

When my son Isaac was 3, he already had a playlist on our family Spotify account. The first song on that playlist was "[Joy.](#)" by the band For KING & COUNTRY. For almost two years we've been listening to this song, both the original and Isaac's versions. And often I've reflected that when I was 3, I was singing, "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart". Ah, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Joy is such an important but confusing part of the Christian life. When the ECC began, one of the primary influences came from the Moravian Church, who taught us to focus on the joy of our salvation. But ask most people what Joy really is and you will get a variety of answers. For some, it is a behavior we are called to accomplish, while for others it is an emotion we experience. For some it is a matter of choice, while for others it is a byproduct of our perspective on our circumstances. For some, Joy is the same as Happiness, while for others they are very different.

So, when the Apostle Paul made Joy the second of the Fruits of the Spirit, just what did he mean by Joy? If the fruit of the Spirit are produced in us when we live as disciples, then it seems that Joy is an emotional response. But what about the command to be joyful in Romans and to sing with joy in the Psalms? Confusing.

Take a look with me at Ps. 126, and let's see what this Psalm has to tell us about Joy...

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
Restore our fortunes, o Lord, like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.*

Here, joy is neither a discipline nor a command. Here, joy is a promise. It's a promise for the future, tied intimately with hope. When God blesses us as He has promised to do, then we will know joy. Yes, we are sowing with tears, but when God brings the growth, the health, and the harvest, we will reap with joy. Using the imagery common to the people of his day, the Psalmist taps in to the well-known reality that sowing seeds is long, hard work with only a distant reward. But after the growing season, when it comes time to harvest, the work is neither long nor hard, and the reward is soon to be realized.

So to truly experience the joy God promises, we have to trust in Him for our future. This has become very poignant in the last few months as we've traveled together through COVIDland. We began this journey with fear, and then moved to impatience, and then to anger. So how can we bring joy to this journey? How can we bear the fruit of joy in our lives and our spirits? According to the Psalmist, we have to trust in God's promises, which here in COVIDland are that He is with us, that He is in control, that He knows our future, and that He loves us deeply. When we trust in these things, even the midst of tears and fears, we can still find joy.

Questions to ponder:

Who do you know who needs your joy the most right now?

What is the different between true Godly joy and manufactured happiness?

Ponder God's promises to you, put your trust in His faithfulness to bring them about, and see how that changes your level of joy today.