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The Joy of Who He Is...

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Joy of Who He Is...

How would you like to be filled with joy?
No matter what comes your way;
How would you like the Joy of the Lord
To encompass you every day.

How would you like to awaken
Each day to the victor's song,
Seeing life as God sees life
Singing the whole day long.

We all would like to be that way,
But it seems it's not meant to be;
For so many trials come our way
We cease in our hearts to be free.

But, oh, that we had God's perspective;
For the things that so destroy
Are the very same things that He allows
To bring us eternal joy.

If only we could somehow learn
As earth's dread paths we trod,
Not to focus on what we see
But to keep our eyes on God.

On who He is, on what He's done,
On the wonder of His power,
Then we would know what real joy is
Hour after hour after hour.

Joy! Another of those seemingly elusive qualities that we attribute to an effervescent few whose personalities seem to overflow with bubbly "Praise the Lords", or whose faces appear to have permanent smiles engraved around their mouths. It doesn't seem to matter; when you see them, they appear to *be*

happy. And the best you can do is either a) wish you were like that or b) at least infer in your heart that they are not “real” or that they don’t live in the same “real” world you live in, a world filled with unemployment, dirty diapers, wrecked cars, broken homes, global wars, racial strife, personal disappointments, and spiritual warfare. Either their hearts are on another planet or their minds are out to lunch, you surmise; and you dismiss them as spiritual Martians who haven’t yet emerged from their cocoons or space ships into the real world of grief and pain and sorrow.

One of two things is correct. Either your assessment is right, or they are some of those special few who seem to have actually entered into the Joy of the Lord. The reason we don’t want to accept that fact is that, if they are, then it’s possible. And if it’s possible, then what’s our excuse? Just what is Joy? We discussed that in our last study.

Joy: A supernatural 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), that is continually encouraged in spite of the circumstances of life.

Joy, unlike happiness, is not a barometer of the soul that responds to life’s circumstances, reacting with excitement when things go well and reacting with depression when things go badly. Joy is the opposite of that. Joy comes from the Spirit of God. It is a fruit of His Spirit’s living in us. When it is allowed to be released (by an act of our wills), it reflects the constancy of God’s nature regardless of circumstances. In fact, the tougher the circumstances, the richer the joy, because when the sky is falling, God is in the process of being glorified, and we are in the process of being changed. Thus, like all of the fruit of the Spirit, joy is so obviously the antithesis of the world’s responses that when a believer exhibits “real joy”, the wondering world is in awe and responds, “They have been with Jesus.”

This is part two of our study of joy. In our last lesson we looked at how God releases His joy in the believer’s life when he or she meditates continually in the Word on the Word. In other

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words, one way to abide in God's joy is to abide in God's Word. As you do, you are to focus on its immutability, its eternal nature, its power, its constancy, and its trustworthiness. Thus, when God calls a promise to our minds in time of testing, immediately our hearts respond with joy, because we know that Word is true, and we know that Word is unchanging; therefore, we can rest.

In this lesson we look at the second thing that brings us joy—meditating on the Worth of God. While this is no doubt the most important, we looked first at the Word since the Word is both the vehicle of His joy and one source of it. Here we look at: “The Joy of Who He is...”

Our source will be the Scriptures, and the passages that specifically teach us how meditating on the nature of God actually gives the Christian joy. Here is our outline for this study: The Joy of Who He is...

- I- Meditating on His Love
- II- Meditating on His Presence
- III- Meditating on His Power
- IV- Meditating on His Awesomeness

MEDITATING ON HIS LOVE

The question, then, is “How would you like to be filled with the Joy of the Lord...constantly, consistently, enthusiastically... even in the storms of life?” And one answer is to meditate day and night on the nature of God...who He is.

Example: When the torrents of doubts flood your mind amidst times of physical pain or anguish, and Satan begins haunting you with unanswered questions like, “How could a God of love allow...” or “Why me, Lord?” If your mind has been saturated with truth about the love of God, He will from His Word answer you quickly, and your joy will abound. Well the Psalmist wrote:

Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

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Many are asking, “Who can show us any good?” Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.

You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:1,6-8 NIV)

David is searching for joy amidst weeping. He is in distress. He calls out to God for help. The enemy is whispering “What good can come of this?” God answers, “I can come of this...be still;” and David’s weariness turns to joy. He turns to God and returns that joy through praise. Suddenly, David is enveloped in peace. Why? Have the circumstances changed? Of course not, but David’s heart has been lifted from the plane of circumstance to a reminder of the love of God. If God is who He says He is...love, then why should David fret? And why should you? And why should I? Rather, ought we not to meditate, breathing the Scriptures into our hearts, on passages such as Isaiah 43:

But now thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are mine.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shalt not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;...

Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore, I will give men for you, And people for your life. (Isaiah 43:1-3a,4 NKJV)

“You are mine!” God reminds, “and I have loved you... therefore, the floods may roar, and the waters surround you, but they will not overflow you; the fires about you may burn, but you will not be destroyed by those fires. For I AM, the Lord, Himself, who loved you and made you, is with you...”; and He plans through those very floods and fires to create a

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ministry through you, and exchange people for your life. As you relinquish control and let God be God, He will trade your control for His control, and the result will be lives transformed to the Glory of God.

Now doesn't that give you joy? Don't you just want to shout it to the rooftops? My God loves me so much that the very trials that Satan designs for evil, He will use to change me and through me change my world. That's God's perspective of floods and fires.

They reveal His matchless love, and as they do, the very things that once brought you depression now flood your heart with JOY.

MEDITATING ON HIS PRESENCE...

But even being reminded of the love of God is sometimes not enough to restore to our hearts that unspeakable joy, because Satan sells us the lie that God may love us but He's so far from us that His love is of little comfort. Job had this problem. He fretted and fumed "if only God would come near to me, I'd get some answers." That's why it is so important to meditate daily on the *presence of God* as well.

Your God is omnipresent. He is always everywhere. Never can there be a moment, even in your loneliness, when you are alone. You may feel alone, but that is the time for you to let God call back to your mind from "the tip of your tongue" where you have stored it, passages from His very lips that remind you of His presence. It is guaranteed to give you joy. By whom? By God Himself. That Messianic portion of Psalm 16, which is repeated in Acts 2:28, reads like this: (Memorize it.)

The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.

I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My

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flesh also will rest in hope.

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence
is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures
forevermore. (Psalm 16:6-9,11 NKJV)

There is no reason for you to be moved. There is no reason when, in the long night hours, the enemy floods your heart with fear and the comfort of God seems planets away, for you to give in to those fears, not if you have been meditating on the presence of God. Immediately. Satan is revealed for what he is...a liar. You are not alone. God is with you; yea, God is in you. Memorize Jeremiah 23. It says this:

“Am I a God near at hand,” says the LORD, And not afar off?

Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the LORD; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:23,24 NKJV)

And, of course, memorize and meditate daily on Psalm 139. What an awesome thought:

You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? (Psalm 139:5-7 NKJV)

Even in the uttermost part of the sea,

If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:9,10 NKJV)

My friend, if you go out into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and jump in and go all the way down to the bottom of the ocean, you will not even begin to separate yourself from the presence of God. So surely that turmoil that surrounds your heart in the dark of night is false, because God has not taken His Spirit from you. He will never leave you nor forsake

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you. Never. Therefore, when you feel alone, you have simply bought the devil's lie. Crawl up into God, meditate on His Presence and rest. Do you know what will happen? Joy will flood your soul.

MEDITATING ON HIS POWER ...

So spend your time meditating on the worth of God, who He is. Spend some time meditating on His love for you, on His presence in you, and certainly on His power in you, as well. For even if God cares, and even if God is with you, Satan can imply to you, as he did to Job, that your God happens to be powerless in this situation. Lie! Your God cannot under any circumstances ever have less than total, complete authority and power, or He ceases to be God. Don't ever forget that. Your joy will be magnified as God is glorified for His Omnipotence. Because He is all-powerful, there is nothing He cannot do. Therefore, once you have His Word as your promise, you can rest in that promise, for there is no danger that the circumstances will overtake His capacity to be the Victor. Listen:

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. The Lord is the strength of His people, a fortress of salvation for His anointed one. Save your people and bless your inheritance, be their shepherd and carry them forever. (Psalm 28:7 NIV)

The Psalmist only began thinking of God's strength and power, and his heart began to "leap for joy". So filled with joy was he, simply meditating on the power of God, that he burst out in songs of praise. He pictured his God as the Shepherd, the Good One, and began singing songs of the shepherd carrying his flock forever. That is what meditating on the power of God will do for you. Out of your heart will flow melodies of praise, because "The Lord is the strength of His people."

May I urge you, if you have not done so, to memorize Isaiah 40:28-31, where the Holy Spirit is reminding us of one of the most profound practical truths in Scripture. This truth says God never gets tired, never runs out of energy, and never runs short of power. In fact, so incredible is God's strength

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that we who own His Spirit by faith in His Son can, in times of weariness, simply appropriate that very same power, and literally take wings and soar through life's pressures. In fact, the passage tells us that the weaker we are, the stronger He becomes in us. It goes like this:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. There is unsearchable (no searching of His understanding).

He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31 NKJV)

How can you have that promise from God on the tip of your tongue and be depressed in your weakness? Be discouraged in your weariness? Surely you are weak. God knows that. But remember, the weaker you are, the more usable you are. Paul reminded us of that in II Corinthians 12. He quotes God's answer to his plea for strength. It was this:

And he [God] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory [boast] in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities (needs), in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong.

(II Corinthians 12:9,10)

We've heard that passage quoted so many times that we've cheapened it in our thoughts. What it is literally saying is this: "The less we have to offer, the more God gets to give. The more God gets to give, the more God gets glorified. The more God gets glorified, the greater our cause for joy...because His glory is why we are here." So Paul learned to actually become filled

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with joy when sickness, or unjust persecution, or the lack of funds, or serious calamities interfered with his plans. The minute they did, Jesus was set free to reveal His power in a whole new way; and the watching world got a chance to see God in action in a man.

Do you long for the joy of the Lord? Then meditate day and night on the power of God. Every time you hear the thunder roll, praise God for His power. Every time the lightning flashes, thank God for His power. Every time the sky falls, and your heart sinks, and there seems to be no place to turn for strength, praise Him for His power, because in your weakness you are about to experience His strength anew, and as you do, your joy will be multiplied.

MEDITATING ON HIS AWESOMENESS...

There is no stopping. God's patience, God's kindness, God's mercy, God's grace, God's faithfulness, are all sources of joy. Because we will be looking at those things in future lessons, let us content ourselves with just one more of God's attributes that particularly affects our joy. It is His awesomeness. By that word I mean who God is in the light of our frame of reference. One of Satan's greatest ploys as he tries to remove our joy takes place when he realizes that if he cannot stop us from trusting God in the midst of our trials, his only hope is for us to somehow bring God down to our level and try to reason into God's character the same type of limitations we have. This was his success story with Eve. And the degree to which you attribute to God the limitations of man, to that degree, you rob Him of His Deity, and thus of His capacity to act as God on your behalf. The devil attributed to God in the garden the character weakness of selfishness. He made God a petty god. He implied that God only wanted to limit Eve so she couldn't be as smart as He. He implied that God was jealous of her potential success, that God was threatened by her potential wisdom. That was the devil's lie. He uses the very things that make God so approachable to do it.

God uses the characteristics of man to define His nature.

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So Satan turns and tries to use that against Him. God depicts Himself with hands and feet, so Satan implies that God isn't Omnipresent. God depicts Himself as thinking and deciding, so Satan tries to get us to see Him with the same limits to His thinking and deciding that we have, thus making Him less than Omniscient, less than Sovereign. God depicts Himself as weeping over our hurts, so Satan paints Him as weak. God depicts Himself as waiting patiently for us to repent, so Satan depicts Him as spineless and unstable. The very nature of God that allows Him to understand our frailties, Satan tries to turn into examples of weakness, and subtly, ever so subtly, he tries to get us to see God as something less than He really is.

I believe Satan is delighted with some of the music and some of the books and some of the theology in this generation which, in an honest effort to portray God as having a heart for man, have taken the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Creator of heaven and earth and made Him to be little more than a spiritual Clark Kent who every now and then ducks into a phone booth in heaven, dons His eternal Superman Suit, and does something spectacular. The rest of the time, Satan wants us to imagine that our God is just a little more than man, but certainly less than the All-powerful King of Kings and Lord of Lords He really is. When we buy that lie, he steals our joy.

That is why it is so important for us to meditate on God's awesomeness...the decided eternal difference between Who He is and who we are. For it is the joy of Who He is that makes our lives worth living. Listen:

Clap your hands, all you nations: shout to God with cries of joy.

How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!
(Psalm 47:1,2, NIV)

For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.

God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

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The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted. (Psalm 47:7-9 NIV)

The Psalmist is saying, “How would you like to overflow with Joy?” Then consider how awesome God is. The whole earth is His. All the nations are His. He is seated in Heaven, in total control of the destiny of man. Here is a good passage to meditate on:

Tell them this: “These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”

But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Everyone is senseless and without knowledge [compared to God]; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them.

They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.

He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for He is the Maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of His inheritance—the LORD Almighty is his name.

(Jeremiah 10:11-16 NIV)

Your God whom you serve is not at all like man. Oh, He may use some of man’s attributes to describe Himself, so we have a frame of reference, someplace to start. But you take the wisest man in all the earth, and all His wisdom is but a grain of sand on the desert floor compared to the Wisdom of God. You take the mightiest man in all the earth, the winner of all the Olympics in strength, then multiply His might ten trillion times ten trillion, and he will still not have enough power even to be measured against God’s.

Satan can counterfeit much of what God does. He can even

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counterfeit some of what God is. But when those counterfeits are tested, the best he can do is not even enough to be calculated on the scales of eternity. So don't wonder if God can really deal with Communism. One word from His lips and every trace of that godless doctrine of antichrist will vanish before so much as a breath can be taken. Don't wonder if God is trembling in heaven as He sees the epidemic of AIDS, the rise of pornography, the evil of drugs. God's silence is not a sign of weakness. God's silence is both a sign of judgment and of mercy. Of judgment, because He is allowing the wages of sin to take their course. Of mercy, because were He not a God of infinite longsuffering, He would have spoken generations ago, and this sin-torn world would have vanished from existence. God is—and what God is happens to be so infinite that our vocabulary ceases to even attempt to describe His Awesomeness.

It was only when Job saw that, that he repented in dust and ashes. So long as he saw God from any other vantage point, he argued himself into a web of bitterness and depression. But the minute God got him alone and asked him, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world? Answer if you are so wise..." That was when the reality of it all hit. Only when he gazed on the awesomeness of God long enough for him to see himself as he was...nothing...did Job fall down and cry, "I uttered things I did not understand."

The Joy of the Lord is God's nature revealed in the Christian, in the all things of life. It is God in man seeing God in man's circumstances, and thus rejoicing even when, and especially when, those circumstances give no cause for happiness. Why aren't we, who claim to walk with God, more joyful than we are? Perhaps it is because we have not filled our hearts and our minds day and night, night and day...without stopping, taking what the Word of God says about the Worth of God, until our spirits soar to the heavens, and we see through our circumstances a chance for God to be God.

Joy! You already have the Joy of the Lord. It is your strength. But unless you appropriate it by meditating on the

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Word, the Worth, the Works, and the Ways of God, the flesh will always see God through the eyes of circumstances, rather than seeing circumstances through the eyes of God. When things are going “good”, we’ll rejoice. When troubles come, and they always do, we’ll be sad, maybe discouraged, maybe even depressed; and the world about us will see no difference between our response and theirs.

You set God free to be Himself by laying up treasures of His Word that reveal His Nature and meditating on it constantly, and you will begin to hear, when crisis comes, the still, small voice of God’s Spirit whispering the constant, eternal voice of His Word into your ear...and you will be reminded of God’s love, of God’s power, of God’s presence, and of God’s awesomeness. Fear will vanish. Discouragement will dissolve in an ocean of joy. That joy will burst forth in an anthem of praise. And the more you praise Him, the more joyful you will become.

Joy produces praise. That praise produces more joy which, in turn, produces more praise. The cycle goes on and on and on. With every passing day, your heart becomes more and more a reflector of the nature of God, and less and less a reflector of life’s happenings. You won’t have to paint a smile on your face and force a calm response. God in you will cause your countenance to literally glow with a brilliance that comes from the inside out. Christ in you will respond to life’s troubles as well as life’s victories from God’s vantage point. Yours will be a life characterized by joy.

The choice is yours. You can continue to live life on the roller coaster of human experience, struggling to pretend to be joyful to those you desire to impress, but internally discouraged with every roadblock that causes a detour to your happiness. You can begin to enter today into the Joy of the Lord. You can begin to meditate continually on the Word, the Worth, the Works, and the Ways of God. In particular, you can devote hours of the day and night to worship God through His Word for Who He is.

It won’t happen overnight. Joy is not a short-term behavioral change; it is a long-term character change that

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evokes continual behavior transformation as time goes by. The more it permeates your life, the more your life will glow, and the more your testimony will grow. Not because you will have discovered some new theology, or new form of worship, or new system of praise. What will be new is you.

You will be joyful because you will have entered at last...
into the joy of who He is.

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