

A Spirit of Love, Joy, and Peace

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love, joy, peace, and sweetness of spirit in the Christian life, and provides practical advice on how to attain to these qualities.

Scripture: Philippians 4:2

Topics: "Fruits Of The Spirit", "Christian Unity"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the significance of cultivating a spirit of love, joy, and peace in the Christian life, drawing from Philippians 4:2-6. He highlights the importance of mutual love among believers, urging them to be of the same mind in the Lord, and to rejoice always, regardless of circumstances. Simpson explains that true joy comes from the Lord and is not dependent on external factors, while peace, a precious gift from God, guards our hearts and minds. He encourages believers to practice moderation and sweetness of spirit, reflecting Christ's love and gentleness in their interactions with others. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a life characterized by these fruits of the Spirit, rooted in prayer and thanksgiving.

Transcript

"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord. . . . Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:2, 4-6).

This passage reaches the very heart of the sweetest Christian life. It combines the four choicest ingredients of the fruit of the Spirit; namely, love, joy, peace, and sweetness.

I. LOVE

The first is love. There are three kinds of love unfolded in these verses. The first is Paul's love to his friends and flock. How tenderly he addresses them: "My brethren," he says, associating himself with them in the heavenly ties of the divine family. "Dearly beloved," he adds, mingling with this holy relationship all the tenderness of human affection. And "longed for"; this is more than tenderness, this is the affection that dwells continually on the beloved object, wearies of his absence and longs for fellowship and reunion. "My joy," a still stronger expression of the dependence of his very happiness upon their fellowship and love. "And crown," this carries forward the bonds of love and friendship to the eternal sphere, and links all his

eternal hopes and rewards with his dearly beloved friends at Philippi. It was thus that the early Christians loved one another, and it is still true that "every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

Next, we have a reference to their mutual love of one another. Among the saints at Philippi were two sisters whose names signify "success" and "fame." They were evidently valued workers in the church, but, like many good women, they were not able to agree with each other in the same mind and judgment. Each was a woman of such strong character and individuality and such excellent common sense and judgment that she could not see how she could be wrong in her view of the matter, and her sister right; and so they were frequently at variance, and their misunderstandings were evidently hurting the little flock. Paul does not reprove them or even enjoin them, but he gets down on his knees to one of them and asks his friend Epaphroditus to do the same with the other, and they just beseech them to "be of the same mind in the Lord." This is very touching and humbling to us in our misunderstandings and strifes. Thus the Master is beseeching us to be of one mind and one spirit in the Lord.

But the best of all is that the Apostle gives us here the secret of attaining to oneness of spirit, a thing not so easily done with strong and independent minds, especially when each is sure she is right. The secret is this, "in the Lord." Don't try to bring your sister to your mind. Don't try to come to her mind, but let each of you drop her own opinion and preference and move out of yourselves into the Lord, and agree jointly and severally to take His thought about it, whatever it may be, and even before you know it. And you will always find that His mind about everything is one that does justice to both parties, and lifts both to a higher plane where they can be fully one.

At the same time the Apostle entreats his friend to help them both, and he very distinctly tells him of their value and importance; for it is of them he speaks when he says; "They labored with me in the gospel," and "their names are in the book of life."

Then there is a third expression of love in the little phrase which he addresses to his own fellow laborer, "true yoke-fellow." This tells not only of Paul's love to his friends but of their love to him. It is a beautiful figure and speaks of perfect fellowship and mutual service and suffering. The Lord Himself uses the same figure respecting His fellowship with us when He says: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." How beautiful and blessed if we might be to each other as true yoke-fellows as our blessed and heavenly Friend has been to us.

II. Joy

Here again we have the same little talisman which tells the secret of the heavenly life, "in the Lord." We may not be able to rejoice in circumstances, feelings, or even friends, but we can still rejoice in the Lord. This is the heavenly element of our joy. It comes entirely from sources beyond our own nature or surroundings, and it often contradicts every rational consideration and makes us wonder even at our own joy. It is the joy of Christ throbbing in the heart where He dwells. It was of this He spake when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Again, it is a constant, uninterrupted and unlimited joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always." There is positively no situation where we should cease to rejoice; no reason that could justify us in discouragement or depression. It is the normal, uniform and unvarying temper of the Christian life. "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." If the fig tree does not blossom, and the fruit is not upon the vine, we must

still "rejoice in the Lord, [and] joy in the God of my salvation." If the dearest friends disappoint us or leave us, the Lord remains, and we must not cease our singing. If our own feelings even betray us, and our hearts seem dead and cold, still we must "count it all joy," though we do not feel it, and take by faith the gladness that we do not find in our own consciousness. And if trials roll over us like surging waves and raging billows, we must raise the keynote higher, and exchanging joy for triumph, we must "glory in tribulations also."

Once more, this joy is persistent and refuses to be defeated or discouraged, for he repeats the command with strange insistence, and as though he were speaking against some barrier of difficulty, some cloud of discouragement, some weight of deep depression; "again," he adds, "I say rejoice." It is a redoubled command. It has a twofold significance, and whatever else we fail to do we must rejoice.

Now, dear friends, we do not say this is the uniform experience of the children of God. We are simply pointing out in this epistle the rarer and choicer qualities of the Christian temper. It is the ideal character if it is not always the real, and as we pursue the ideal, and refuse to take lower ground, God will make it real. Do not, therefore, be discouraged if you have sometimes failed to reach this lofty and settled standard, and to dwell on high in this lofty poise of victorious gladness; but take it as your ideal, pursue it as your goal, claim it as your privilege. Remember that sadness, discouragement, depression, are always of the enemy and must surely weaken your faith, your love, your holiness, your usefulness, your healing, your prayers, your whole Christian life, and, therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice."

III. SWEETNESS OF SPIRIT

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." The Greek word translated "moderation" is difficult to turn into English, but the various meanings that have been given to it are all suggestive and helpful, and each has certain degrees of truth in it. The first of these is the Authorized Version, "moderation." This is the temperate spirit, the disciplined heart, the self-control which comes to a well-ordered mind, the quietness, sense and moderation which keep us from all extremes, and hold us in the golden mean of a sound mind.

Again, it has been translated "yieldedness." This is also a valuable trait of character. It marks the chastened spirit, the soul that has surrendered, the will that has been subdued, the heart that has learned to wait and sacrifice. This is one of the most valuable qualities of the highest Christian life.

Again it is translated "gentleness," the spirit of Christian refinement, free from harshness, rudeness, coarseness, unkindness, the spirit that is harmless as the dove and gentle as the soft breath of evening. This is always characteristic of the heart that is possessed by the heavenly Dove. It is also translated "humility," and there is no rarer or richer element in Christian loveliness than the lowly spirit, which has learned not so much to think of itself as not to think at all of self; which takes its true place and never intrudes into another's; which never gets in the way of others, or asserts its self-importance, but leans, like John the beloved, on Jesus' breast, his face hidden on the Savior's bosom while the Master's alone is seen.

But the Syriac version has probably given us the most striking translation of this word. It is the word "sweetness." "Let your sweetness be known unto all men." It is that quality that probably blends all the qualities already named, and clothes us with the divine attractiveness that makes us a blessing to all we meet, a balm to the suffering, a rest to the weary, an inspiration to the depressed and a rebuke to the unkind. It is that quality which can "suffer long and be kind"; which can endure all "longsuffering with joyfulness," and come through the flame without the smell of fire. We have seen it in some of His dear

saints, and it was always manifest in Him. Let it be known unto all men. Do not hide it in your closet. Do not keep it for select occasions, but wear it as a beautiful garment. Shed it around you as a holy radiance. Take it into the bustling street until it breathes its fragrance on the agitated and excited ones around you. Carry it into the place where others wrong you or despise you, until it shall reprove them as your resentment never could. Show it to your enemies, and don't forget to show it to your friends. Pour it out in the home circle to husband, wife, child and friend, until all you meet shall feel as if a breath of summer and, a gleam of sunshine had passed by. "Let your sweetness be known to all men." Don't wait till people die to plant your flowers on their grave, but while they live shed the fragrance of love on their tired and tempted hearts. For all this the incentive and encouragement is given in the next brief sentence -- "The Lord is at hand." Perhaps it means that the Lord is nearby watching you, testing you, ready to help and sustain you; and perhaps it means the Lord is coming soon, and all these trials will seem but little things in the light of that blessed hope and surpassing glory. "Let your sweetness therefore, be known to all men, for the Lord is at hand."

IV. PEACE

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Peace is the most precious of all the gifts and graces of the Spirit; so precious indeed is peace that it was the one legacy left us by our departing Lord. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Joy may be more exciting, but peace is more sustaining. Joy may be the wine of life, but peace is its refreshing water and its daily bread.

Let us look a little more closely at this precious gift.

1. It is the "peace of God." It is not peace with God, which comes to us with forgiveness and salvation, but is the very peace of God Himself, His own calm, restful heart possessing ours, and filling us with His divine stillness.

2. It is a "peace which passeth all understanding." There is no rational explanation of it. It does not come to us by reasoning things out, and seeing our way clear, but it is often most profound when all the circumstances of our life are perplexing and distressing. It contradicts all conditions, and constantly proves its heavenly origin and its supernatural birth. It is indeed the peace of God, and wonderful as was His own calm, tranquil spirit, when standing on the threshold of the garden and the cross.

The writer remembers a Christian woman, for a long time a member of his church, on whom there suddenly fell the greatest sorrow that can come to a loving heart. It was the death of her husband, the companion of half a century of happy wedded life. She was a quiet, practical woman, with no natural emotion or sentiment in her temperament. But she had received the Holy Spirit years before and, in a very calm, consistent way, had been living a very devoted life. Hastening to her home he expected to find her plunged in deep distress, but she met him at the door with radiant face and overflowing joy. "My dear pastor," she cried, "my family all think that I am wrong to feel as I do, for I cannot shed a tear, and my heart is so happy that I cannot understand it. God has filled me with such a peace as passes all understanding, and I really cannot help rejoicing and praising Him all the time. What shall I do?" Of course I told her to rejoice with all her heart, and thank God that she could rejoice in such an hour. It was indeed the peace that passeth all understanding. There was no human cause for it. It was the deep artesian well flowing from the heart of God.

3. It is the peace that saves us from anxious care. Its watchword is "Be careful for nothing." It simply crowds out all our corroding anxieties, and fills us with such satisfaction that there is really nothing that we can fear. No, nothing. The command is unconditional and unlimited. "Be careful for nothing." Not even for your spiritual life. Not even for your friends. Not even for the answers to your prayers. Not even for the highest and holiest things. Cast every burden on the Lord and trust everything with Him.

4. It is a peace that leads to constant prayer, and is sustained by a life of prayer. "In every thing by prayer and supplication . . . let your requests be made known unto God." This does not mean that we are to be indifferent to the things that concern us or others, but that we are to be free from worry about them by handing them over to One who can attend to them better than we can, and who is already carrying the responsibility and the care. This is really the truest self-interest to hand over our interest to a wisdom and a love superior to our own, and then we know that all must be well.

The word "supplication" is derived from a root that signifies "many ply." It refers to the minutiae of life and the innumerable details of life's cares and burdens, all of which we may bring, and bring again and again, to Him who careth for us, and then leave them at His feet and know that they are safe in His keeping.

5. It is a peace that fills the heart with constant thankfulness and the lips with praise. Our prayers are turned to praise, and as we thank Him for what we have, we have new cause for more thanksgiving; for the surest way to receive answers to our prayers is to praise for what we have received, and then to praise for what we have not yet received. A life of peace leads to a life of praise, and a life of praise in turn leads to a life of peace. There are some natures that always see the dark side first. There are some that can only see the sunshine, the silver lining and the coming morning.

6. This peace is the guardian and the garrison of our heart. It keeps us, or, in the meaning of the Greek word, "garrisons" us, shutting out unhappy and unholy thoughts, and creating an atmosphere out of which only righteousness and blessing can spring.

7. It keeps our heart and mind; the heart first, and then the mind in consequence. It is not the mind first and then the heart, but it is heart foremost, that the sweetest Christian life always moves. Would you know the remedy for anxious, distracting, and ill-regulated thoughts? It is a heart kept by the peace of God, and still as ocean's depths where the surging billows that toss the surface into angry foam never come. This is the very element and atmosphere where faith and love may dwell deep in the heart of God. This is "the peace that passeth all understanding."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/a-spirit-of-love-joy-and-peace/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net