, we are commanded to rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is our reward in heaven (Matthew 5:11-12); we are commanded to rejoice because our names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Until we see His face, may the joy of the Lord be our Strength!