

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH



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‘The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength’
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THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

Do you feel weak in the face of everything the world throws at you? Read these wonderful words in Nehemiah 8:10 – *‘the joy of the LORD is your strength.’* If you need mental strength and/or emotional strength, then the joy of the Lord is your answer. His joy isn’t the same as happiness. Happiness depends on circumstances. If things are going well you might be happy but if they’re going wrong, you probably won’t be. But, if you have made Jesus your Lord and Saviour and therefore are born-again, the joy of the Lord is always there within you, no matter what is happening to you or around you or in the world. It’s there whether you can feel it or not. That’s good news. (To read about being born-again go to the end of this booklet)

Joy in the Lord

For many years I thought that Nehemiah 8:10 – *‘the joy of the LORD is your strength,’* meant that if I was joyful in the Lord, I would have strength. There are lots of verses in the Bible that tell us to take joy in the Lord. Here are three of them –

Psalms 5:11-12 – *‘But let all those who take refuge in you rejoice. Let them always shout for joy, because you defend them. Let them also who love your name be joyful in you. ¹²For you will bless the righteous. LORD, you will surround him with favour as with a shield.’*

Philippians 4:4 – *‘Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, “Rejoice!”’*

Isaiah 61:10 – *‘I will greatly rejoice in the LORD! My soul will be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.’*

When we think about God's goodness and faithfulness and His love for us and all He has won for us through Jesus, then feeling and expressing joy in Him can come naturally.

God's Joy in Us

Having said all that, a few years ago God showed me that this isn't what Nehemiah 8:10 is talking about when he says – *'the joy of the LORD is your strength.'* Notice the word 'of' – it's very significant. The joy of the Lord means God's own joy which He has given us, not our human joy that we feel about Him. It's not talking about us choosing to rejoice in God, important as that is. It's talking about God's joy which He has put in us.

Hebrews 1:9 says about Jesus – *"You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows."* Jesus was more joyful than anyone else when He was on earth. When He went to the Cross, He did so motivated by joy. Hebrews 12:2 says that He – *'...for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'* He didn't do it for Himself – He did it for us. The joy that He saw ahead, was the joy of the love relationship we would be able to have with God and with Himself, as a result of His death and resurrection

God is a God of joy. He loves you and He rejoices over you. He is singing songs of joy over you. Zephaniah 3:17 says – *'The LORD, your God, is amongst you, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with joy. He will calm you in his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.'* This was written before Jesus was even born. How much more will God joy over you now that Jesus has brought you into His family!

Romans 14:17 says – *‘For God’s Kingdom is ... righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.’* God’s kingdom is one of joy – not the temporary happiness of earthly pleasures or the satisfaction of fulfilling some rituals, but a deep, lasting and eternal joy of relationship with Him through Jesus.

When we were born-again, God took away our old sinful nature and gave us a brand-new spirit in its place. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says – *‘if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.’* That new perfect spirit is identical to Jesus and remember, He was more joyful than everyone else. So we have Jesus’ joy in our spirit. God also put His Holy Spirit in us. Galatians 5:22-23 says – *‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³gentleness, and self-control.’* Joy is part of who the Holy Spirit is so we have God’s joy within us in the Holy Spirit too. Psalms 16:11 says – *‘In your presence is fullness of joy. In your right hand there are pleasures forever more.’* Joy is part of God’s very nature and He’s given it to us. It belongs to us.

Jesus spoke many things to His disciples on the night He was arrested. They were going to go through three days of real anguish until He rose from the dead. But Jesus reassured them in John 16:22 – *‘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.’* We have the joy of the Lord, His joy, in us. It’s there whether we feel it or not. It’s always available to us. No-one can take it away from us. It’s when we believe this and choose to base our life on it and allow it to flow in us that we find the strength to face and deal with the difficulties life throws at us. That same evening, Jesus had already told them in John 15:11 – *“I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full.”* We now have

the fullness of the joy of the Lord in us and when we allow it to flow, we will have all the strength we need. That's wonderful good news.

The Strength of Joy

Think about this on a human level. We all know that when we are sad or depressed, we feel vulnerable and weak, but when we are happy and joyful we feel so much more on top of things. If human joy makes us feel strong, then how much stronger will God's joy make us. Let's not underestimate the strength which comes from the joy of the Lord in us. Instead, let's embrace His joy and allow it to flow in us and through us. God's joy is so much more powerful than any human joy. It doesn't waver or dip in response to circumstances – it's constant and consistent and no one can take it away from us. I had been to church all my life, but it was after I met some Christians whose joy in their relationship with Jesus was so obvious, that I was born-again. Seeing the joy of the Lord in those people was the turning point, which eventually led to my own personal relationship with God. I didn't think of it this way at the time, but the joy I saw in those people had the strength to turn me to Jesus and find salvation.

How Do We Allow God's Joy to Flow?

The question is, how do we experience God's joy in us so we can have strength? As a born-again believer, we can't lose our joy because it's already in us – in our brand-new spirit which is just like Jesus and in the Holy Spirit within us. But we can lose our experience of it. The problem is that we can't feel our spirit where His joy is, but we are all too aware of our body and our human thoughts and emotions in our soul. So how do we access the joy that is in our spirit to let it flow?

Romans 12:2 says – *‘Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.’* There’s a don’t and a do in this verse. First, in order to be transformed, we need to resist being pulled along in the way the world thinks, speaks and acts. And secondly, we need to renew our minds – get to know God’s truth in His Word and choose to believe it. In John 8:32 Jesus says – *“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* The more we know and believe the truth, the more our thinking will be renewed, and the more we will be able to experience God’s joy in us and be strengthened by it. Even when we’re feeling unhappy, we will know we still have the joy of the Lord in us and can draw on it and see our unhappiness turn into gladness.

We need to choose to turn back to the truth of God’s Word and draw on it to experience His joy. We draw on His truth that’s already in our spirit by thanking God for His Word, speaking verses about the joy of the Lord out loud, singing His praises etc. It may take discipline and perseverance, depending on how deep our negative thoughts about circumstances are rooted in us, but God’s joy is always available to us, because we’ve already got it. It’s when we renew our mind in the Word, that we will start to experience His joy in us once again and find strength. Psalm 119:111 says – *‘I have taken your testimonies (God’s Word) as a heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.’*

Joy in the Middle of Trouble

We need strength each day to live for Jesus, but it’s when trouble comes along that we are particularly aware of that need. And yet, it’s often when things get difficult that believers feel they’ve ‘lost’ their joy. In John 16:33 Jesus says – *“In the world you have*

trouble; but cheer up! I have overcome the world.” There are times when our feelings try to pull us away from the truth that we always have the joy of the Lord. Many Christians then ask God to give them joy. He can’t do that because He’s already done it! It’s in those times that we need to consciously and deliberately draw on God’s joy in us. Thank Him for it. Tell yourself you have God’s joy. Speak verses about joy out loud. Build yourself up in the truth. Sing joyful songs of praise. If you do this sincerely, you will start to feel the joy of the Lord in you and you will find strength to face and deal with what’s going on. It takes a decision and may take effort to begin with, but it is so worth it. In 2 Corinthians 7:4 Paul says – *‘I overflow with joy in all our affliction.’* If you want to know what Paul’s afflictions were, go to 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. They were beyond anything the vast majority of us will ever have to face and yet he overflowed with joy as he suffered such appalling hardship and persecution.

In Matthew 5:11-12 Jesus says – *“Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Rejoicing under persecution sounds impossible but it isn’t. God never tells us to do something that’s impossible. It’s possible when we draw on His joy in us, instead of trying to drum up our own human joy. And then we will not only have joy, but strength as well to face persecution.

God has put His joy in us and so it is His desire that we experience it. When we truly decide to let the joy of the Lord flow in us, He will help us. He has given us everything we need to be joyful, no matter what is happening to us or going on around us. In Isaiah 61:3 Jesus says that God’s Spirit is on Him – *‘to provide for those*

who mourn in Zion, to give to them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.'

Our Responsibility

Do you sometimes think thoughts like – “I’m going to try harder to be joyful,” “I’ll try to whip up some joy,” “I can’t possibly feel joy in these circumstances,” “I’m not worthy to have the joy of the Lord,”? No you aren’t, neither am I, but we are forgiven. God has forgiven us and doesn’t remember our sins. It’s not about anything we have to do, but it’s about what God has already done for us through Jesus. It is God’s responsibility to bring strength from His joy, not ours. And God never shirks His responsibility. That is so freeing.

But we do have a part to play. We have to believe that He has given us His joy and that His strength is in it and then live according to that truth. If you are born-again you have the joy of the Lord, but if you spend your life worrying or complaining and allowing circumstances to dictate how you feel, you won’t experience it and find its strength. Thank God for doing His part, and now let’s do ours. Let’s draw on His joy in us and discover the strength that comes from it.

In Isaiah 35:10, Isaiah prophesied that Gods joy would be in all born-again believers – *‘Then the LORD’s ransomed ones will return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.’* What a beautiful picture. It will be fulfilled in complete reality in heaven, but it’s there for us today too if we will believe it and take hold of it.

The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength

Do you need strength mentally and/or, emotionally? You'll find it in God's joy which is already in you if you are born-again. You already have it in your new spirit which is just like Jesus – the most joyful man. And you have it in the Holy Spirit living in you whose fruit includes joy. Don't try to drum up human joy; instead, thank God for His joy. Speak the truth of it out loud and praise Him and you will start to experience His joy in you. And then you will find strength to sustain you in any circumstance. Thank You Lord.

Being Born-Again

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *'If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart – "Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour."

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you'll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

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The Bible tells us many times to be joyful in the Lord.
But it is God's own joy in us that has the potential
to give us strength.
It is when we believe that God
has put His joy within us,
in our new born-again spirit
and in His Holy Spirit,
that we find the strength
to face what life throws at us.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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