4 True Joy and Circumstantial Obstacles
Talk 4

Question: What are the obstacles to true joy? How might we best fight against those obstacles?

- There may be some benefit at this point to address the issue of what seems to rob us of our joy in life.
- We lose our joy and peace in life when…
    - When we allow a troubling event or situation to soak into our souls.
    - When we build our thoughts repeatedly around a negative situation and hurt.
    - When we fail to enjoy regularly the fellowship of Christ and the promises of the gospel.
    - When we allow ourselves to see ourselves as a victim, instead of a conqueror in Christ.
- We gain joy and peace when…
    - When we believe in the sovereignty of God in all things in life, even the hard and bad things
    - When we yield ourselves to the Lord's will, no matter what He chooses to do in our lives
    - When we build our lives and our joy on the saving work of Christ and His promises in the gospel
    - When we see our life purpose as living for the Lord and pleasing Him
    - In this way, joy becomes (characteristics of joy)…
        - Real and true
        - Transcendent
        - Powerful and enduring
        - Inspiring and impactful
        - Anticipatory of heaven

Doubt (James 1:5-8; Matthew 14:31; Mark 9:24; Luke 24:38; Hebrews 3:12; James 2:13)

- What is doubt, and how is doubt the antithesis of faith?
    - Doubt chooses to believe the negative, instead of the positive.
    - Doubting God chooses to disbelieve God and His promises.
    - Doubting God replaces faith in the heart.
    - Doubting God removes every strength that grace provides.
        - Doubt says, "God failed me."
        - Doubt says, "Life is going to be bad, no matter what God does"
        - Doubt says, "I am going to be mad" (Jonah 4:4)
- What does doubt do the soul of the Christian?
    - Doubt kills joy.
    - Doubt undermines assurance.
    - Doubt weakens peace.
    - Doubt severely questions and destroys hope.
- Thus, doubt…
    - Doubt drives away optimism and optimistic possibility.
    - Doubt drives away healing of the heart and the entrance of peace.
    - Doubt destroys joy and relief.
    - Doubt has terrible impact on others following us:
        - Because it destroys their faith.
        - Because it destroys their peace.
        - Because it destroys their joy.

Anger (Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; Psalm 37:8; Ecclesiastes 7:9; James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:26, 31; Matthew 5:22; Romans 12:19)

- Anger misses what God is doing; thus, it destroys joy.
- Anger centers on selfishness; thus, it destroys joy.
- Anger does not consider others in love; thus, it destroys joy.
- Anger does not yield to the sovereign will of God; thus, it destroys joy.
- Joy says to anger:
    - Let go, and stop being angry.
    - Stop allowing negative and angry thoughts to dominate your thinking.
    - Start loving and being kind.
    - Let transgressions go and forgive, as God has forgiven you.
    - God is good, and He is doing good to me right now.
    - God has a good plan for my life.

Loveless (Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 4:7-21; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Romans 12:9-10; 13:10)

- Joy is fueled and fed by love for God.
    - Joy in life begins by knowing the God of joy.
    - Joy in life comes from experiencing joy in the Lord.
    - Joy in life is nurtured by knowing God's love for us and loving God in return.
        - Love for God and joy in God lead to love for others and joy in life

- There can be no love for others unless there is a love for God.
    - Love for others starts when we see that God loves us.
    - Love for others is instigated when we want to obey God's command to love.
    - Love for others is fulfilled when we live in the love of God for ourselves and others.

- Without love for God and others, there can be no joy.
    - Love for God is diminished when we believe God has let us down.
    - Love for God is diminished when we believe we cannot trust God.
    - The problem of sustained anger and bitterness:
        - Every experience of anger and bitterness is addressed against God.
        - This struggle with God is augmented by self-hatred.
        - This leads to negativity to others.

Un-surrendered (Romans 12:1-2; James 4:7; Luke 9:23; 14:33; Matthew 6:33; 1 Peter 5:6; Luke 22:42)

- Joy is the cousin of surrender to the sovereign God's will and plan.
    - Surrender trusts that God is in control.
    - Surrender trusts that God will work things out.
    - Surrender trusts that I am safe because God is doing these things.
    - Thus, surrender gives birth to joy.

- Refusing to surrender to God is a rejection and refusal of faith.
    - Refusing to surrender to God's will is an act of unfaithful doubt.
    - Doubt means that faith is not operative and joy will not grow.
        - A rejection and refusal of faith destroys joy.

- Refusing to surrender to God as our sovereign God and Savior begins idolatry.
    - Refusing to surrender means that I am taking charge.
    - Taking charge is paramount to idolatry.
    - No idolator can ever have joy.

Focused on problems (Philippians 4:8; Hebrews 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 12:2)

- What is focusing on problems?
    - Studying problems
    - Thinking about problems all the time
    - Every time we think about problems, we do not think about solutions
    - We think about problems instead of thinking about the good things God is doing

- How does focusing on problems affect the spiritual life of the Christian?
    - Focusing on problems destroys a positive mental framework
    - Focusing on problems destroys praise to God
    - Focusing on problems removes our sense of safety and assurance
    - Focusing on problems removes our dependence on God
    - Focusing on problems takes away the power of God's promises

- How do faith in God and joy in the Lord refocus our perspective?
    - Faith in God and joy in God turns our thoughts from problems to promises.
    - Faith in God and joy in God enables us to live our lives and do our work without distraction.
    - Faith in God and joy in God enables us to see what God is doing in our lives.

Unconfessed sin (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

- Sin cannot bring joy; joy comes from rightly dealing with our sin.
    - Sin and faith do not exist together.
    - Sin and joy do not exist together.
    - Sin and humility do not exist together.
    - Humble repentance brings about joy
        - The joy of the forgiveness of sins
        - The joy of restored fellowship with God
        - The joy of being right in our humanity

- Unconfessed sin does not bring joy.
    - Unwilling to acknowledge
    - Unwilling to confess
    - Unwilling to repent
    - Unwillingness says:
        - "No", God
        - "I want my sin"
        - "I will not acknowledge my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5)

- Thus, joy begins by first looking at, confessing, and turning from our sin.
    - Joy begins when we first take an honest look at our sins
    - Joy grows when we begin to hate our sin
    - Joy comes to full fruition when we turn from our sins to God

- Joy that is sustained requires that we hate sin in our own lives and take action against it.
    - Joy plans to obey God and not disobey God's law
    - Joy plans to rejoice in God and take joy in Him
    - Joy plans to serve God and make my life count for His kingdom

Closing Comment:

Christians must understand the foundational relationship true joy has with our life in Christ. We must see how this joy felt and manifested in our lives toward God gives glory and praise to God. Joy is the miraculous gift of God in the application of salvation in and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but joy does not just happen. We must use "means" given to us by God to foster, nurture, and maintain joy. We will talk more about the use of "means" for the development of joy in talk number 7.