



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

Volume 354 • November 2022

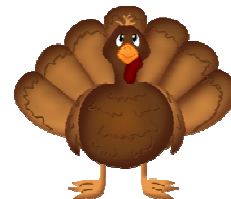
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Dear Friends,



I don't need a perfect world. I need a perfect peace.

Dr. Earl Henslin

*You shall keep in perfect peace those whose mind is stayed on
You, for they trust in You. Isaiah 26:3*

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... Galatians 5:22



I suppose it is natural for us to think in categories, to chop up lists of items into single pieces in order to be able to digest them. And that's ok if we are trying to learn certain kinds of information. But when we do this with the things of the Spirit, we get off-track. Love, joy, and peace are not to be understood as different items. They are directly interconnected and cannot be divided. Love is the fountainhead of joy which cannot help but be the sustainer of peace. There is a state of peacefulness that may not be exuberant, but calm and contented. Yet it is not possible for peace to exist without being sustained by a heart of love that rests in joy. This can all be true even when tears are flowing and we are struggling with all kinds of trouble.

The Presence of God is love, joy, and peace to any who are living in the circle of Him who is Love. To be conscious of His love is the highest joy and brings abiding peace. We don't grasp this if we think (as I have heard some say), "I just need some peace," as if peace could sit on its own. What they really mean is, "I just need freedom from this turmoil so I can get back to my life." That is far below the quality of real peace that arises out of love and joy.

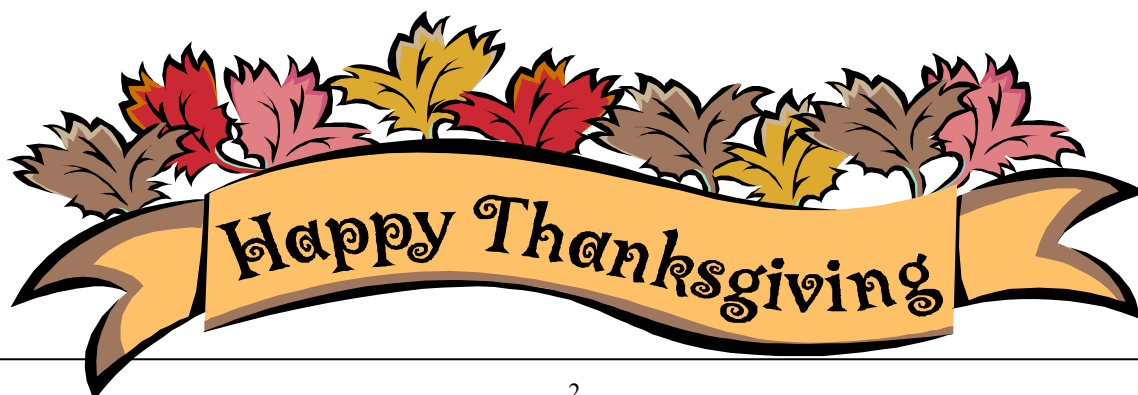
It is an ongoing journey of growing up into a life of true peace. It takes time. It takes living and learning just Who is the Prince of Peace. Even Paul had to grow through times when **without were fightings and within were fears (2 Corinthians 7:5)**. He later said, **"I have learned in whatever state I am to be content."** (Philippians 4:11) When we read in 1 and 2 Corinthians of what Paul suffered, we may think he was superhuman and that his example is simply beyond our capacity to follow. But Paul was a human being, a man. What was extraordinary was his utter surrender and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Shouldn't

we desire to attain to that place of knowing and living in Him, with peace as our daily norm? Paul's invitation to you and me is one that is a real invitation we can all embrace: that we follow him as he followed Jesus Christ.

To be content includes the ability to patiently endure circumstances one would rather not have to endure. But we can endure hardship as we become more and more rooted in His life within us. Contentment is an inner power generated by joy. As we read the letters that Paul wrote to the churches, we become aware of the horrible circumstances Paul endured. What had Paul learned that we can't seem to get? Paul's letters from prison, especially to the Philippians, are filled with **relationship**. He speaks of his relationship with Jesus from Whom all goodness flows. Then outflowing from Him, Paul speaks of his relationships with people. These living tangible relationships rooted in Jesus filled Paul with joy. They flowed like tributaries from the Fountainhead that watered his inner life with contentment. Contentment then fed his ability to endure troubles when necessary.

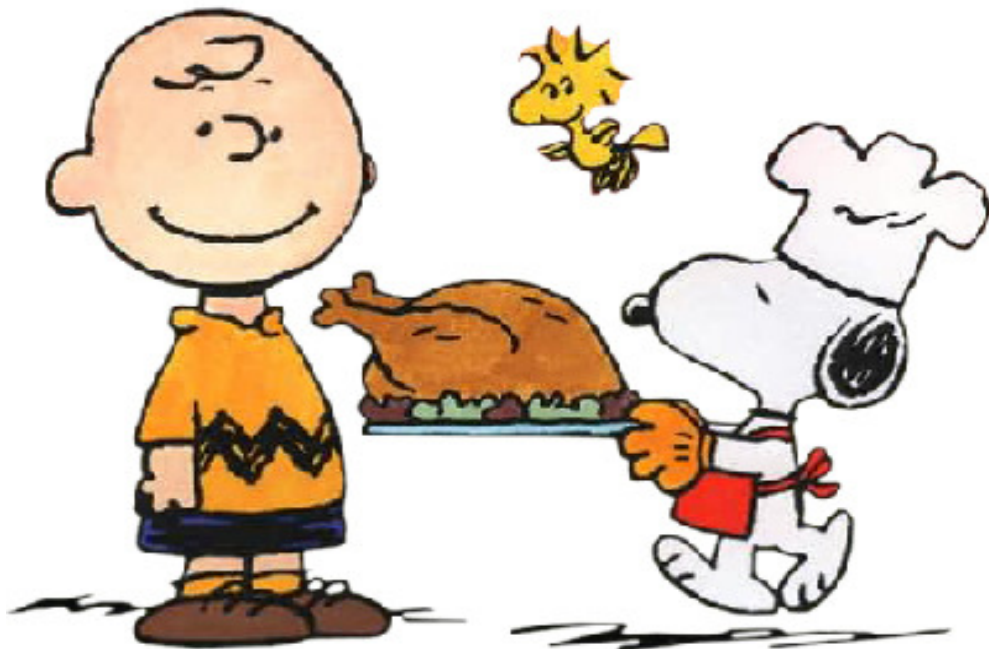
Many current brain researchers agree that the structure and function of the human brain is wired for joy. This is not an opinion or theory. It is measurably proven and documented. And that **joy is the direct result of loving relationships**. Contrary to Freud and his offspring, the driving force in life is NOT sex. IT IS JOY! As C. S. Lewis pointed out, "Joy is not a substitute for sex. Sex is very often though, a substitute for joy." Or as Chesterton said, "When a man goes to a brothel he is searching for God." There is a song from the mid 70's titled *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places*. You can replace the word *love* in this title with the word *joy*. That is because the words, love and joy, are intimately related when seen in their true light. For joy is the power released in us when the eye of one whom we love and who loves us twinkles at the sight of us.

All our recent brain research, which is good and helpful, doesn't tell us anything that the New Testament hasn't been telling us for two thousand years: **Love each other deeply, affectionately, consistently**. For this is the power source of joy which is our strength. Strength to live a daily normal life...yes. But even more, strength imbued with peace, to endure great difficulties that we all face in our lifetimes. We are **looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. (Hebrews 12:2) To this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. (I Peter 2:21)** We are not to lay aside this truth as beyond us, but embrace and pursue it as our own. We do this as we live in union with Him, abiding in Him day by day, no matter what comes. As we do so, little by little, the seeds of His own planting within us will grow into a harvest of love, joy, and peace. As we receive His abiding presence, we are empowered to then love others consistently, affectionately, and deeply. This is the never ending fountain that feeds into the JOY that is our strength. We live every moment with Him, and yet look forward to our ultimate reunion. For 'Joy is not in where we've been. Joy is Who's waiting at the end.' (from the song *Road to Zion*)



Defining Joy

The word for joy in the New Testament is *chara*, which you may recognize as a derivative of *charis*, which means *grace, gift*. One of the mysteries of language and history is that some words cannot be traced to a mere human origin. Rather, they seem to arise out of a cluster of living realities. They just seem to be, so to speak, what they are. Joy cannot be defined in a sentence. Its meaning is so much more than just *being happy or celebrating, etc.* Joy is a supernatural force of heavenly origin. It has many nuances and layers of various manifestations. The most moving to me comes from what I believe is the best explanation of joy by C. S. Lewis. He speaks of joy (in more than one place) as a deep longing for something that cannot be understood because it points to another world and another level of being. Joy is something that cannot be manufactured or captured or controlled by us, yet joy is what we were meant to be and have. And one day, by God's grace, we will be and we will have...joy complete!



Closing Thoughts...



The cure of most (if not all!) of our current cultural and personal maladies is found in a simple (yet demanding) obedience. That is, to obey the call of the New Testament: to love one another as we love ourselves. We believe we are His beloved, therefore we love others deeply, consistently, and affectionately. Let us begin by embracing love as a willful choice we may not FEEL like doing. Then watch what the Holy Spirit does in and through us in that presentation of ourselves to Him. *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, Who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (1 Thessalonians 2:16,17)*

*Giving Thanks,
Clay & Mary*



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