

Joy in the Lord

#0745

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—June 25, 1982

[The audio of this message includes an entire church service, complete with song service, announcements, etc. We have only transcribed Elder Frazee's sermon from it.]

That's what I want everybody to experience—resting in Jesus' love. Are you resting in that love tonight?

Now, our text is Nehemiah, the 8th chapter verses 9–10. You remember Nehemiah had been in the providence of God brought down to Jerusalem, and along with Ezra, led out in the work of reformation after the captivity. They found a lot of problems and difficulties. But Nehemiah and Ezra prayed and worked their way through.

And this eighth chapter of Nehemiah tells the interesting story of the people being gathered together to hear the words of the law of Moses read, the law of God. The ninth verse says:

“And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha...” Nehemiah 8:9.

That's the governor.

“...and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, 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” Nehemiah 8:9.

Isn't it interesting? There are times we need to weep, but there are times that God sends the message, “Cheer up, cheer up.”

There's a time to weep, and there's a time to quit weeping.

“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” Nehemiah 8:10.

I want to ask you something. In God's purpose and plan, which is temporary, the joy or the sorrow? Sorrow. Which is God's plan for permanency? The joy. Is that right? Do you believe that?

We're living in the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the day for a man to do what? Afflict his soul. So, we are to experience in a special way the sorrow for sin during this final judgment hour.

But—don't miss it—in that setting comes the deepest joy that human hearts can experience. God intends that we shall have such a clear view of His character that we shall understand that His purpose in our entering into *any* sorrow is to get rid of sin so that we may experience His joy.

“...Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength” Nehemiah 8:10.

Will you repeat with me those last few words:

“...The joy of the LORD is your strength” Nehemiah 8:10.

All together:

“...The joy of the LORD is your strength” Nehemiah 8:10.

Again:

“...The joy of the LORD is your strength” Nehemiah 8:10.

What is your strength?

“...The joy of the LORD...” Nehemiah 8:10.

Now, there are two things that the Christian needs strength for. One is to live the Christian life himself, gain the victory over temptation, be an overcomer. For that, he needs strength. And what is the strength that's given here?

“...The joy of the LORD...” Nehemiah 8:10.

What's the other thing you think of that the Christian wants strength for? To win others, soul-winning. Is the joy of the Lord strength on that point, too? Oh, yes. You and I, as soul winners, are to be salesmen for God, and it's joy that wins.

Grief, gloom, mourning, even if there's a reason for it, seldom attracts people. Do you know why? Well, most people have plenty of that commodity already. But if you and I can show them how to find happiness, how to rest from trouble and distress, they're interested, provided they believe that it's genuine.

And so, God intends that you and I, as salesmen for Him, shall remember that the thing that attracts is what? Joy, joy. So, every time we want to win souls, we should put on a fun party, shouldn't we? What? Notice what it is that's our strength. The joy of what?

“...The joy of the LORD...” Nehemiah 8:10.

Our business (and don't miss it) is not to help people to see how happy we can be in spite of our religion. That's not the joy of the Lord. It's our religion that is to give us our happiness. That's the joy of the Lord, and that's our what? That's our strength, our strength.

What do you think of when you think of a good time? Some people think of blowing off a bit of steam after they've been good all week, tried to be. That's not the joy of the Lord, is it? So, that wouldn't win very many people to Christ.

"...The joy of the LORD is your strength" Nehemiah 8:10.

So, I repeat, God wants us to be happy, both for our own victory's strength and the strength to win others, but it's to be the joy of the Lord. Let's be sure that that which we're using to attract people came from Him because only that which came *from* Him can lead *to* Him.

I was thinking of it this way. Here's a man. He's a salesman for a General Motors line, either Chevrolet, or Buick, or whatever. What would you think if he was always driving around in a Dodge car or a Ford car? The sales manager would soon call him in and really labor with him, wouldn't he? Or give him his walking papers.

Are you a salesman for God? Do you believe that there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God? Have you found it? Is it phony? Is it for real? How do you get it? Do you ever have any problems? Is the joy that Jesus gives us here in this world free from problems? Oh, no.

"...The joy of the LORD is your strength" Nehemiah 8:10.

Let's turn to the 40th Psalm, the 7th verse, and learn something about the joy of the Lord. Jesus was so anxious that we should all understand how to be happy that He came down from heaven and took our humanity with all its weaknesses and infirmities and handicaps, to show us how to live to be happy, right here in this present world.

Now, He had other reasons for coming. He must give His life as an atonement on the cross. But notice that one of the reasons He came was to show us how to live.

"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me" Psalm 40:7.

Will you read the eighth verse, what Jesus says:

"I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" Psalm 40:8.

What's the second word of that eighth verse? "Delight." What's delight? That's another word for "joy," "happiness," "pleasure."

"I'm delighted."

That's more than just tolerating something, isn't it?

"I delight..." Psalm 40:8.

What?

"...to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" Psalm 40:8.

He came from heaven to reveal the joy that is the result of setting aside one's own way and accepting the way of the Father.

Turn again to a text which is becoming increasingly one of my favorites, the 6th chapter of John and the 38th verse. I think this is wonderful. Fits in right here, as you see:

"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" John 6:38.

Where was the place where this choice that He had made and repeated day by day was put to the greatest test? Gethsemane. There, the issue was would He accept the plan that He and His Father had laid together, that He knew what was His Father's will, would He accept it even if He went to the cross with the black darkness of separation from His Father?

Or would He take the opportunity, which He could do, of leaving this world to perish and go back and be accepted in heaven? Was that a real temptation? Ah friends, eternity will never be long enough to fully understand, comprehend what went on that night. We'll be studying it a million years from now.

But every time, as He came to that crucial choice, He said:

"...Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt"
Mark 14:36.

"...Not my will, but Thine, be done" Luke 22:42.

He had been developing that attitude and strengthening it by repeated choices all through His 30 years of life before He came to that great final choice. The reason —don't miss it—, the reason you and I in Jacob's trouble will have that same attitude is that we have learned it, and cultivated it, and developed it as the Spirit of God has worked upon our hearts, and we've cooperated with Him throughout our lifetime up to that point. We learn it in little things, in little things.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" John 6:38.

I want to learn it. What do you say?

“...The will of Him that sent Me” John 6:38.

Jesus didn't come to please Himself. Some of you have heard me say, and I want to repeat it, religion is more than avoiding the bad things, to keep us out of the penitentiary or to keep us out of hell. Religion is entering into the experience of Jesus to please the Father, to please the Father. And the paradox of it is that that's the only way to be genuinely happy and satisfied ourselves, for that's the way we were made.

Now, let's see what we've learned so far tonight. The joy of the Lord is what? Our strength. Strength to do two things. What's the first? To overcome sin, to meet temptation. And second? To win souls. Is that what you want? It's joy.

Well now, how in this world could a person live on a program of never pleasing himself but pleasing somebody else and still be happy? That's *the* thing. That's *the* thing. Until we've learned it, we're hardly able to convince others that it'll work.

Does it work? Have you found it so? Thank God, friends, people are finding it so all over this world. And the way to find it is not to discover a location where there are no troubles, no trials, no difficulties, where everybody pleases you, and then try to live this life. That's all right for people that have never fallen. The people out on the other planets don't have to have the problems you and I have.

But the only way we can learn how to live the Eden life now is to be out of the Garden of Eden. That's why we're not there. That's why God told Adam and Eve when they sinned, “Sorry, you're going to have to leave this garden home.”

“Oh, we'll be good, we'll be good. Just let us stay in this beautiful home.”

“Sorry. You'll never learn the lesson.”

They wept, and Jesus wept with them, but they went out where the thorns and the briars would hurt them, where they'd have to work hard and sweat to make a living, where the problems of life would come. And after a matter of time, oh how the tears fell, as Adam and Eve looked on the form of Abel, dead, killed by his brother, Cain. Ah, yes, friends, pain, sorrow, trouble.

But in it all, God was teaching them that the way of sin is the way of sorrow and death; that the way of obedience, of pleasing Him instead of pleasing one's self is the way of true, eternal rest, happiness, security, joy. Do you agree? Oh, thank God. Then, we'll let Him run our lives, won't we?

I want to take you for a few minutes this evening halfway around this world, way over in the Far East. Elder and Sister Cretchmire, who are from New York City, were recently over there. And just a very few of the wonderful experiences that they met up with over there I want to share with you this evening on this point—what God is able and willing to do for people who have settled this question of making God first, making God first, who are willing to pray the prayer of Jesus:

“...Not my will, but Thine, be done” Luke 22:42.

You see, so many of our prayers are like Balaam’s prayers. Did Balaam pray? Oh, yes. What did he pray for?

“Lord, let me go with Balak, so I can get the rich reward.”

“Lord, let me go, so I can get what I want.”

Did he finally get to go? Did it make him happy? No, not really. And oftentimes, the only way God can deal with us is to let us learn by sad experience that our way is not a good way. So, we’ll quit praying for our way. We’ll pray for *His* way.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” John 6:38.

Prayer is intended by God not to change God to get what we want, but to change us so that we’ll want what He wants. Is that the purpose of prayer? Is that what it’s accomplishing in your life, my friend?

“Often our plans fail that God’s plans for us may succeed” *Ministry of Healing*, page 473.

In one place, Sister Cretchmire says, “About two and a half weeks before we arrived” (now, this is just this year; this is just a few months ago that this happened, halfway around the world), “two student colporteurs who had become tired and discouraged because they hadn’t sold anything for a couple of days noted that they had just enough money left to purchase a bus ticket home.”

So what did they do? They’d decided that they’d had it; couldn’t sell any literature, discouraged, two student colporteurs. Now, they prayed, but it didn’t seem to help. And so, they were sitting on the curb waiting for this bus to come to take their last money to get home.

There was a restaurant nearby, and somebody that they thought was the manager came and offered to let them eat lunch there. So, it looked like a providence, so they went and ate their lunch.

But as they were leaving the restaurant, they saw this person that had invited them to go to the cash register to pay the bill, and they realized he wasn’t the manager after all. But since he’d been so kind, they got more courage, and they decided that they’d canvas him with their literature, share the good things they had.

He was already headed down the street, so they hurried to catch up with him. He didn’t seem to be interested in conversing with them.

Finally, the man turned and said this, “You know who I am. You’ve been praying.”

And at that, he turned and went on down the block and around the corner of a building. And these student colporteurs had been so dumbfounded by his answer that they paused a moment, but they hurried after him, and when they got to the corner, he wasn't there.

And there were no houses nearby, no place for him to have gone. And they were so impressed by the fact that God had sent His angel, and even sent some money with the angel to pay the restaurant bill, that they stayed right there instead of going home, and sold 2,000 pesos' worth of books in that very town.

Now, my point is that God heard their prayers, and they thought they weren't being answered at all. And God sent His angel. Would you like to have an answer like that? Are you sure you would? Would you like to have the troubles and disappointments that led them to that?

Here's another one. This is a colporteur one, too. One of our Adventist colporteurs was walking along a road out in a jungle, and in that part of the country, the guerillas, the rebels were watching for opportunities to catch people that they thought were loyal to the government and execute them because this revolution was on.

And so, they caught this fella, and walking not far behind him was another man, who noted what was happening, and he hid in some bushes and watched it. Now, this man that was watching from the bushes was not an Adventist, but he saw what was happening.

This Adventist colporteur was surrounded now by these rebel soldiers who were pointing their rifles at him. He tried to explain that he was not a spy—that he was an Adventist colporteur. And he told them if they didn't believe him that they could look in his briefcase, and they'd get the evidence all right.

But the leader was impressed by what he said, and so he went off to examine the briefcase and left him guarded by these soldiers, who were pointing their rifles at him. And there, this colporteur fell on his knees and began to pray for the men that had their rifles pointed at him, pleading with God to have mercy upon them because they knew not what they were doing, pleading with God to save them.

And suddenly, the man that was hiding in the bushes as he was watching, he heard the rifle shot ring out, and the colporteur fell over dead. He'd given his life as a witness for Jesus. But as he watched that colporteur kneeling on the ground before the execution, he said that he saw his face just shining like Stephen's did at his execution. It made a deep impression on him.

The officer that was in charge heard the shot and came running back and said, "Oh," he said, "I'm so sorry you shot him. He's an innocent man."

But he's already dead. But as the result, this man that was hiding the bushes was so impressed that he became an Adventist and is going on with the work.

Not only that, the officer that was in charge of the group told the folks, the men that were holding the rifles, he said, “You know, I know something about Seventh-day Adventists, and I’ve already made up my mind as soon as this war’s over *I’m* going to be a Seventh-day Adventist.”

So there were at least two people won by his death.

Did God hear his prayer? Yes. Did God hear Stephen’s prayer? Yes. But the purpose of prayer—don’t miss it—is not always to give us miraculous escapes. It may be to die as martyrs if God sees that that’s best. And that’s a perfect answer to a perfect prayer, isn’t it? Because the purpose of prayer is:

“...Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done”
Luke 22:42.

And then this one—I was very much impressed with this one. There was a pastor in the area of mountain provinces who was in charge of the territory where they had no roads. His territory started where the road ended. In fact, he has to walk six to ten hours just to get to his first church. But this area that he’s in is an area of headhunters. Some of those tribes still hunt for human heads.

But one of these headhunting tribes had been impressed by the Lord to ask for our workers to come in there, so he was walking these hours with his wife accompanying him, a man and his wife, this pastor, into this headhunting country to minister to these people physically and spiritually.

That’s real dedication, isn’t it?

Now, in order to get to this tribe, they had to go through enemy territory that’s very dangerous, but God protected them. Now, they have 30 people getting ready for baptism. This is all just within the last few months this has all happened.

Now, listen. This is the thing that impressed me. This pastor—I’m reading now.

“The pastor is a good-looking, educated man whose heart is full of love and respect for God and for his wife, who is an American citizen. She’s a national but she’s been over in this country for a number of years and so she has American citizenship.”

Now, what do most people that have American citizenship, where do they want to be?

“This man had earlier had the opportunity to go to the United States, but he and his wife talked it over and turned down the chance.

“These people live with a very low economic standard. They have no vehicle, no automobile, and no automatic

conveniences in their home. The man grew up in the city, and the wife spent seven years of her life here in the United States.”

But you know what the wife told her husband when they were faced with this decision whether to accept the invitation to come back to the U.S.?

She told him, “I have had everything I wanted, and I’ve realized I had nothing at all. My life was empty.”

She’d seen the two extremes of having everything she wanted in material lines and an empty life or the extreme of poverty and hardship. She said she would not choose to trade their ministry there at his side for the convenience and emptiness of another life.

Oh, my dear friends, I pray that God will not have to take us to the jungles to learn that lesson. Just being in the jungles won’t teach it to us. We can learn it right here, can’t we?

“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” John 6:38.

Somebody says, “Brother Frazee, I thought your text was, The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Precisely. Has this dear woman and her husband found the joy of the Lord? Yes. How’d they find it? By consulting their comfort, and convenience, and desires? No, no, no. By turning their backs on money and on all the things that money can buy.

And remember, they could have found a place where they could work for God and have things a lot better than in the headhunting country of these mountain tribes, couldn’t they? Oh, yes. And that doesn’t mean that all of us are to leave the place that God has put us and head for the jungles tomorrow. There’s plenty of trials right here, friends. If any of you don’t know it, let me know, and I’ll let you in on some of them.

The issue is, “What do I want? How do I expect to find rest and peace?”

Is it by getting people to give me what I want? The job I want? The place to live I want? The kind of food I want? The program I want? The remuneration I want?”

Oh friends, I thank God there is something sweeter.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” John 6:38.

Somebody says, “But Brother Frazee, don’t we need rest, and recreation, and sleep, and time for this and that?”

Yes. But notice the difference. It makes all the difference in the world whether we work in order to get those helps, those recharging experiences, or whether we get the recharging experiences so that we can do our ministry. It makes a world of difference.

Most of the people of this world, they're working what for? So they can get money to have what they call a good time, which means that if they get *enough* money, they quit the working and just have a good time. Then, they *really* have a good time, don't they? Or do they? No, they don't, no, they don't. Because that isn't the way, you and I were put together.

"...The joy of the LORD is your strength" Nehemiah 8:10.

And the joy of the Lord is not selfish ministering to our needs. The joy of the Lord is to delight in the Father's will and have His law written in our hearts so that we're thinking all the time about how to help others instead of wanting our own way. Oh, I thank the Lord for the preciousness of His will.

Now, friends, in a practical way, this is a moment-by-moment experience, a moment-by-moment experience. The law of God will tell us some great principles that will keep us out of very bad things. But nothing in the law of God, nothing in the Bible will tell me where to be tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock, will it? No. Do I have some choices to make? Does it make any difference to God where I am tomorrow morning or tomorrow afternoon? Does it? Does He have my life planned?

"Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 327.

You know, I have the joy of knowing I'm right where I belong tonight. I'm sure of that. And I trust every one of you is sure of that. Can we be just as sure day by day and hour by hour in the different decisions? That's our privilege, dear friends.

And God's plan to bring it to us is not by having the angel bring a golden card and say, "Here's your schedule for the day."

He has a thousand ways of leading and guiding those that submit. But it is written in Proverbs 3:6:

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" Proverbs 3:6.

In *Ministry of Healing* is this wonderful statement on page 491:

"...Constantly inquire, 'What would Jesus do were He in my place?'" *Ministry of Healing*, page 491.

"... 'What would Jesus do were He in my place?'" *Ibid.*

So, when the dear Lord wakes me up in the morning, I can begin by saying, "What would Jesus do if He were in my place?"

What *would* Jesus do? What did He generally do before breakfast? Did He have some time alone with His Father? Did He listen to the Father's voice through the Scriptures? Did He talk to His Father in prayer? Did He gather inspiration from nature and from the Word that carried Him through the day?

"... 'What would Jesus do were He in my place?'" *Ibid.*

When I sit at the table if my attention is on Jesus, will He help me to select the right food for *me*, the quality and the quantity? Will He? Will that be a burden? No, that'll be a joy.

"... The joy of the LORD is your strength" Nehemiah 8:10.

And oh, I'm so glad, friends, for the wonderful pleasure that comes in eating right. And so on through the day—the work that I'm to do, the people I'm to meet, the telephone calls that I'm to answer, and all the rest. If I'm willing, God will help me to be on *His* schedule moment by moment and be happy in it.

But I'll have to be willing to be interrupted because it says:

"Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed" *Ministry of Healing*, page 473.

Do you see? But if it's the Father's will we're interested in, not ours, we'll be willing to suffer, like that pastor and his wife over there in the jungles. We'll be willing to be martyred if necessary, like that colporteur. We'll be willing to give our lives in service and sacrifice, and in that supreme surrender and perfect trust, we will find the joy, the happiness that Christ has promised.

God's looking for salesmen that have experienced enough of that to know that all they want is more of the same. All they want is more of the same. And thank God, He doesn't wait until we're graduated in His school to put us to work, does He? But oh, if we've learned the first principles, if we've experienced the first blessings that come from putting aside our way and taking His way so that our prayers become more and more an endeavor to follow His will and to please Him, then we have something to share.

Now, I'd like to have a score of people but very quickly and briefly come and tell us your response.

"... The joy of the LORD is your strength" Nehemiah 8:10.

Is what you have heard tonight God's message? Do you believe it? Have you found it true? Can you put your signature along with David, and with Paul, and with Stephen, and with others who have put their lives into this, that Jesus does satisfy, not by giving you what *you* want but what He wants?

Come. Dr. McClure is going to be the first and let some others come while he's talking.

[Testimony service followed.]

[Following are comments made by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

...How many of you know who these girls are? Some of you don't. These girls are from Zambia, Africa, Butler girls, Lorraine, and Lucy's married now, so her name is Fuller, but we're glad that they're both here tonight. And they've been in Mexico in their earlier years.

And you've just come down from Belize, haven't you?

They're part of this program from infancy, and I thank God they're a living demonstration of the fact that children can grow up in this program and keep the vision and the dedication.

...Now, dear ones, remember this. Just working for others and trying to imitate what we've heard in the lives of others will not in itself bring this. It's a miracle of God that a person who's been selfish all his life could ever find joy in unselfishness. That's a miracle. We must seek for that miracle. We must, in our great need, cry out to the Lord.

This is what conversion is all about. This is what repentance means, turning from self to Christ, turning from getting fun out of sin to getting pain out of sin, turning from finding pain in doing the right things to finding joy in doing the right things. That's a change of heart, a change of life. It's a miracle. It doesn't happen without the Spirit of God. This is not something you can practice, and finally, you get it, like a technique, like practicing at the piano, or the scale, or anything like that. This is a miracle of God.

If God has done it in your life and you want more and more of it, fine. You know how to get it—by seeking the Lord with all your heart, right? But if He hasn't, if you know that you're selfish and that you wish that you could have the experience that we've been studying about and that others have testified to, remember don't go from this meeting and think, "I'll practice that." It won't work. It won't work, and you'll just be disillusioned.

You'll say, "It may work for somebody else, but it doesn't work for me."

When all other things fail, follow the manufacturer's instructions. He says:

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth..." Isaiah 45:22.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" John 12:32.

It's coming to the cross where we find how terrible selfishness is, that it will kill our best friend. How wonderful unselfish love is that Christ will die rather than let us be lost. And as we look to Him, God works a miracle in our hearts, so we hate the selfishness that crucified Jesus and respond to the love that led Him to give Himself for us.

Oh, let's turn to number 567. There may be somebody here tonight that longs for that miracle to be wrought in your heart.

Now, dear ones, listen. Let me make my call plain because sometimes calls are not plain, and people are confused. I want to make my call perfectly plain. I'm not inviting the people up here tonight that just want to do better. I hope you all want to do better, don't you? Yes. I'm not inviting people to come up here tonight that already know that the joy of the Lord is their strength, and they've tested it. If you want more of it, stay where you are and pray that God will give it to you.

But there is somebody here tonight that God brought that what you need is not merely to more of what you have, you need an entire change. You need a change of direction. You've been living for self. You've been wanting your own way. You've been praying. Even your prayers have been for your own selfish way.

And tonight, you see, as the Spirit of God convicts your heart, that what you need is a turn clear around and to enter into the experience of having Jesus' way in your life instead of yours.

If that's your response, then I want you to come up and kneel here and pray that God will work that miracle, and we'll pray for you.

[Recording ended in progress.]

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