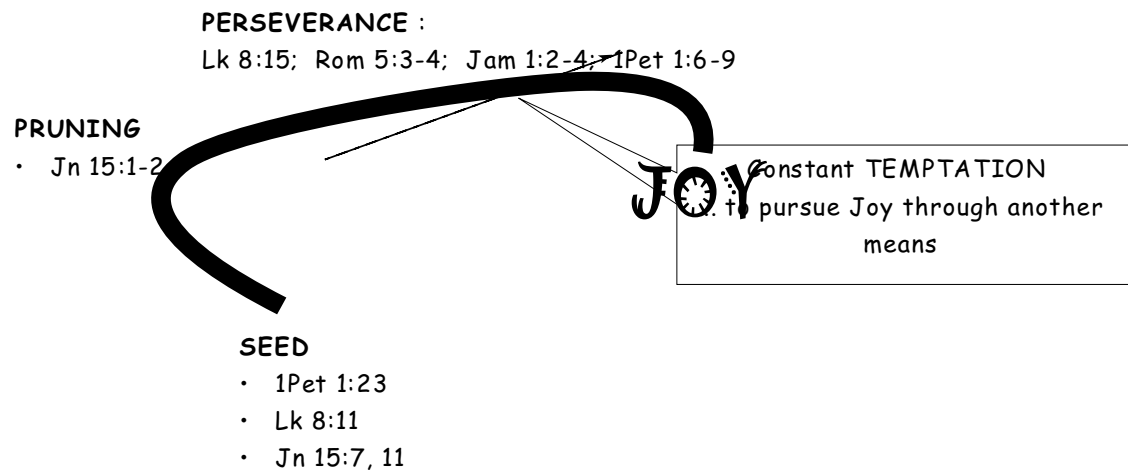


Sunday Celebration (3-13-05)
(Message at LCC the week after Spring Retreat)

"Joy ... the Road Less Traveled"

Thought From the Men's Session: We don't arrive at joy by aiming at joy... we arrive at joy by pursuing the path of fruitfulness.

- The Biblical Revelation (Jn 15:11, 8): Our Joy is About Having God's Joy Made Full in Us ... God's Joy is in His Glory Being Revealed God's Glory is Revealed by Our Bearing of Fruit



Jn 15:8

— What is this "FRUIT"? (I believe it's more than the fruit of the Spirit)... To understand the fruit we should probably start with the SEED)

THE SEED FROM WHICH THE FRUIT IS PRODUCED

1 Peter 1:23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

Luke 8:11, 15 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

The Seed = the Living Word of God (see also Jn 15 "if you abide in me and MY WORDS abide in you")

... Therefore, I believe that the Fruit is the Life That is Produced by the Living Word of God

Lk 8:15 ... FRUIT IS PRODUCED BY SEED, WHEN:

(1) The Word is HEARD

Jn 15:7, 11

Rom 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ"

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

"I will not say that the more a Christian knows, the more joy he has; but I can truly say that ignorance often hides from us many wells of delight of which we might otherwise drink, and that, all other things being equal, the best-instructed Christian will be the happiest man. He will know the truth, and the truth will make him free. The truth will kill a thousand fears which ignorance would have fostered within him... If you are diligent students of the Word, you will find that you have good reason to rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances." Charles Spurgeon, "Christ's Joy and Ours"

— If You Want to Reap Joy, You Have to Sow Seed (the Word)

NOTICE: What Jesus DID NOT SAY— "If you let me lay my hands on you and "give you a touch", then my joy will be in you and your joy will be full". No, he connected Joy to the Seed of the Word "Abiding" in us.

Rom 15:4-5 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. [hope and joy may be two sides of the same coin]

"One of the things this teaches us is that we have not begun to know all the ways it is possible to get hope. We have very small experience in life compared to God's wisdom. There are a thousand ways that God has designed to give us hope. Most of them we have not yet tasted or even conceived. Yet how often we murmur that the few proven ways we get hope are missing! We do not realize that there are ways to get hope that we have never thought of. How small-minded of us in our hopelessness to look at our closed Bible and say, 'What I need is _____, and this is not in the Bible.' How do we know we need _____ and not some utterly unexpected hope that the Bible will awaken in us when we read it in faith? Indeed, we may lack hope because we think we need something we do not need. It may take the Word of God to show us what we really need is Christ. ... Sometimes what we need from the Bible is not the fulfillment of our dream, but the swallowing up of our failed dream in the all-satisfying glory of Christ. We do not always know the path of deepest joy. But all Scripture is inspired by God to take us there." John Piper, "When I Don't Desire God", p. 100

(2) The Heart is "Honest and Good"

Honest (Gk - Kalos) = good, healthy, well ordered

Good (Gk - agathos) = beneficial, profitable, useful

— It is the product of Pr 4:23 a heart that has been watched over carefully — it hasn't been allowed to run off on tangents or neglected to become OVERGROWN

(3) When the Heart "Holds Fast" to the Word

This is FAITH! ... Holding Fast— Depending Upon Completely— Falling

Flat if God's Word Could Fail!!

James 2:26 faith without works is dead.

John 13:17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household,

Jn 15 the Pathway to Joy Travels Through FRUITFULNESS

PRUNING ... See Gina's Women's Session and the Men's Session from the Retreat

PERSEVERING

Luke 8:11, 15 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ... 15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Gk - Hupomonê is associated with hope (1 Thess 1:3) and refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. (from The Complete Word Study Bible)

Rom 5:3-4

Jam 1:2-4

1Pet 1:6-9

Heb 10:36

— "Receiving What is Promised" — Perseverance allows us to "complete the transaction". How many of us are missing out on the delivery of the good that we have begun. (Planting— Pruning— Persevering)

Rom 15:4-5 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The Richness of Christianity is NOT Like Lemonade, but Rather Like Fine Wine (aged for fullness).

"We have only one way to become mature and complete in God: We must develop the difficult but crucial discipline of perseverance. Jesus said that only through perseverance do we bear fruit" Gary Thomas, "Sacred Parenting", p. 144

"There's only one way to develop perseverance: We have to surrender to God as we feel pushed past the human breaking point. We have to reach the threshold of exhaustion, and then get pushed even further. One trial can help us deal with fear. Two trials can lead to wisdom. But perseverance? That takes a bundle of difficulties. ... If you think about it, how do we grow in endurance and patience? Only one path exists: to have both our endurance and patience sorely tried, even past the breaking point, until we learn to rest in God's 'glorious might'." Gary Thomas, "Sacred Parenting", p. 144, 146