

Having begun a consideration of the fruit of the Spirit, we come this morning to the second fruit, joy. But before we do that, I want to remind you of two things: (1) it is the fruit of the Spirit—that is, it's the result of the Spirit's work within our heart and lives. It is fruit ultimately produced by God. (2) It's our responsibility. Thus, while it's the fruit of the Spirit, we are nevertheless responsible to cultivate it. And so, twice within this passage, we are exhorted to "walk in the Spirit" (v16 and v25). Which at least in part means, walk dependent upon the Spirit and do nothing that would hinder or quench His work within us.

I. Its Description

II. Its Importance

III. Its Promotion

I. Its Description

1. The first thing I want to say is—I understand the first three fruit, love, joy, and peace, in the broadest sense.
2. That is, as we saw last week, I understand "love" to refer to our love to God and our love to our neighbor.
3. The same is true with regards to joy and peace—in the first place these have reference to God and then others.
4. Now, providing a definition for "joy" isn't that easy—while every Christian has it, defining it is difficult.
5. I think this is likely why Peter refers to as "joy unspeakable"—that is, it's joy difficult speak of or to describe.
6. The Greek word rendered "joy" is also rendered "glad, gladness, joyful, and joyous"—at its core it refers to delight or pleasure.
7. Thus, true or Christian joy is the Spirit's work within our hearts, wherein we take delight and find pleasure in God and the things of God.
8. Ps.16:11—"In Your presence is fulness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"—notice our David equates joy and pleasure.
9. Biblical joy and Biblical delight and/or pleasure are identical—to rejoice is to delight or have pleasure.
10. Now, I know this may sound strange to us, given the fact that we live in a culture that worships pleasure.
11. But brethren, pleasure isn't the problem—the problem is the object of that joy, delight and/or pleasure.
12. And so, because it's easier to describe than define Christian joy, I want to provide four descriptions of true joy.
13. (1) It's spiritual—that is—it's the work God's Spirit within man's spirit—it's internal and not merely external.
14. It's rather easy to fake it with a smile—but true Christian joy goes beneath external facial expressions.
15. Now, let me just say, it often finds its expression on the countenance, but it goes much deeper than that.
16. Ps.4:7—"You have put gladness in my heart"—true joy is deeply rooted in the heart—it's spiritual joy.
17. Ezekiel Hopkins—"It is not so light and frothy, as to float upon the expression of the face. It lies deep and hidden, in the center of the soul."

18. Now, let me clarify—true joy is a grace that includes the whole soul—the intellect, affections, and volition (the mind, heart, and will).
19. This is true of love (as we saw last week)—it starts on the inside and often reveals itself on the outside.
20. But, just as with true love, while true joy often shows itself on the outside, it has its origin on the inside.
21. I think we've all met people who are naturally upbeat—they seem generally happy and are often smiling.
22. That may or may not be true joy—it's possible that it's nothing more than a generally happy disposition.
23. But true and Christian joy—the fruit of the Holy Spirit—is a grace that has its origin in the heart of man (and this joy may or may not manifest itself on the outside).
24. (2) It's durable—that is—it endures through the sorrows, struggles, and setbacks of life in a fallen world.
25. Jas.1:2-3—"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (Matt.5:11-12)."
26. Put another way—true joy and godly sorrow are not enemies, but often dwell together in the same heart.
27. 2Cor.6:10—"But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God...as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."
28. Thus—true Christian joy isn't at odds with the deepest sorrow—but exists within the very same soul.
29. This can be illustrated in our Savior, who on one hand was the most joyful soul that every lived on earth.
30. Ps.45:7—"God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions"—He was filled with more joy than any other person.
31. Isa.53:3—"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—never was there a Man who knew sorrow like our Savior.
32. He was at the same time the most joyful and sorrowful Man that ever lived—both were equally true.
33. Furthermore, true Christian joy is able to exist within all circumstances—times of plenty and times of empty.
34. Hab.3:17-18—"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."
35. Philip Ryken—"Joy does not depend on circumstance at all. It is based rather on rejoicing in one's eternal identity in Jesus Christ."
36. Jn.16:22—"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you."
37. Our Savior was about to die, and so they would have sorrow, and yet, He would see them again after His resurrection.
38. And they would have joy—and the reason no one will be able to take this joy from them is because, He will always be with them by His Spirit (and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age).
39. This is a fundamental difference between the joy of the Holy Spirit and the joy of this world—the joy of this world is dependent upon circumstances.
40. If we get a new job, we are joyful, but if we lose that job, we are sad—our joy is dependent upon things outside of us.
41. But this is very different from Christian joy, which is not dependent upon this world, but God and the things of God.

42. (3) It's eternal—that is—true Christian or gospel joy never ends—but continues throughout all eternity.
43. Matt.25:21—"Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."
44. Thomas Watson—"Here joy enters into the saints; in heaven, they enter into joy"—heaven is a place of perfect joy.
45. True Christian joy never ends, because its objects (which are God and the things of God), never end.
46. Heaven is a world of love, but it's also a world of joy—it's a place where pure delight will be enjoyed.
47. (4) It's holy—by this I mean, it delights and finds pleasure in holy and lawful objects—the ultimate object of all true Christian joy is God—He alone is the source and object of all true joy.
48. Thus—all true joy focuses on God—and, it traces everything else, back to God as the source of all good.
49. This is in contrast to a sinful or worldly joy, which takes delight and/or pleasure in sinful and evil things.
50. And so, true Christian joy delights or takes pleasure in lawful things, and it delights in them lawfully.
51. Thus, what I want to do at this point, is suggest there are five things, Christians find delight and joy in.
52. And I want you to notice, that all five of these have relation to God—the being of God, salvation of God, people of God, word of God, and day of God.
53. (a) The Being of God, Ps.43:4—"I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" Ps.40:16—"Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You."
54. Phil.4:4—"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice"—to rejoice in the Lord is to delight in Him.
55. Everything about the Lord gives us reason to rejoice—His attributes, His eternal decrees, and His works.
56. CHS—"Every attribute of God, every characteristic of God, is an inexhaustible gold mine of precious joy to every man who is reconciled to God. Delight thyself in God the Father, and His electing love, and unchanging grace...Delight thyself also in the Son, who is God with us...Delight in Him as man suffering, sympathizing with you. Delight in Him as God putting forth infinite wisdom and power for you...Then think of the Holy Ghost, and rejoice in Him as dwelling in you, quickening you, comforting you, illuminating you, and abiding with you for ever. Think of the triune God, and be blest."
57. (b) The salvation of God—every aspect of salvation is a cause for our joy, gladness, and our rejoicing.
58. Isa.25:9—"And it will be said in that day: Behold, this *is* our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This *is* the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."
59. Isa.61:10—"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels."
60. When it comes to our salvation, there are present blessings that bring us joy, and future blessings that bring us joy.
61. Present blessings are things such as regeneration, union with Christ, justification, and sanctification.
62. Future blessings are things we have by way of promise—the bodily resurrection and new heavens and earth.

63. Rom.5:2—"We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"—we rejoice in the hope of being glorified in heaven.
64. Thus, we rejoice in blessings we possess and anticipate—we rejoice in that we are right with God, and soon shall be with God.
65. Thomas Boston—"Christians rejoice in precious spiritual privileges they have in hand, which they enjoy for the present in this life, as justification, adoption, sanctification, peace with God, peace of conscience, access to God and communion with him, et.; and they also rejoice in precious privileges they have in hope, heaven and the eternal weight of glory."
66. (c) The people of God, Ps.16:3—"As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."
67. These are ultimately the words of Christ Himself, who rejoiced, delighted, and found please in His people.
68. Zeph.3:17—"The LORD your God in your midst. The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."
69. Here we learn that God Himself rejoiced over His people gladness and singing—He delights in them.
70. But you might ask—why do we delight in other Christians? Well, for that very reason—they are other Christians.
71. 3Jn.1:3-4—"For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (Phil.1:3-5; 1Thess.3:9-10)."
72. Paul rejoiced in the spiritual advancement of others—he delighted and took pleasure in them as they bore fruit for God.
73. (d) The word of God, Ps.119:111—"Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart" Ps.119:162—"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure."
74. Jer.15:16—"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."
75. Rom.7:22—"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" Ps.1:2—"his delight (the blessed man) is in the law of the LORD."
76. Christians rejoice in the entire word of God—in its promises as well as precepts—the gospel and the law.
77. (e) The day of God, Isa.58:13-14—"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD."
78. To "call the Sabbath a delight" is to delight or pleasure in the activities that take place on the Sabbath.

II. Its Importance

1. Here I want to take a few minutes and suggest three reasons why true joy (Christian Joy) is important.
2. I think we all can understand why love and peace are important, but it may not be as easy to see the importance of joy.
3. (1) The joy of the Lord is our duty—the Scripture everywhere, commands us to rejoice in the Lord, Phil.4:4—"Rejoice in the Lord always" 1Thess.5:16—"Rejoice always."
4. I fear this point can be easily overlooked—Christians are commanded to be joyful—to rejoice in every situation.
5. In times of plenty and in times of want; in times of health and in times of sickness; in times of peace and in times of war.

6. A joyful Christian is a lawful Christian; a holy Christian; an obedient Christian; a God-honoring Christian.
7. I think there are at least two reasons behind this command: first, joy is beneficial to us (something I want to come back to in a few minutes); secondly, joy is glorifying to God.
8. Heartfelt obedience always glorifies God, and disobedience always dishonors God—a joyful Christian honors God.
9. Wilhelmus a Brakel—"God is pleased with the joy of His children. It is His will that they delight themselves, value the benefits, fully trust in His Word and in His promise, leap for joy, and sing His praises with joyful and singing lips."
10. (2) The joy of the Lord is our purpose, Shorter Catechism—"Q. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glory God, and to enjoy Him for ever."
11. This is why we were created—to glorify God, and enjoy Him now (in part) and forever (in perfection).
12. This is why sin is so serious, because at the heart of sin is man's attempt to enjoy the creature above the Creator.
13. (3) The joy of the Lord is our strength, Neh.8:10—"For the joy of the LORD is your strength"—joy gives strength.
14. (a) Joy gives us strength to worship, Neh.12:43—"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off."
15. (b) Joy gives us strength to witness, Ps.51:12-13—"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You."
16. (c) Joy gives us strength to endure hardship, 1Thess.1:6—"And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit."
17. Jas.1:2—"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials"—to count it joy means, we are to consider our trials as reasons to rejoice (we are to joyfully endure them knowing they ultimately strengthen us).

III. Its Promotion

1. (1) Pray for reviving grace—I put this first because we must remember—true joy is a fruit of the Spirit.
2. Ps.86:6—"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You"—joy is the work of God.
3. Hymn (246)—"Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness, pierce the clouds of sinful night; come, thou source of sweetest gladness, breathe thy life, and spread thy light."
4. (2) In everything give thanks—there is an intimate and inseparable connection between gratitude and joy.
5. True gratitude is a soul's recognition that everything it receives, it receives from God as grace and mercy.
6. 1Thess.5:16-18—"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
7. Simply put, an unthankful person isn't going to be a joyful person—joy and gratitude are necessarily related.
8. (3) Avoid hindrances of joy—and here I specifically think of sin that isn't dealt with in a biblical sense.
9. Ps.51:11-12—"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit."

10. Jn.15:10-11—"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full."
11. If we keep Christ's commandments, we will abide (remain in His love)—that means, in the awareness of His love (it doesn't mean we will continue to be loved by Him).
12. And, as we abide in the awareness of His love, our joy will be increased—a sense of His love for us is the oil that increases the flame of joy. `
13. (4) Rightly use the things of this world—that is—enlist the good gifts of this life as a means for joy.
14. There is a sense in which every lawful thing within this world, should a cause or reason for us to rejoice.
15. Every lawful thing and activity, moderately used, for the glory of God—is a reason or cause to rejoice.
16. For example—the little children within this church—are an ongoing source of joy and gladness to my heart.
17. My own children and esp. my wife—are a large source of joy, Prov.5:18—"rejoice in the wife of your youth."
18. The sunrise, warm-breezy summer days, rain, wind—in fact, all creation should be a reason to rejoice.
19. Perhaps I can put it like this—every good gift that comes down from heaven, is a reason for us to rejoice.
20. Because here's the point—we never rejoice in these things as an end in themselves—but as gifts from God.
21. In other words—we rejoice in our children, spouses, parents, and siblings—as they are gifts from God.
22. 1Tim.6:17—"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."
23. This verse provides a contrast—(a) there are those who trust in riches—who misuse the things of this life.
24. (b) There are those trust in God, and properly and moderately use the good gifts God gives in this world.
25. How do we rightly use the things of this life? By receiving them as gifts from the hand of our Father to enjoy.
26. (5) Focus on Christ the source of all true joy—failure to do this, always results in the lack of true joy.
27. True joy, just as saving and sanctifying grace, is purchased by Christ, and is abundantly found in Christ.
28. 1Pet.1:8—"Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."
29. As we look at Christ, with the eyes of the soul, this enables us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."
30. But where do we see Him—well, we see and hear Him within His word—we behold Him in the world, and we read about His many promises (this is, how joy is increased).
31. 1Jn.1:4—"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full"—what John says about His first letter, is true of the entire Bible.
32. There is a sense in which the whole of Scripture was written to increase our joy, if we read it with a believing heart.
33. Let me put as simply as I can—as we behold Christ within Scripture, the Spirit works grace in our heart, which includes love and joy.