### THE JOY OF THE LORD

**Lesson 7 – “Sustaining Your Joy”**

**I Thessalonians 2:19-20 & Acts 8:16-40**

**Introduction:**  Joy should be an outstanding feature of the life of a Christian. It should not be that we must try to show it. It should be that we cannot hide it.

In the last lesson, we found that one’s joy is inseparably attached to this: “Am I fulfilling my God-given purpose for existing as a believer in this world?” If you answer “yes,” nothing can prevent your joy. If you answer “no,” nothing can give you joy. We learned from Jesus’ words that our purpose is really easy to comprehend. According to ***John 15***, He is the vine; we are the branches. The branches exist to bear fruit as an extension of the vine. So if a branch does not bear fruit, it is discarded. If it does bear fruit, it is purged so as to bear more fruit. Our purpose, then, as a branch, is to do what?

* Abide in the vine!
* Which leads to fruit!
* Which leads to full joy!

The purpose of these lessons is to help you know full joy. Paul knew it; and he who was a helper of men’s joy (***II Corinthians 1:24***) can help us too.

# I. *I THESSALONIANS 2:19-20* FRUIT IS THE CAUSE FOR JOY AT JESUS’ RETURN

## *V19* Paul emphasizes joy and rejoicing at Christ’s coming.

1. The depth of one’s spiritual life may in large part be measured by the answer to this question: “What is it that gives you joy or cause for rejoicing?”
2. Let’s say you are not overflowing with joy right now, so I ask you this question: “Just what do you suppose *will* give you joy?” You may answer honestly in your heart about something to do with your marriage, job, house or neighbourhood, debt, the car you drive, etc.
3. Now let me add three words that will put everything in perspective: “Just what do you suppose will give you joy *at His coming*?” Will your answer change? More than likely it will.
4. You see, the bottom line for the child of God is not what will give me instant joy; here; now; presently; quickly. Rather, the bottom line is what will cause joy when Jesus comes again!

## *V19-20* Paul’s answer is both clear and simple.

1. You! You saved Thessalonians; you are our joy and crown of rejoicing.
2. From ***Acts 17***, we know that Paul led them to Christ. The Thessalonian believers would be called his fruit!
3. Fame and notoriety; apostolic authority; gifts; abundant revelation; miracles; visions: None of these things caused his joy or rejoicing. It was fruit!
4. Paul did not regard that in Philippi, Corinth, or Thessalonica he was beaten and put in jail, etc. He was praising God that he left fruit there.
5. Show me a person abiding in Christ and bearing fruit, and I will show you a person with joy; guaranteed!

# II. SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE JOY OF SO MANY BELIEVERS?

## The most normal thing is for a new believer or a revived believer to reach people in their immediate sphere of influence.

1. Jesus said to Andrew, “Follow me,” and he did. He first found his own brother Simon Peter and brought him to Jesus.
2. The demoniac in ***Luke 8*** wanted to travel with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go tell his house what the Lord had done for him. He did, and also told his whole city.
3. Cornelius got saved, and so did his house.
4. The Philippian jailer got saved, as did his house.
5. That trend goes on to this very day, as some could testify. A believer has an immediate sphere of influence that he works. Some believe and get saved; some at least are given the gospel and a seed is planted. The result is joy!

## However, a zealous believer may soon exhaust that sphere of influence.

1. Some perhaps believed. Let’s say there are forty or fifty, such as friends, family, neighbours, co-workers, etc.
2. When that realm of influence has been worked, often a person puts their soul-winning energy into park or on hold. After a spell, there is unrest, discontent, and loss of joy.
3. No fruit = no joy!

##### The earth’s population is over six billion people.

1. That means there are 5,999,950 people outside your sphere of influence, and less than 2% of them have the new birth.
2. We must enlarge our sphere of influence.

3. The devil is tricky. People say “Well, you can’t witness to family and people you are so close to and familiar with and all that!” and also say, “You expect me to witness to strangers? No way!”

**III. *ACTS 8:16-40* THIS IS WHERE PHILIP COMES INTO THE PICTURE**

**Note:** Philip was one of the seven deacons of Acts 6, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. He became an evangelist and travelled to Samaria. Through his preaching, the city got evangelized and glory came down. A stronghold of Satan was smashed with the gospel of Christ. The key here is that Philip did abide in Christ; he was full of the Holy Ghost, which is the same thing. So, we expect fruit.

**A. *Acts 8:26-40*** **Three great lessons from Philip.**

1. ***V26-27, 29-30*** He was available and obedient to the Spirit.

a. Philip’s life was not so crowded that he could not hear the Lord.

* + - 1. He did not excuse himself, but arose and went.
      2. You’re not too busy and preoccupied with your own agenda for God to speak to you, are you? Could it be that He has spoken about training and opportunities for soul-winning and your life was so crowded with “your life” that you could not or would not hear?
      3. In some ways, God’s ways are incomprehensible, but at the same time He is very practical. He wants you to bear fruit, and you must hear from Him to bear fruit. If you are not prompted to learn and take opportunity, it says more of you than of Him.
    1. ***V30*** Philip was eager; he ran.

a. I must confess there are times the opportunity to witness has hit me in the face, and due to preoccupation and carnal self-preservation, I have tried to avoid witnessing.

* + - 1. Philip was looking for and ran to the opportunity.
      2. Surely if I am abiding and Spirit filled, His leading and prompting will be met with eager effort.
    1. ***V39-40*** Philip did not stop after winning the lost.

a. There is no record that these cities were as fruitful as Samaria; still he spread Christ’s gospel.

b. Have you any recent fruit? A farmer rejoices in his harvest; but in the present harvest, not the past.

c. Fruit = joy. Where is the joy with Philip? ***V8***  That city had great joy. ***V39*** The eunuch went on his way rejoicing, and so did Philip because abiding in Christ results in fruit which results in joy.

##### Enlarge your realm of influence.

* + 1. Be sensitive to the Holy Ghost. Avail yourself!
    2. Cease upon special opportunities such Open House, Easter Sunday, or holiday services.
    3. Get involved in soul-winning or canvassing.
    4. Help in a ministry (Sunday school helpers, hospitality, security…..)
    5. .Give to missions for an international, global influence.

**Conclusion:** We are talking about sustaining your joy. To sustain your joy, stay at it with regard to your purpose for existing as a believer in this world. To live a life with the expectation that the Lord is returning and those in our sphere of influence will be spending eternity in heaven.