

YOUR STRENGTH ISN'T YOUR STRENGTH

HELLO EVERYONE!

I'M TED BURT AND TODAY I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT STRENGTH.

STRENGTH TO FULFILL YOUR GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE.

STRENGTH TO FACE LIFE'S CHALLENGES AND NOT GIVE UP.

STRENGTH TO STAND AND LOOK ADVERSITY IN THE EYES.

STRENGTH TO KEEP GOING, WHEN IT WOULD BE EASIER TO QUIT.

STRENGTH TO SAY YES WHEN EVERYONE ELSE IS SAYING NO.

WHERE DOES A STRENGTH LIKE THIS COME FROM?

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH TELLS THE STORY OF THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM AND THE RETURN OF GOD'S PEOPLE TO THEIR HOME.

IT'S A STORY OF A TASK THAT WAS SO MUCH BIGGER THAT THE MAN CALLED TO ACCOMPLISH IT.

IT'S A STORY OF DETERMINATION AND PERSISTENCE.

IT'S A STORY OF LISTENING TO GOD INSTEAD OF GIVING INTO THE CROWD.

NEHEMIAH KNEW GOD. HE LOVED GOD. HE KNEW HOW TO PRAY. HE KNEW HOW TO LISTEN.

AND IN CHAPTER 8, VERSE 10, NEHEMIAH SHARES THE KEY TO STAYING STRONG AND NOT GIVING UP.

DO NOT GRIEVE, FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.

THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD'S JOY AND STRENGTH.

WHAT IS THE JOY OF THE LORD?

PART OF THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS FOUND IN GALATIANS 5:22-23.

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL. AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW.

JOY IS LISTED AS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. IT IS SOMETHING THAT GROWS IN OUR LIVES AS WE WALK WITH GOD AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

JOY IS A FRUIT AND FRUIT IS GROWN. GIFTS ARE GIVEN, FRUIT IS GROWN.

AS WE TAKE OUR JOURNEY WITH GOD, JOY IS SUPPOSED TO GROW IN US.

WHAT IS JOY?

IT IS A CONFIDENT ABIDING IN CHRIST, KNOWING THAT HE IS IN CONTROL.

IT IS THE SETTLED ASSURANCE THAT HE WORKS ALL THINGS FOR MY GOOD.

JOY SAYS I DON'T NEED TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING, BUT I DO KNOW THAT GOD WILL WORK EVERYTHING OUT.

THAT SOUNDS FOCUS, NOT FEELING.

IT SOUNDS LIKE GOD-FUELED DETERMINATION.

IT SOUNDS LIKE SOME OF US MAY NEED TO ADJUST OUR DEFINITION OF JOY.

I READ A LOT OF DEFINITIONS FOR JOY AS I PREPARED MY DEVOTION.

SOME DESCRIBED JOY AS A FEELING.

SOME REFERRED TO JOY AS EXTREME HAPPINESS.

OTHERS MADE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN JOY AND HAPPINESS.

IF NEHEMIAH FOLLOWED HIS FEELINGS, HE WOULD HAVE QUIT AND WALKED AWAY.

HE KNEW THAT THE JOY OF THE LORD WAS THE KEY TO HIS ACCOMPLISHING WHAT GOD HAD PUT IN HIS HEART.

HE KNEW HE NEEDED MORE THAN JUST GOD MAKING HIM HAPPY.

HE KNEW THAT TRUE, ENDURING STRENGTH CAME FROM THE CONFIDENT ASSURANCE THAT GOD WAS WITH HIM AND THAT HE WAS IN CONTROL NO MATTER WHAT THINGS LOOKED LIKE.

JUST LIKE NEHEMIAH, WE ALL NEED STRENGTH TO ACCOMPLISH THOSE THINGS THAT GOD HAS PUT IN OUR HEARTS.

WE NEED SOMETHING MORE THAN HAPPINESS TO NAVIGATE LIFE AND ALL ITS CHALLENGES.

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS CAN BE UNRELIABLE BECAUSE THEY TEND TO CHANGE WITH THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHAT THEN?

QUIETLY AND CONFIDENTLY ABIDE IN CHRIST. SPEND TIME IN HIS PRESENCE.

BECOME SETTLED AND ASSURED IN THE TRUTH THAT HE IS FOR YOU AND WORKS ALL THINGS FOR YOUR GOOD.

LET THE JOY OF THE LORD BE YOUR STRENGTH.

GOD BLESS YOU AND GOD BLESS YOUR DAY.