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# **Let Heaven and Nature Sing**

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**Series: The Fruit of the Spirit**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Let Heaven and Nature Sing

When was the last time you went to a garden party? Oh, I don't mean the kind of garden party you're thinking about...where a group of people gather together in someone's back yard and fire up a barbecue pit, fix green salads, use plaid tablecloths, burn perfectly good meat, and smoke up the neighbor's back yard so he can't sit outside. I mean a *real garden party*. The kind where you and God and the trees and the rocks and the flowers and the grass have a praise session together, the trees lifting their leafy arms in adoration to their Creator, the rocks echoing their refrain to the Rock of Ages, the flowers bowing in humility before the Lily of the Valley, the Fairest of Ten Thousand.

You say, "Now I know he's gone off the edge. Take him away." No, wait a minute before you jump to the conclusion that my brains have completely evacuated the premises, or my mind has burnt out its main logic board. I believe that *trees do have worship services*. I believe that *flowers do adore God*. I believe that *rocks do offer praise to the Rock of our Salvation*. I believe that a day is coming when all of nature will once again break forth into the most incredible world-wide worship service this earth has ever known. But before you dismiss this as some kind of a gimmick to open a study, let's take a walk through God's beautiful Word and see just what happens when nature is freed to worship. Let's see if we can learn a thing or two from those awesome oaks, those dynamic daisies, those heavenly hills. For they have been given *to us to teach us how to express the joy of the Lord*.

This is the last in a look at the second of the fruit of God's Spirit in the believer; the fruit of joy. We have defined joy as an "inner excitement over who God is (His Worth), what God has said (His Word), what God has done (His Works), and how God has done it (His Ways)." It is an inner enthusiasm that is unaffected by circumstance; in fact, it is best displayed when circumstances are at their worst, for then God can receive the most glory. The joy of the Lord. We have learned, as we have throughout all of this study, that by meditating on those qualities through the

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Scriptures, we can literally allow that aspect of God's nature, His Joy, to flow through us back to Him in adoration and praise; and then to flow through us to those about us in a quiet, confident testimony of gladness, when there is no earthly cause for anything but sadness. Our outline:

- I- Let Heaven and Nature Sing
  - A- What Makes Trees Happy?
  - B- The Curse and The Choice
- II- Let Christians Learn to Praise
  - A- What Makes Christians Happy?
  - B- The Crisis and The Choice
- III- When You're Smiling
  - Does the Whole World Smile With You?

### LET HEAVEN AND NATURE SING!

The Word of God is a book of praise. From the beginning to the end, it is a handbook of adoration through which fallen man learns to worship the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer God. Through all of its pages flows the natural essence of man's returning to God the love and the joy that God has given him in the spirit realm. And since the fall, the miracle of that praise and that adoration is that *it is the result of man exercising his will*. That means we praise, not only when we feel happy, but *we praise continually*, because praise, along with obedience, is our way to demonstrate to God that we are aware that He is...and is thus our way to glorify God on earth, as He is glorified in Heaven. The balance to that statement comes when we realize that though *we are the ones who must choose to exercise joy, only God in us can produce it*. So it is not something we do, it is something we choose to let Him do. You, apart from God, cannot be joyful. God in you, however, can be nothing else. Therefore, all He wants you to do is to choose, moment by moment, to let Him be Himself... perfect joy.

Back now to that garden party and the question of whether or not heaven and nature sing. My argument is, that if they don't, they at least *paint for us a portrait of how we are to sing*, or else God would not have devoted so much space in Scripture to describing His leafy choirs and His melodious mountains. Before I share these verses with you, let me ask you to try to discern one thing. Whenever nature is said to be singing, ask yourself, *to whom and*

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*for what is the praise intended?* Let's begin our journey.

Isaiah is a good place to start.

Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. (Isaiah 44:23 NIV)

Over what were the mountains and trees singing? Look at the verse before it:

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isaiah 44:22 KJV)

The mountains and the trees of the forest are admonished to break forth and sing. Sing what? Redemption's song, that's what! No, they cannot experience it; and no, they cannot understand it, but the Hand of the One who made them has redeemed His people. Jehovah thinks it fitting that the joy His people feel be so intense that they can all but feel the trees laughing with joy—all but see the mountains quake in a resounding "amen". The question is: Do you possess *that kind of joy* when you sing redemption's story? When the Cross is sung about in a worship or praise time, does your heart beat with such fervor that you can all but hear the clouds clap their hands? Then perhaps you've missed the awesomeness of the joy of the Lord.

Remember this verse? We looked at it not too long ago.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12 NIV)

What are the mountains so happy about? What is it that is causing the elms to applaud? the pines to praise? the cedars to cry out with their arms to heaven? *The Word of God*.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void,... (Isaiah 55:11 KJV)

So God is saying that, once you come to grasp the reality that *never does God's Word not accomplish its purpose, never is it impotent*, whether you see results or not, once you grasp that truth, you ought to be so filled with joy that all you need to do is walk out the front door of your house and listen to the mountains singing "Amazing Grace" and watch the magnolias blossom into a chorus of "amens". Nature understands the perfections of God's

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Word. Oh, that man would follow suit.

And what about Psalm 65?

Those living far away fear your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy.

You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.

The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.

The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

(Psalm 65:8-13 NIV)

The grainfields and the sheep of the pasture are filled with joy at the provisions of God. Are you? They understand that the crops only grow at His command. Do you? They understand that the rains only fall when He allows. Do you? They are grateful for every ray of sunshine, for every raindrop, for every breeze that blows. Are you? Or are you always wishing for more? Are you always looking to your neighbor's grainfield wondering why the disease that infested yours did no harm to his? Study nature. It understands the joy of the Lord. It praises Him for His provision. Dear God, how can we do less?

Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name." Selah (Psalm 66:1-4 NIV)

And why not memorize this anthem of joy?

O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

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For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof.

Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Psalm 96:1-13 KJV)

The Psalmist pleads with us to learn a lesson from nature. God is coming back to judge the world in righteousness. The angels in Heaven are singing with joy. The trees of the forest are shouting "amen". And what are the Christians doing? The ones who will be exalted to rule even over the angelic host? They are walking this earth moaning and groaning over a grumpy committee chairman, the wrong colored pews in the church building, a broken air conditioner, a noisy water pump, or an overflowing washing machine. Beloved, on that day, those things won't matter. That day will last forever! Sing about it. Shout about it. Get excited about it. Even the lethargic weeping willow tree lifts its limbs in praise over that.

Does not nature understand the faithfulness of God? And does it not rejoice? Listen to Psalm 98:

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

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with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:4-9 NIV)

Beloved, the *hills are alive with the sound of music*. No, they are not eternal. All of nature will one day perish. All this earth as we know it will one day be dissolved. Yet even the heartless hills know enough to sing. Even the perishing pines know enough to praise. Even the unstable waves of the sea understand enough to clap their hands. When tornadoes whirl about them, still they worship the one who made them. Literally? Who knows. Who cares? God has painted living pictures for us from His Word about *how to praise from nature itself*. Listen carefully to what it says.

Two things I believe must be learned from these passages:

1- Nature understands the curse, yet still it worships. There was a time when weeds did not infest life's gardens. There was a time when crippling disease did not steal into grainfields and snuff out their very life. There was a time when treacherous hurricanes did not bow the mighty oak trees until their branches snapped beneath the load. There was a time when all of nature sang in the major key. There was a time when all of nature sang *because the garden in which it lived bore no thorns nor thistles*. There was that time, but these verses we've read came long after the fall. These are trees that sing *in spite of thunderstorms and hail*. These are hills that echo joy *in spite of earthquakes that cause them to crumble and mighty winds that blow apart their leafy covering*.

2- Whenever nature sings, it sings of the worth, the word, the works, and the ways of God. Why do the trees clap their hands? Because the Word of God never returns void. Why do the valleys shout and sing? Because the God who clothed them with carpets of green provides so bountifully. His works are awesome. Why does the sea roar? Because the God who set its boundaries is coming back to end the reign of Satan forever. Why does the earth break forth into song? Because the Lord God of Creation is so faithful.

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All of His creation resounds with that hymn of thanksgiving. God meets our needs. Learn from nature. Its eyes are on the Creator; not on the contrary winds the Master allows to blow.

### LET CHRISTIANS LEARN TO PRAISE!

The issue, then, is not whether or not trees really sing, or oceans really get excited enough to clap their waves in unison, or hills really echo psalms of praise. The issue is that God has told us that the matter of constant, continual praise is so essential to the Christian life that even nature, in its state of disharmony from the fruits of the curse, knows enough to praise God for Who He is. That leaves us absolutely no excuse. It also gives us perpetual reminders, living portraits of joy. Every time we see a mighty oak tree, we ought to visualize its branches clapping their hands in praise to God. Every time we stand in awe of a majestic mountain, we ought to imagine that we hear it echo the angelic host as they sing “Holy, Holy, Holy”. Every time we stand by the seashore and watch the waves beat against the sandy beach, we ought to hear them gently whisper — “God is...worship Him.”

Nature sings even amidst the curse. So should we. Nature seems to know that the day is coming when the weeds will disappear from the garden of life; the bugs that destroy will be destroyed; the disease that infests will be suddenly cured, and all of life will be restored. The Tree of Life will stand amidst the garden; the River of Life will flow through its center; and redeemed mankind will gather 'round the Throne of God to spend eternity in worship and praise and adoration.

Nature seems to know. Then why don't we, who have God's perfect Word, live as though this life is not the reason we live? Why aren't we joyful when the world begins to crumble, knowing that we have an inheritance that is “incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation.”?

Have the trees more sense than we have? Do the mountains understand what we cannot grasp? No. We have a free will. We have a choice. We don't sing and praise because God gave us no options. We sing and praise because we believe the Word of God. We believe that we have a “house not made with hands” that neither moth nor rust can corrupt. We sing and praise because we believe our God when He says that He has given us an inheritance that “thieves cannot break through and steal.”



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For us to praise is a matter of the will. God in us will do nothing else. But God will not force us to release His nature. We must choose to do so. So the issue comes down once again to *whether or not we are willing to rejoice, even if and especially if we do not feel joyful*. The Christian is told to rejoice in the Lord *always*. That comes from a Greek word that means *always*. It means that when the car breaks down, you rejoice. Because you're happy? No. Nobody is happy that the car breaks down. It means when the doctor calls, and says there is no cure, you rejoice. Because you're happy? No. Nobody is happy about pain and suffering. But you can rejoice. You *can rejoice* because:

1- God is about to reveal His nature by releasing His joy and His peace and gentleness and His self-control, if you'll let Him. You are about to see the miracle of the character of God manifested once again. Get excited.

2- God has a plan that includes meeting every need you have; so every need you have that you did not expect to have is God's way of saying, "Guess what, I've got an extra blessing for you."

3- God is reminding you that the day is coming when cars and houses and computers and televisions and hospitals and mortuaries and graveyards will all be a thing of the past. And it won't be long. Every reminder you have of how Satan has messed up this world our God created is a reminder that there is coming a day when that same God will recreate paradise, and we will have no sickness, no sorrow, no pain, and no dying.

4- Your God has invited an audience to watch you suffer life's inconveniences. He calls it *your witness*. That person in the service station who watched you fume over a broken water hose was invited by God to view His nature in action. Too bad he didn't see it. That nurse in the hospital was invited to witness a godly response to an ugly diagnosis. Too bad she missed it. It may have been why God sent you to that hospital. That person in your office was invited by God to watch one of His children take persecution joyfully. What a shame. That person in your family was invited by God to watch you trust Him when the rivers dried up and the bills kept coming, but all they saw was anxiety and anger. Too bad. God had invited them to a praise party. The trees in the back yard could have done better than that. Don't you see? It is our willingness to express joy when the world sees no reason for joy that is why we are allowed to experience that disappointment in

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the first place. We are praying for a ministry, and God sends us trouble, sends an audience to view our response, in order to give Him glory, and we throw away the opportunity, while we keep begging God for a ministry. Dear God, can't we learn a lesson from the singing trees? Those who watch us endure the storms are our ministry.

### WHEN YOU'RE SMILING...

So watch how you react to life's intrusions. Respond with joy. Don't wait until you *feel joyful*. Occasionally, you will *feel joyful*, and because you feel joyful, you will rejoice. But more often than not, the times you need most to express joy will be times when you feel anything *but* joyful. It is those times when the Scripture clearly instructs you to rejoice: to express joy by praise to God and by a quiet, consistent response before men.

There was an old song written back in the dark ages (when I was in school) called, "When You're Smiling". The gist of the lyrics, though obviously worldly, indicated that "When you're smiling the whole world smiles with you. When you're laughing, the sun comes shining through." Now the implication was that if you just *act happy*, things will all work out. That, of course, is not true. But what is true is that when you're smiling, the world *does often smile with you*. Try it. Try walking into a room full of people and *exhibit genuine joy*. Smile, and demonstrate a joyful spirit. Not the glad-handing, fake kind of smile. A genuine, gentle expression of quiet confidence. Now watch the people around you. They will often begin to smile, too. Now try walking into the same room and frown at everyone you see. Before long, the whole room will be filled with bears ready to pounce on their prey.

Your expression, you see, is contagious. Proverbs says this:

The light in the eyes [of him whose heart is joyful] rejoices  
the hearts of others, (Proverbs 15:30a Amplified Bible)

How you respond to life will affect the lives of everyone you touch. Whether or not you go around looking like you just had your Mercedes stolen will have a definite effect on those who look to you for spiritual direction. And you don't know who is looking to you...only God does. So Christian, you and I have a responsibility...a great responsibility. We must rejoice in the Lord always.

We must constantly be praising God for *everything* that

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happens; and we must constantly be responding before men with joy *no matter what happens*, because they may well be the audience God has sent to us to demonstrate how His nature looks when it encounters a flat tire, or a sick child, or an undeserved demotion, or an unexpected rejection. Think of everyone you meet as a God-sent audience looking for the nature of God. And think of every time you fail to rejoice as a time when that audience failed to see what they were sent to witness.

The joy of the Lord. It is a fruit that God's Spirit constantly produces in our lives *if we let Him*. But the choice, moment by moment, situation by situation, to let that joy flow is up to us. We don't "fake it" and pretend to be joyful. That's hypocrisy. Nor do we pray and ask God to make us feel joyful. That's naive. We pray and say, "Lord, express yourself through me right now, *no matter how I feel*," and then, by faith, *express joy*.

Heaven will open, and from the throne of God there will rain down a torrent of joy. Even then we may not "feel" joyful. But "feeling" is not the issue. The ability to express joy will be ours because we have prayed according to God's will, and He will release through us the divine enablement to reveal His nature to man and to express His nature in praise back to Him.

Joy. It is that supernatural expression of the character of God that consistently reflects internal excitement over Who He is, What He's said, What He's done, and How He's done it. It will light up a room darkened by sadness. It will flood a dry soul with the water of Life. It will communicate with a smile when the world is collapsing, what a thousand sermons could not say. It will communicate the character of God.

Joy. It is the freedom to be excited when life falls apart. It is the unwavering constant in a world fueled by feelings. It is the life of God poured through the Christian with such impact that the unbelieving world says, "I want that." It is a gentle smile when bad news comes. It is a quiet "Thank you, Lord," when the boss says, "No". It is enthusiastic cooperation with the one who just defamed you. It is a song sung from the heart, when the melody of the world just lost its tune.

Joy. It is also the song that nature sings when the skies turn black and the cloud formations hide the sun. Listen for it. If you see through the eyes of the Spirit and hear through the ears of the Spirit, you will see that big oak tree lift its branches and

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gently whisper... “Praise God”, as the mountains and hills echo their refrain. The waves that beat upon the shore will send their rhythmic approval, as well. For nature has learned what we are so slow to grasp. That our God is to be praised...all the time.

The psalmist said it so well in Psalm 148. Let us pray those words together as we close:

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above.

Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.

Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,

you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,

wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,

kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,

young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. (Hallelujah!)

Praise the LORD. (Psalm 148:1-14 NIV)

All the trees of the forest are shouting “Amen!”

May we, by our lives, shout “Amen!” as well.

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