

## #279 "The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength"

By Brent Barnett

[www.relevantbibleteaching.com](http://www.relevantbibleteaching.com)

Nehemiah 8:10b says, "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." How does the Christian continue when life continues to be overwhelmingly difficult? How does he or she remain faithful when it seems as though God has allowed too much hardship, too much pain, and too much sorrow? Perhaps you have been through such trials that you can literally feel your body wasting away on you, dying a little bit each day. The fact remains that, though the outward man dies, decays, and perishes more each day, the inner person, the eternal soul, can be renewed each day (2 Corinthians 4:16). It is this soul which will overcome death, for death has no sting for the believer. The soul will rise again to new life in Christ in heaven, and there pain, sin, death, and sorrow will be done away with (Revelation 21:4). Christ will wipe away all tears (Isaiah 25:8), and all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5). For now, He has promised that the believer is a new creation in Christ such that the old things have passed away and all things have been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The soul is thus regenerated and stamped with a Spirit-guarantee of a heavenly inheritance and a future body that will be imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:52). **While the body ages, the soul can stay fresh and alive.** This is why it is such a testimony and encouragement to see somebody praise Christ on his or her deathbed and die physically with a song of worship on the lips or at least in the heart. This person may know that the body is passing, but the soul is leaping with joy knowing that its time of release has come. From an earthly perspective, death is a horrific thing, something that is a result of sin. But Christ conquered even that. He is the firstfruits of the resurrection, but we who belong to Him will follow (1 Corinthians 15:20). We have eternal life, for eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ (John 17:3). It is a supreme confidence and overwhelming hope that Christ will keep His promise of life and forgiveness. It is a realization in the heart and mind that God has indeed changed us from the inside out and made us new. A new body will follow when the time comes, one in which sin will have no pull or effect. What a joy and what a privilege it is to know Christ and be known by Him!

Whether a result of our sin or just being in a sin-corrupted world, grief will be our experience sometimes. But we need not stay in that state, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. Continuing to grieve and dwell upon what is related to sin and death rather than upon Christ and life eternal is bound to sap our strength and fervor for Jesus. We must focus entirely upon the hope that we have and the life to come (1 Peter 1:13). While we can and should expect to see daily mercies (Lamentations 3:22-24) and God's goodness in the here and now (Psalm 27:13), **our ultimate hope is not in what happens now but in what happens later.** *When we have that proper focus and hope, it invigorates us so that we can actually maximize our energy and function with spiritual vitality in the present.* Otherwise, the voice of God gets drowned out by the lies of the devil and the many distractions he offers. We can be fooled by sin and temptation if we forget who we are in Christ and what is ours in Christ. We can't lose sight of the calling, of the prize, and of our mission. Eternal life starts upon knowing Christ, and it only gets better in its state when we pass from this world. Being cognizant of life in Christ enables us to have joy and to be fixated upon Him, for it is He alone Who can strengthen us as the body continues to grow

weary and decay. Even youths grow tired and young men stumble badly, but those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. It is not youth, money, power, prestige, or privilege that brings joy and strength but the Spirit lifting up our spirits with wings like eagles because of the confidence we have in what He has done and what He is doing and will do (Isaiah 40:29-31). That is what gives us strength to finish well, to function today, and to keep our eyes fixed and focused on what God is doing in and through us and around us.

People will fail us, they will make selfish decisions, and they will abandon us. But God never will because **eternal life is a permanent trajectory**. He Who takes our sin away is able to give us joy. We can find strength in Him as we are lifted up by Him into His holiness, His righteousness, and His reward.

We as believers will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). Knowing Jesus and being known and loved by Him is our glory, our pride, our boast, and our longing. It is why we will enter His presence in heaven, and it is why we can have strength to finish. What most people look to for strength and rejuvenation is actually a futile attempt at polishing weakness, but the Christian knows the joy of the Lord is wind in the sails even when the body is tired. Strength is found in joy which is found in Christ. **We must have His joy, or we won't have any of His strength**. So do not be grieved, the Son has conquered sin and the grave. *The more we choose to rejoice in Jesus by faith, the stronger our inner person will be and the more His power will be perfected in and through us despite our outer feebleness*. Death does not get the last laugh; we do because we have the joy of Jesus down in our hearts to stay.