



# ***SPRING 2020 DEVOTIONAL***

***WEEK 2: MAY 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>***



**Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church  
Dr. D.Z. Cofield, Senior Pastor  
Mark Slone, Devotional Editor**



**Monday, May 25, 2020**

## **“God’s Grace Brings Joy”**

*When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose.*

**Acts 11:23 (ESV)**

“*The Best of Enemies*” was a feature film in 2019 which received very little press, but truly outlines the challenges of overcoming racism in a society which thrives on differences as a means of advancement. In this true story, Ann Atwater, a vocal civil rights leader, and C.P. Ellis, a local KKK leader, are coerced to come together to make a decision about school desegregation in their community. Each one was determined to stand their ground and get what they wanted with little regard for the other person’s beliefs or struggles.

The story climaxes as C.P. Ellis recognizes that his own personal beliefs and actions were unfounded. As a result, he turned his back on those in the clan and everything he believed at the risk of losing everything. But his losses turned into joy when he embraced his former enemies, gained a new way of living and a lifelong friend. Acts 11:23 demonstrates in a similar fashion how people were able to come to grips with the error of their ways and empathize with those whom they had formerly shunned.

The passage describes a time when many believers from Jerusalem scattered because of persecution. Although they were enthusiastic about sharing the gospel, their old ways continued to prevail. Initially, they only shared the good

news with other Jews until men from Cyprus and Cyrene began spreading the good news with the Greeks in Antioch.

When the gentiles also began to believe and the church in Jerusalem heard the news, they sent for Joseph, whom the apostles called Barnabas, because of his gift of encouragement, and dispatched him to investigate the situation in Antioch. When Barnabas arrived, he was overcome with joy to see the grace of God manifest in many beautiful ways. Instead of the normal hustle and bustle, backbiting, complaining and hatred for those unlike themselves, he saw a blissful unity based on God’s love for all mankind. He began to understand God’s desire for the entire world to be filled with people who reflected His image.

The grace of God showed up as Israelites looking beyond their personal persecution to demonstrating kindness and thoughtfulness for those who had overtly chosen to oppose the people of God, for those who had chosen to worship other gods, and for those who had little regard for God’s law. Because of God’s love demonstrated to strangers, Barnabas saw Greeks embracing the truth about God and forsaking their lofty philosophies and ideals.

With overwhelming joy, Barnabas began to encourage ALL those involved; those who had been scattered, new Israelite believers, as well as the gentile converts. He encouraged them to continue by faith to grow in God’s love for one another and to focus on God’s purpose of saving the world through His Son (John 3:17). We must learn to join God in His work of building His kingdom by encouraging others in their walk with the Lord.

When you see God’s grace change the lives of your enemies, people of other races and cultures, others with whom you

may have previously disagreed, or those who may have shunned you? Does this bring joy to your heart? Do you encourage them in their walk with the Lord? Would you allow God's grace to grow in your life so that you can empathize with their struggles? Will you encourage someone today to hold steadfast to God's purpose?

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Joy is the human response to the grace of God.

– Sis. Lilene Caldwell

**Tuesday, May 26, 2020**

### **"The Greatest Occasion of Joy."**

*So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.*

**Acts 15:3 (NKJV)**

Do you remember a time that you felt joy? I mean a time where you felt great pleasure and happiness. To be honest, joy isn't even like happiness. It is not an attitude dependent on chance or circumstance. No, joy remains even during suffering. Twelve years ago, I remember sitting in the pew of a church and making the decision to give my life to Christ. My heart was filled with so much joy, as I walked to

the front of the church. The feeling even surprised me as I was in a bad place mentally, and emotionally my world was full of trials. From that moment on, I have felt nothing but joy in my life.

As I reflect on my journey as a Christian, I think of the Apostle Paul, who affirmed he was deeply dedicated to the word of God. Along my journey, I have met people who professed to be Christians because they grew up in a Christian household and go to church out of habit. Individuals who were born as Christians, Christians who gave human-made qualifications for others to become Christians, and Christians genuinely dedicated to the teachings of Christ, like the Apostle Paul. It is no wonder that there are many responses to accepting Christ or remaining a devoted Christian. I also learned that some Christians use false doctrine, while other Christians simply need a quick lesson on self-righteousness. We will save that topic for another day. BUT today, I want you to understand that we are saved by grace (a gift from God). Today I want you to reflect on what makes you a Christian.

In Acts 15, people were giving qualifications for individuals to be saved. For example: unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved. The apostles and elders met to consider this question. The apostles and elders agreed and decided that they should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God

The Bible tells us that it's our faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. You do not have to do anything; to simply put it, you are saved by God's grace. Romans 10:9 (NKJV) states, "*That if you confess with your*

mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." And Acts 15:3, states, "So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren." As Christians, we should experience real joy not only when we are saved individually, but when other sinners are saved.

Acts challenges us to reflect on the type of Christian we are or want to be and to rejoice when a sinner is saved. It also reminds us of the joy of being saved by the grace of God.

"A person who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that he is under solemn obligations to serve Christ. The new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord." – Charles Spurgeon

**For if angels rejoice, much more should saints rejoice at the conversion of sinners (Luke 15:10).**

– Dr. Brittney Goodman Pettis

**Wednesday, May 27, 2020**

## **"Sharing the Burdens and Joys of Others"**

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

**Romans 12:15 (ESV)**

As I sat a meeting at my job, one day, two of my co-workers had made up in their minds that the awards and promotion that was to be presented to a fellow team member, should not have been given to him. They mumbled that he was always kissing up to the manager, although I knew this was not the case. What's funny is that the co-workers noticed that I had listened in on their dislike for the awarded team member. And as luck would have it, they asked if I agreed with their point of view. I immediately let them know that I was happy for the team member and the accomplishments he had made to the overall team standing on the assigned project. I placed myself in his shoes and was joyful for him as if it were me receiving the award. It was that day I too became an unwelcomed teammate to the uncompassionate co-workers. All of this illustrates the part of fallen human nature that makes it hard for us to take joy in the success of other people, especially when we think that their success has come at our expense. Are we more often happy or provoked to jealousy, when someone gets the promotion or has an occasion to celebrate?

In Romans 12:15, God commands us, "*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*" As you can see clearly that NO excuse is justification to sweep aside that which Jesus Himself did daily. Paul says that we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus because His heart is filled with compassion for people.

As a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ through faith I wholeheartedly welcome the grace and mercy of being called a child of God. Throughout the Bible you can find many references that reveals this born-again revelation as one begins to walk in his or her faith building path that Jesus presented to us before His death for our sins. Throughout my life I have witnessed so many ways that we (Gods creation) have decided to ignore or make excuses for one of the simplest aspects of faith, that Paul expressed in today's devotional text.

As children of God, we are called to community. We are called to step away from the path of selfish ambition and sacrifice our lives for others the way Jesus did for us. Paul echoes this message in his letter to the Colossians, where he writes further, on how we are to emulate Jesus' divine nature in everyday life. He says, *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive,"* (Colossians 3:12-13, ESV).

So, how can you and I live our lives like Jesus? How can we better *"rejoice with those who rejoice [and] weep with those who weep?"* It all starts with our faith-walk encountering the heart of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ourselves.

By rejoicing with others, we show our love for them in Christ.

**Remember the Golden Rule, "Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you." (Matt. 7:12)**

- Bro. Clifton Clark

**Thursday, May 28, 2020**

### **"Joy in THE Promise Keeper"**

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

**Romans 15:13 (ESV)**

Remember when you were a young child and still believed in Santa Claus? During the holiday season, your parents might have taken you to see Santa Claus, in a department store or at the mall. You would tell him everything you wanted for Christmas. Remember the joy you felt when you left Santa knowing that he would keep his promise to leave the toys you asked for underneath the Christmas tree on Christmas morning? Remember that joyful anticipation of the big day when that promise would be fulfilled? Now you that you are older it may seem as though that kind of wishful innocence is a relic of your past. What if I told you that you can have that same kind of joy in your adult life? What if I told you that it is possible to have that same kind of joy knowing that you can approach life's circumstances with peace and hope?

Paul writes “the God of hope” because it is God who inspires hope and gives it to His children. You can count on God to fulfill your needs to accomplish all that remains to be accomplished for you. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul wrote, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*”. Think about that. All that God would do for you He has already done! God has already provided you with all you need for the plans He has for your life. Knowing this, you can go through life with peace of mind knowing that not only does God have your back, but has provisioned all the blessings you will need for what He has planned for your life.

Hope operates from trust. In fact, hope is the by-product of faith, it is that peace and joy that comes from knowing that God not only will help you in working out your problems, but that He has already provided blessings to help you. In believing this, you can by the power of the Holy Spirit abound in the hope that comes from God’s abundant grace and fills the life of every believer.

As you go through life, find peace in the fact that God is the God of hope, that He can and will help you. God promised to never leave or forsake His people, and He always keeps His promises. On that you can find joy and peace, and in the process, let God’s grace abound in every aspect of your life.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) says that, “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*” You may face problems in life, but rest in the knowledge that God intends for good to come out of it in the end.

**Let the peace of God guard your heart.**

– Min. Russell De Pina

**Friday, May 29, 2020**

### **“Perspective”**

*Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

**2 Corinthians 6:10 (NIV)**

Tom Brady is arguably the greatest quarterback to have ever played in the NFL. Since football is the most popular sport in America, many fans of the sport are intrigued by his ability to continue to play quarterback at such a high-level, despite being 42 years old. Some have estimated that the average length of a football players career is a little more than 3 years. Tom Brady has been playing football for 19 years. Essentially, the longevity of Tom Brady’s career does not appear to have affected the quality of his play. A reporter was interviewing Tom to discuss his preparation and find out how he has continued to operate at such a high level for so many years. Most of his statements spoke to his intense mental and physical preparation. He paid attention to his diet and continues to exercise vigorously. He has access to so many things, because of his great wealth, that he could be caught up in many distractions. However his devotion to winning championships causes him to pass up many opportunities for enjoyment. In fact, he summarized

his perspective on how to be great in these words, “If you are going to beat me, you must be willing to give up your life.” He could make this statement because, in his perspective, winning championships is worth the grind of preparation.

Perspective is the state of seeing all the relevant data in a meaningful relationship. Perspective is a mental view or expectation/anticipation. Oftentimes, we as Christians will feel unappreciated in ministry. Many of the most devoted and faithful of us operate in situations that will not provide a lot of visibility to others. The sacrifices of time, talent, and/or treasure that we make can be taken for granted. This Scripture speaks to being sorrowful (deep emotional pain or sadness), being poor (deeply destitute, completely lacking resources or earthly wealth), and having nothing.

The reason that we rejoice (delight in God’s grace) is not because we will always enjoy the “grind” of ministry. It is not because we believe our sacrifices will be known to any of earthly counterparts. The reason, we can rejoice is because we maintain our perspective of the reason why we minister. We minister because we know that Christ “embraced the grind” of the cross and the shame associated with it, because of the victory that we would gain from His death. Hebrews 12:2 reads, *“For the joy set before Him he endured the cross, scorning its shame.”* We minister because we know that Christ does see our sacrifices and we know that our ultimate rewards will be realized when we see Him in heaven. We as Christians understand that the disappointment and sorry that we may experience in ministry will pale in comparison to the rewards we will receive when we get to Heaven.

Have you ever been so discouraged in ministry or in life, that it was difficult to maintain the perspective that your work will be richly rewarded when we enter heaven?

Remember, *“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”*  
- The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 4:17, ESV)

**Perspective is everything when you are experiencing the challenges of life. Joni Eareckson Tada**

- Min. Juene Franklin