Precious Keys to the Kingdom of Joy

Part 2: GROWING IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Scripture:

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and in my place I trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation that will invade us. 17 Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive trees fail, and the fields give no food, though the flock be cut off from the pen, and there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will exult in the LORD; I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 *For* the Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like hind's feet; he enables me to walk upon my high places. – Habakkuk 3:19f

B. Opening Prayer

C. The Week that Was! (Mark's call)

D. The Message of Habakkuk: "Though, though, though . . . yet, yet, yet!"

- MP: Habakkuk has received the two greatest keys to the Kingdom of Joy:
- He *knows* where to focus his attention and hope
- He *chooses* to rejoice in what he sees there
- This is Christ's message to us all:

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is *that* darkness." – Mt. 6

E. Review:

1. <u>Our theme in this series:</u> Understanding and Growing in the Joy of the Lord (the serious business of heaven!)

2. <u>Last Week:</u> # 1: The Joy of the Lord—and the Lord of all Joy—is our ABIDING inheritance in Christ

    - The Holy Family (God Triune) is a Happy Family
    - Sin alienated mankind from experiencing the life and joy of God
    - Through the work of Christ, God's original purpose is fulfilled in His People: They are united with, and enter into, His Holy, Happy Family!

- At conversion the Saints first taste the Joy of the Lord, and acquire a taste for more (Rev. 2:1f)!
- MP #1: The joy of the Lord is a *Present Reality,* but experienced imperfectly and intermittently (WCF)

- MP #2: The Joy of the Lord is a *Future Destiny,* that one day will be experienced perfectly and permanently

- MP #3: We are betwixt and between . . . GROWING to perfection!

3. <u>This week:</u> Though the Joy of the Lord is always present, it also grows as we grow in wisdom, faith, and obedience

4. <u>Next time:</u> To fully enjoy the Joy of the Lord, you must kill all the killjoys!

II. THOUGH THE JOY OF THE LORD IS ALWAYS PRESENT, IT ALSO GROWS AS WE GROW IN WISDOM AND FAITH

A. **The Joy of the Lord is a Growing Thing** (Galatians 5:22f)

- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, *and* self-control. (God's part)

- Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. **8** For he who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh; but he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

- MP: All the fruit of the Spirit begin as a seed planted once and for all in our hearts, *a seed that will grow over time if properly watered, nourished, tended, etc.* (Our part)

- <u>Illustration:</u> Much-Afraid and her long, difficult journey with the Shepherd to the high places of love, peace, and joy! (i.e., to abiding joy and victory over all killjoys, no matter what the circumstance)

B. **The Joy of the Lord is watered by Wisdom** (1 Cor. 1:12)

1. Key text:

9 As it is written, "Things no eye has seen, things no ear has heard, *things that* have not entered into the heart of man, *these are* the things that God has prepared for those who love Him." **10** Yet God has revealed *them* to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. **11** For who among men knows the things of a man

except the spirit of the man that is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. **12** *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.*

2. Precious Revelations to make us wise and to supply a proper focus for our faith

- His Divine Nature: The Holy Family (F, S, HS) is a Happy Family
- His eternal love for His people (Eph. 1)
- His eternal purpose for His people (Rom. 8:28)
- His eternal joying over His people (Zeph. 3)

Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all *your* heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! [15] The LORD has taken away *His* judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more. [16] In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands fall limp. [17] "The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty warrior who saves. He will exult over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

- Note: Because the Holy Family Happily Sings over His people, Christianity is a Singing Religion

"When de negroes go round singin' 'Steal Away to Jesus,' dat mean dere gwine be a 'ligious meetin' dat night. De masters … didn't like dem 'ligious meetin's, so us natcherly slips off at night, down in de bottoms or somewhere. Sometimes us sing and pray all night." – Wash Wilson

C. **The Joy of the Lord is Nourished by Faith** (Eph. 6, 1 John 5, Heb. 4)

- MP: Spirit-illuminated truth always brings joy; but to *hold on* to the joy, we must *hold on* to the truth, no matter how sorely we are tested over it!

- "Therefore stand, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace[2]— in all *of this* taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. – Eph. 6

- "For whatever is begotten by God triumphs over the world. And this is the triumph that has triumphed over the world—our faith. **5** And who is he who triumphs over the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" – I John 5

- OT Illustration: The case of the Hebrew spies: The spies gave a bad report, the people believed it, and they did not enter in! But Joshua and Caleb were men of another spirit—so they did! (Num. 13, Heb. 3).

- MP: Let us search and meditate upon the Scriptures, asking God to illumine them to our hearts, and strengthen us to believe and obey them!

D. The Joy of the Lord is strengthened by obedience (2 Pet. 1:4)

1. Mini-Review:
   - Joy requires focus . . .
   - On the Happy God
   - On the great truths concerning His redemptive purpose and plans for His people
   - But also . . . on His promises and commandments

2. What Peter has to say on this:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the spiritual knowledge[2] of God and of Jesus our Lord, **3** seeing that His divine power has bestowed on us everything *necessary* for life and godliness through the spiritual knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and moral excellence. **4** Through these things *He has granted us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of lust.* – 2 Pet. 1:2-4

3. Key promises and commandments from Philippians, the Epistle of Joy! (HSL)

- *Cultivate an attitude of gratitude (which primes the pump of joy):*

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you . . ."

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." – 1 Thess. 4

- *Express confidence in God's eternal purpose for you (personally):*

" **. . .** being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect *it* until the day of Christ Jesus."

- *Remind yourself often that God is in control of ALL events, and working them for the good of His people:*

"**19** Yes, and I will *continue to* rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance . . . whether by life or by death!" (cf. Rom. 8:28)

- *Remind yourself that this includes your trials, too!*

17 But even if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice together with you all. **18** And in the same way, you also should be[2] glad and rejoice together with me. – Phil. 2

"**3** And not only *this,* but we also glory (joy!) in *our* tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance proven character, and proven character, hope (and joy). – Rom. 5

- *Focus on the Future:*

The Generic Command: "But this one thing *I do:* forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, **14** I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The Penultimate Future: **21** For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. **22** If, however, I should live on in the flesh, that *will mean* fruitful labor for me. And *so,* I do not know what to prefer, **23** but am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ (for that is far better *for me*), **24** yet *knowing that* to remain on in the flesh *is* necessary for you. **25** And so, being convinced of this, I know that I will *indeed* remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that your rejoicing over me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. (Note: Heaven is for Real; Miracles from Heaven; 90 Minutes in Heaven)

The Ultimate Future: The Second Coming, the Resurrection, and the World to Come:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await *the* Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who will transform our lowly body, that it might be conformed to His glorious body, according to the exercise of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.

"How divinely full of glory and pleasure shall that hour be when all the millions of mankind that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God shall meet together and stand around Him, with every tongue and every heart full of joy and praise! How astonishing will be the glory and the joy of that day when all the saints shall join together in one common song of gratitude and love, and of everlasting thankfulness to this Redeemer! With what unknown delight, and inexpressible satisfaction, shall all that are saved from the ruins of sin and hell address the Lamb that was slain, and rejoice in His presence!" -- Isaac Watts

- *Learn the Secret of Contentment:*

11 Not that I speak out of want, for I have learned to be content in *all* my circumstances: **12** I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. In each and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of enjoying bounty and suffering lack. **13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. *(gratitude for the gravy)*

Note: More principles to come, but in the context of Killing the Killjoys!

VI. CONCLUSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIORITIZING THE JOY OF THE LORD

A. Mini-Review: We are getting FOCUSED on joy: Our joyful God, the revealed truths by which He creates, nurtures, and preserves joy, and the promises and commandments that help us to walk consistently in it

B. We need also to see the IMPORTANCE of joy:

- The joy of the Lord keeps the saints healthy

"Man cannot live without joy; therefore, when he is deprived of true spiritual joys it is necessary that he become addicted to carnal pleasures."—Thomas Aquinas

- The joy of the Lord makes us a blessing to a sad and frightened world

Blessed is the man *whose strength is in You, i*n whose heart are the highways *to Zion* (or, whose heart is set on pilgrimage). Passing through the Valley of Weeping, they make it into a place of springs; yes, the early rain covers it with blessings. They go from strength to strength, *and* every one of them appears before God in Zion. – Psalm 84

"There are souls in this world which have the gift of finding joy everywhere and of leaving it behind them when they go." -- Frederick Wm. Faber

"When was the last time you laughed for the sheer joy of your salvation? People are not attracted to somber doctrines. There is no persuasive power in a gloomy and morbid religion. Let the world see your joy and you won't be able to keep them away. To be filled with God is to be filled with joy." – Anon.

- The example of Tom Calhoun: A man who CHOSE the joy of the Lord!

C. <u>Next Time:</u> Killing the Killjoys!

- "My feelings are not God. God is God. My feelings do not define truth. God's word defines truth. My feelings are echoes and responses to what my mind perceives. And sometimes - many times - my feelings are out of sync with the truth. When that happens - and it happens every day in some measure - I try not to bend the truth to justify my imperfect feelings, but rather, I plead with God: Purify my perceptions of your truth and transform my feelings so that they are in sync with the truth." – John Piper

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. – John 15:11

Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. – John 16:20

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. –John 16:22

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. – John 16:2

His lord said to him, 'Well *done,* good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' – Mt. 25:21, 23

"But the High Places of victory and union with Christ cannot be reached by any mental reckoning of the self to be dead to sin, or by seeking to devise some way or discipline by which self-will can be crucified. The only way is by learning to accept, day by day, the actual conditions and tests permitted by (the all sovereign) God, by a continually repeated laying down of our own will, and an acceptance of His as it is presented to us in the form of the people with whom we must live and work, and of the things that happen to us. Every acceptance of His will becomes an altar of sacrifice, and every such surrender and abandonment of ourselves to His will is a means of furthering us on our way to the High Places." HH