

~ Kevin's Kolumn ~

The Joy of the LORD is my strength!

One of the greatest struggles of a Christian is to maintain joy. Life has a way of drawing us into its mold. When this happens, we become deflated and disillusioned. This is one of the greatest tragedies of Christianity! We NEED to experience the joy of our Lord on a regular basis, but how do we do it? And once we've done it, how do we maintain that joy? Scripture contains numerous gems. For instance, we sometimes are tempted to limit the Psalms to chapters we reference in times of grief to receive a spiritual "pick-me-up". And while it's true the Psalms can provide a salve for the weary, we dare not lose the richness of their beauty! Try looking at the Songs of Ascents sung by the Israelites as an *experience* they enjoyed as opposed to our usual approach of a scholarly point of view. We can divide these fifteen psalms into five "stages" of three psalms each.

Psalms 120-122 are the first stage, the stage of "vision." The second stage, Psalms 123-125, focuses on our *consecration*. Out of our vision we come to a consecration. The third stage, Psalms 126-128, is the stage of *enjoyment*. Our consecration leads to a rich enjoyment of the Lord. The fourth stage, Psalms 129-131, we will call the stage of *enlargement*. Our enjoyment of the Lord eventually causes our vision to expand. Then from our experience of enlargement we enter the final stage, the stage of maturity (Psalms 132-134).

If we were to approach these songs as the Israelites did, we would appreciate a general ascending of the songs pitch as well as a deeper connection with God. We should never go so far as to think that in the stage of enjoyment our consecration can now take a break so we can love the world and love the Lord together. Remind yourself that whenever our consecration is gone, then our enjoyment of the Lord is also gone! *If we want to enjoy the Triune God then we must be a consecrated person all the time.* The moment we are away from consecration we are also out of the enjoyment. Just as the Israelites progressed upward as each stage was sung, so too did this symbolize their spiritual growth.

Think of it like this: our ability to comprehend these messages is based on our level of experience. Some of these messages may be beyond our grasp. If we appreciate the first message the most, that probably means we are recently saved. If we enjoy the second message the most, that means we have gone farther in our growth. If we get lost by the fifth message, that means we still have a long way to go. The more we understand a message, the more we know we have experienced it. Our experience will determine our ability to understand. Isn't the Bible an awesome teacher? Aren't its precepts true, reliable, exciting and relevant yet today?

Have a blessed day and remember the One who gave it to you!

Kevin

Happy Grandparent's Day!!

News and Notes

Senior Saints Luncheon – There will be a luncheon for all Seniors age 60 and older on Sunday, September 20th immediately following the morning service. If you are UNDER the age 60 and would like to help provide food, please see the sign-up sheet on the back table in the auditorium or see Pam Jackson, Marsha Sparks or Dianne Tonkery for more information. Also, there is a sign-up sheet for those who plan to attend. Please be sure to sign so that we can prepare the accurate amount of food.

Ladies Inspiration Day – All ladies are invited to attend a Ladies Inspiration Day at the Pumpkin Center Church of Christ on Saturday, September 26th. Registration begins at 9:00 AM and the program starts at 10:00 AM. Guest Speaker: Janie Craun, Editor of Christian Woman Magazine. She is from Nashville, TN. Lunch will be served.

Save the Date – Our annual Fall Festival will be held on Saturday, October 24th. Special thanks to Dave & Holly White for heading this up! We are in need of volunteers. If you can help in any way, please see them ASAP.

Ladies Retreat – October 9 & 10 at Parchment Valley Conference Center in Ripley (the same place as last year). Marsha is in need of volunteers to help with the following: someone to coordinate sessions, worship leader, decorate, coordinate three meals (Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch. Marsha has notes from last year that may be helpful in planning if someone needs to see them. Please contact Marsha ASAP if you can help. She also needs to know if you plan to attend. If we do not get enough ladies interested, we will have to cancel the retreat.

Prayer Requests

♥Jerry Kerns was admitted to the VA Hospital this past week. Please continue to keep him and Bonnie in your prayers.

♥Keith Kisner remains in Ruby Hospital. Please continue to pray for him, Marsha, Reegan and the family in your prayers. Thanks to all who have continually supported this family through prayer and encouragement.

♥Keep the Glaspell and Lipscomb families in your prayers. Silas Nash continues to improve, but we ask that you continue to lift him and his mother up in prayer.

♥Prayers have been requested for Hazel Mock (Jean Phillips' mother).

♥Tom Little has requested prayers for Joe Smith's mother as she has suffered a heart attack.

♥Dave McDougal is now home and is very appreciative of all your prayers!