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THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

Nehemiah had gone back to Jerusalem to find the wall in shambles. The people were discouraged. Those of their own blood line had exacted taxes and they had become slaves because they couldn't pay. How sad the conditions were when Nehemiah got there. He found those that were willing to work with him and repair the wall and make Jerusalem a place of safety again, with God restoring all that was lost.

Those that helped rebuild the wall had a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. Discouragement came and opposition was great. Nehemiah was threatened and many came against him, yet he stayed the course, because he knew that God had a plan for him. In spite of the opposition, the work was done in fifty-two days. (Nehemiah 6:15)

In chapter 8 Ezra, the priest brought the book of the law before the congregation of both men and women and he and Nehemiah read it and taught it to the people from a wooden pulpit. The first thing he did was bless the Lord and all of the people that had helped do the work said Amen, and lifted up their hands, bowed their heads, and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Ezra 8:6) The reading of the book in the law of God gave them the sense to understand the need to repent, which they did, and wept over their sin. Nehemiah said ***"This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength."***

They had not heard the word spoken since they had been in captivity. They saw God move in the rebuilding of the wall, and when the word was preached, they wept. This is how all hearts should be moved when the word of God is preached. It should cause us to weep with great sorrow over our sin. Yet, Nehemiah told them that the word caused God's joy to be poured out on them, and it would strengthen them. Oh, how precious it was for them to hear this. Their sorrow was turned into joy.

In our lives when God speaks to us and assures us that His joy is our strength, it gives us the peace that passes all understanding. Joy is not happiness. Happiness comes and goes, but joy stays. It is like sweet oil that God pours into our lives to bring us closer to Him.

Many are tired right now and need to let the oil of gladness come on them to bring their joy back. When we get away from God, we lose our joy, but it gives God great joy when we come back to Him, just like it did for Nehemiah and the people of Israel when they came back and received the word of the Lord. Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength!