



Series: Ruin to Renovation	Reference: Galatians 5:22-23 & 1 Corinthians 13:13	Title: Good Vibes	Date: 05.27.18
Website Writeup:			
We can see a life where negative thoughts, patterns & feelings are replaced by the fruit of the Spirit. A life of love, joy & peace among other wonderful things!			

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Thanks to Dallas Willard, this series is born out of his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. Many of his thoughts & words make it into these sermons; read the book as you follow along.

TITLE SLIDE UP FIRST...

We left off talking about feelings, desire & passions by exploring James 3:16 which says, *¹⁶ For where you have envy & selfish ambition, there you find disorder & every evil practice.*

And also 4:1-2 which say...*What causes fights & quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel & fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.*

We looked at how a person, only governed by feelings, desires, or passions, can be destructive to self & others. How modernity has produced people overwhelmed by decisions, and due to a deep shift in worldview, the loss of community & spiritually formative practices, left to make decisions almost solely on how they feel - which is dangerous & unhealthy.

We also talked about God's ability to bring change to a person, restoring healthy emotional life marked by godly self-control. Today we want to explore how the changed life in Christ identifies itself with love, joy & peace - not feelings in & of themselves, but conditions of the whole person, with characteristic positive feelings accompanying them. *Galatians 5:22-23 outlines for us what the changed person in Christ looks like (at least in part). ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness & self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

This fruit, in the singular voice, is made up of these different characteristics interdependent of one another. If it were an actual fruit, you'd bite into it & taste forbearance, goodness, hints of kindness, notes of gentleness, with the three main characteristics of love, joy & peace, being the most dominant flavors on your tongue & love lingering as the aftertaste. Those three are reminiscent of 1 Co. 13:13 where it says, *¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope & love. But the greatest of these is love.*

These things go hand-in-hand, and we find, when one grows in us, the others do as well. You can't have one in true measure, without having the others in proportion - one complete fruit growing proportionately off the branches of our lives. Filled with goodness; life-giving & pleasant, even in the midst of pain & suffering.

The question arises am I more good, more loving & peaceful, more filled with joy, than I was ten years ago? Is this fruit growing in me? Do I react better now to conflict than I did 5 years ago? Is there a progression in me? Are anger & lust subsiding, being replaced by gentleness, self-control & forbearance? Questions not to bring about guilt, or shame. Rather, simply as an emotional & spiritual inventory.

Feelings aren't facts. Just because we may feel guilt or shame, doesn't mean God's placing it on us. That in itself may be the first tool in Satan's arsenal to keep us from spiritual growth. If we feel guilt & shame, our focus stays on the Self, feeling we'll never measure up - instead of on Christ's power & righteousness over us which has already made us perfect in the sight of God! We must take whatever negative feelings may govern us back to the cross. Running to Jesus allowing him to crucify them there, **replacing them with the life-giving attributes we see in Galatians 5.**

There's no false manufacturing of these in any longterm sense, deception (even self-deception) is always exposed. There's no cutting corners - we must walk this out with Jesus. When we do, the person growing in these attributes is a formidable force in the world for good. Hardy long-lasting people. Unflappable. Unshakeable. Hated by some. Respected by others. Since they're committed first & foremost to Jesus, rather than satisfying the perceived feelings of others. They may not feel the driving need to go along with the cultural norm & popular waves of thought in society. What's important to everyone else, may not be important to them, since they pursue Christ instead of selfish ambition, or the applause of others; nor are they tossed about in the waves of emotional groupthink. Feelings don't dictate their direction, although they feel deeply. Everything's measured against Jesus, His message, kingdom initiatives, and the written Word of God, all holding authority over their life.

Hope is in short supply in a hopeless world, and regarded as adolescent fantasy. Muslims are losing hope in Islam - it can't provide it. People flit from one empty-philosophy to another looking for meaning, finding only bankruptcy since they can't provide. But Christ brings real hope to the world, sealed, proved & assured in the resurrection - without which we'd be just another empty religious system.

Romans 8:22-25 speaks of hope... ²² *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.* ²³ *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.* ²⁴ *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?* ²⁵ *But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

Hope & faith are joined together at the hip as well. **Hebrews 11:1 defines faith for us - *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*** Hope & faith go hand-in-hand, inseparable. And as Romans 12:12 tells us, joy joins the chorus as well...¹² ***Be joyful in hope...*** Describe to me how you can have faith without hope & hope without joy, and I will tell you I just saw a pig fly.

As followers of Jesus we walk & grow in these things. Hebrews 11 outlines all the faith decisions made by many figures throughout biblical history as they put their hope in God. In v27 it says this about Moses, *²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.* Moses, walked away from what he could see, into what he could not, by faith, full of hope & not disappointed.

Romans 5:1-5 outlines for us how hope & faith bring us into a deeper more satisfying life even in the midst of suffering when it concerns our feelings... *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

Living under the conditions of faith, peace & hope, we grow in the reality of God's love towards us. In the solidity of our position of being justified in Christ, we experience the peace of God. We stand firm in this relationship since it's been done for us since in v6 Paul writes, *⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.* Which all leads into deep character change, since in Christ the sufferings which may've destroyed us before now become formative to our character. Encompassing our whole being, a solid state in which to live; and in this progression of spiritual formation, feelings change to the positive as we're made whole in Christ.

We're like snow globes allowing our desires to shake up our feelings creating an internal storm. But in Christ we're made still in the confidence of faith, and the storm within settles. Feelings still there & can be kicked up again if we allow our desire to take charge once more. However, if we keep our eyes focused on Christ, all's well; decisions made easier bringing even solidity to life.

Faith in Christ & the hope it births allows us to stand in God's grace, his loving action towards us, which all leads to living a life full of love. That fruit we pick from the branches of our tree should taste mostly of Christ-like love, followed by joy & peace, rounded out in all other tastes of the Spirit. Love in the biblical sense is the will to promote someone's good for their own sake. The opposite is malice & the absence of love is indifference. I don't know which is worse, since those who're abused (malice), or neglected (indifference) as children seem equally to have difficulty in adulthood. But typically, those who grow up in solid Christian loving homes seem to have the fortitude to face life well - they at least don't have all the baggage, although the world outside of family can do a job on us nonetheless.

Love shouldn't be confused with romance, or desire; it's a decision, a willful act. That's the difference between lust & love. In lust we don't will the best for the thing which we desire, we wish only to consume, or use it strictly for our pleasure; based only on feeling. However, when desire comes under the reign of love, it's a beautiful thing. Most often we confuse desire with love which is just lust, not willful care of another.

Love characterizes the deepest essence of God - His will to good in Humanity & Creation. It's impossible, since God is love, for him not to love. The world on it's own, in it's current sinful state, doesn't reflect this love, although it was intended to. It reflects it only in broken ways. We were created in the image of God, but that image was broken in the Fall, and now we only reflect Him in bits & pieces until Christ puts that mirror back together.

Instead we're marked more by pride which is defined by desire, not love. Pride says that my desires, my feelings, should be fulfilled above all else, and if they aren't we cry 'injustice'.

We have to remember what 1 John 2:15-17 states, ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

And later he states in chapter 4:7-8...⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Satan doesn't love. He's full of pride. It'd be better if he were simply indifferent, but he's not, he's malicious. And like Ephesians 6:12 says, ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

These powers seek to destroy the work of the Spirit in you. But Christ's power resides in us, we can't be destroyed. Remember what Joun said to us last week from 2 Co 4:8-9 - ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

In Christ we're justified before the Judge. Made new, covered in his righteousness, sealed & filled with the Holy Spirit. God's wrath is averted from us, since our sin's been paid for by Jesus on the cross. As God looks at you & me, he sees Jesus' perfect record. We're like an inner tube filled with the air of the Spirit who takes all the bumps & jolts of life along with us as we roll along.

In that process of spiritual formation, or sanctification in Christ, God's love is being made complete in us (1 John 2:5 & 4:12). And if you remember we said two weeks ago that most of our fighting & anger come out of fear, but 1 John 4:18 tells us, ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We fear we won't get what we want, feel, or desire from another, which leads to anger. We don't go to the source of satisfaction, but to others who can't fulfill it (James 4:2b). Or, maybe what we want isn't what we need. Yet, as we grow into the likeness of Christ, all that's not of God is pushed out as we begin to reflect the solid Will & Love of God in Christ!

As we begin to reflect that love, we see it in four movements. (1) Christ lays down his life for us (1 John 3:16). (2) In turn we love God (1 Jn 4:19). Then taking on that will of good towards others, (3) we love one another (1 John 4:12). So we find, the first great commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind & strength, enables us to fulfill the second, love your neighbor as oneself. And finally (4) a community of loving people is built which lives as witness to God's love on earth as seen in John 13:34-35 - ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Or, we may say from the Lord's Prayer, His kingdom come, his will (his loving intention) be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10). Perfect love drives out fear, eliminating pride!

Remembering Galatians 5, we see this accompanied by Joy. Joy's primary feeling is a delight in the all encompassing good well-secured in Christ. It's not the same as pleasure, although it's pleasant - pleasure, as is pain, are linked to specific objects. Like potato chips (pleasure). Or touching an open flame (pain). In joy, all is well despite pleasure or pain. Love in the truest sense is always accompanied with joy.

Jesus left two things on the night before his crucifixion. Peace (John 14:27), which is ironic given the turmoil to come, but indicative of the faith & hope we live in due to him. And also joy when he said (notice how he speaks of fruit, his words, and love in this passage, tying all this together) - ⁷ *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* ⁸ *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

⁹ *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.* ¹⁰ *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.* ¹¹ *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* ¹² *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn 15:7-13).*

If we remain in Him, and He in us, our desires & feelings fall in line with his, and we can ask for whatever we then want & it'll be given, since we're living out of true love. Love & joy walk together inseparable. Full joy, no room for anymore - a defense against all the suffering, temptation & pain of life. Paul stated this is the kingdom reign of God in Romans 14:17, ¹⁷ *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...* Do we see how it's contrasted against the objects which we seek in personal pleasure? When we live in line with the reign of God, Christ's righteousness (his love), peace & joy mark our lives, and all else has little to no control over us. What a great way to live - it's freedom!

The final taste of our fruit we should look at today is Peace. Peace results in the assurance of how things will turn out. Peace which automatically faces life's difficulties with deep assurance only comes out of the acceptance of the gift of life as found in the Son as we've seen in Romans 5:12 - *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have*



gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

In Christ there's an assurance all things will work together for my good. No matter what happens, I am secure in him. The giving up of trying to justify myself before God & others. Confessing, I'm not totally competent in & of myself, and can't attain right standing before God on my own. Peace born out of our complete surrender to Jesus. And when life doesn't treat me well, or others take out their fears on me, I'm still okay. I'm not in control of the outcomes, God's in charge. Peace reigns in me as these things become a part of my worldview.

To allow God to renovate our hearts is to surrender to Him. Allowing love, joy & peace, and all other attributes of the Christian life to well up due to being in his presence. I receive from Him the life Christ extends, love him in return, love others, and receive love from them in the ministry of the Spirit; we learn healthy interdependence in communal witness of God's love on earth. The local Church expressing Jesus (Take the time if you can in the next week to read our Vision & Values Statement which also outlines what a mature believer looks like).

I must cultivate a Vision of this; drive my heart towards Intention to follow Jesus; and utilize the Means to get there. Being honest, some feelings & desires aren't in line with the Love of God. I confess these to God & others. Praying in the Spirit to see change, and utilize others in process. Using Scriptures promises (much of what we've laid out in this sermon), believing in hope upon them, drawing on them to bring assurance & peace in this journey of faith.

Many of us live with deep hurt & strong feelings about certain people, or situations. Wounds which keep us from growing in love, joy & peace. Wounds which have become part of our identity; it's hard to vision life without them. But they can be healed & removed by the power of the Word & Spirit. Sometimes it helps to meditate or journal our thoughts, asking the Spirit to lead our hearts into change; to give us clear vision, intention, the will & means to move forward. Sometimes we need spiritual counsel from mature believers in this process, or more intense counseling as we tug at the frayed ends of emotional knots. Allowing others to edify & admonish, reminding us of who we are in Christ, as we receive the ministry of the Spirit through the Body of Believers.

If you're feeling hopeless, joyless & far from being loved, or loving - I'd like you to know - it doesn't have to be that way. You can have freedom. Feelings don't have to govern your life. You can mature in Christ & feel in ways which are healthy & life-giving. You don't have to be controlled by negative thoughts & patterns. Give Jesus the chance to bring you freedom! Let's pray through this a bit together now...