

GOD RESTORES HIS PEOPLE
The Joy Of The Lord Is Your Strength
Nehemiah Ch. 8

Big Idea: God's joy strengthens us as we pursue Him.

I. God's joy is our strength (8:10).

10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

A. God is the source of joy.

- Joy is fundamental to God's triune nature.

1 Timothy 6:15b which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

Augustine: "Following after God is the desire of happiness; to reach God is happiness itself."

- Joy is the overflow of fellowship with God.

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

"The enjoyment of (God) is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends are but shadows, but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the ocean."

Jonathan Edward

- Joy is a gift from God.

Romans 15:13

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

- Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

B. How does God's infused joy strengthen us?

- (1) Joy guards us from practicing dead religion.

"I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how the inner life might be nourished."

George Muller

- (2) Joy guards us from yielding to demonic temptation.

Joy in the Lord will guard you from the empty pleasures the tempter uses to bait his hooks.

II. Pursing God leads to joy (8:1-18; 12:43).

Westminster Shorter Catechism - "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever"

A. Understanding God's Word leads to great joy (vv. 1-8, 12).

- The people desired to hear the God's Word (v. 1-2).
1 And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.
2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month.
- The people listened attentively to God's Word (vv. 3-4a).
3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.
- The people submitted to God's Word (vv. 5-6).
5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.
6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
- The people responded to God's Word with weeping (v. 9).
9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.
- The leader exhorted the people not to grieve but to rejoice (vv. 10-11).
10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved."
- The people rejoiced because they understood God's Word (v. 12).
12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

> Notice the sequence: They desired the Word of God, they listened to the Word of God, they submitted to the word of God, and they responded to the word of God.

Two responses: (1) Emotional – weeping and rejoicing (v. 9)

(2) Volitional – obedience (vv. 13-18)

> Crosspoint Value: Scripture reveals truth.

> Clarity of Scripture

The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.

Wayne Grudem – Bible Doctrine, p. 52

Psalm 119:130

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

> The Spirit gives us eyes to behold the beauties of Christ that moves our hearts to erupt with joy.

John 16:13-14

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world. **John Piper**

B. Obeying God's Word leads to great joy (vv. 13-18).

- The leaders came to Ezra to study God's Word (v. 13).

13 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.

- The leaders discovered in God's Word that they are to observe the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 14-15).

14 And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."

- The people immediately obeyed God's Word (vv. 16-17ab).

16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so.

James 1:22-25

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

- The people responded with very great rejoicing (v.17c-18).

17c And there was very great rejoicing. 18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

> Joy is an expression of faith in God.

Faith that isn't based on the Word is not faith at all; it is presumption or superstition. Joy that isn't the result of faith is not joy at all; it is only a "good feeling" that will soon disappear. Faith based on the Word will produce joy that will weather the storms of life.

Wiersbe, W. W. - Be Determined, (p. 101).

> Joy is experienced through abiding in Christ (Jn. 15:9-11).

John 15:9-11

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

C. Repenting of sin leads to great joy (vv. 9; 9:1-3).

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

Nehemiah 9:1-3

1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. 2 And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.

> God's Word not only causes us to rejoice in our Savior it also causes us to weep over our sin!

Hebrews 4:12-13

12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

> Grieving must turn into repenting for there to be true forgiveness and joy.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Sorrow, especially for our own sin, has its place. But it is not our strength.
That lies in the joy of forgiveness. **Donald Macleod**

Psalms 32:1-2

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.