

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG141 – God's Joy is Our Strength

Welcome to the podcast. The title for today is, *God's Joy is Our Strength*. I wanted to really do this out of my own seeking the Lord, because I feel like this idea of joy is very necessary for us in the days in which we are living. I think that a lot of what we see in the world is a lack of true joy; and we are talking about the joy that comes from the Lord, something very deep within our being that has the ability to really make us live life the way we need to.

I want to start with a Scripture from Daniel the seventh chapter, starting with verses 24-25. It says, "As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." In the vision Daniel had, which was an end-time vision, we understand this idea, that one of the things we would experience and witness is the events that transpire – spiritual warfare, if you want to call it that – but it is just what goes on surrounding us in the turmoil of God's Kingdom coming forth, and the battle that takes place on many levels. The tactic against God's people is that they would be worn out, worn down. The demonic realm is going to wear down the saints of the Highest One. This should be very real to us, because, as I was starting to say, when you look around at the world today, I think you see many, many things transpiring; and at the root of those issues is a lack of true joy existing any longer in this world. Whether it be found in substance abuse, drugs, whether it be found in suicide, many, many things are happening. We also see that times will be altered, and laws will be altered, and that type of thing is taking place around us. And all of it comes to wear down the saints, God's people, and make us want to give up.

What is the answer to that? Like I said, I am bringing this because I am looking for the answer. I have been into this all day long, believing for the Lord to show me, "What do we do? What takes place in order for us as God's people not to be worn down, not to give up, not to lose out in this time of the transition from where we are into the Kingdom of God?" I want to go on reading out of Daniel 7, where we see the story continues. He talks about the king and the wearing down of the saints in verses 24-25; but right after that, it transitions into verses 26-27, where he says, "But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

The story starts out very bleak in the first two verses, with what is transpiring in the warfare of the king and the nations, with this intention of speaking out against the Most High and wearing down the saints. But immediately, it goes into the fact that the Kingdom court is going to sit, and dominion is going to be given, and the Kingdom is going to be granted to the saints of the Most High. So there is this positive aspect, and we recognize that God's purpose is for us to enter into His Kingdom. Yet at the same time, we can't get worn out and give up and lose out, because of what is taking place against us, before this event of judgment and dominion and sovereignty, and the Kingdom being given to the saints. We want

to make it there. Well, how do we make it there? What is a key in this? One of the keys is the fact that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We must recognize that there is a strength that comes in and from having the joy of the Lord. And so, we want to somehow press into this.

I was realizing in my own thoughts, and talking to the Lord about this, that I do not feel a great deal of joy. It is difficult to have joy, and I feel like we are already in this process where satan's tactic is to take away the joy from us. So I was saying, "Well, Lord, if I know that the joy of the Lord is my strength, then where do I draw this joy of the Lord? And how do I receive that? How do I get into this flow of joy?" But it is promised to us. I want to look at Isaiah the thirty-fifth chapter, verse 10. It says, "And the ransomed of the Lord will return," which we see happening now, "and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." So we see in the prophecies that as Israel is returning to Zion, as we are coming into these days of the Kingdom, part of what we should be experiencing is the joyful shouting, the everlasting joy upon our heads. "They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." This thing that is wearing us out is going to be wiped away. It is wiped away through what it is that God is doing on our behalf, and for us.

I want to read Psalm 51, because in this Psalm, David was praying and crying out to the Lord because he had sinned, and he was reaching for something from God. In verses 11-12 of Psalm 51, he says, "Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit." And I think, there is a joy of salvation. There should be a joy that we live in, knowing that we have salvation in God, through Christ; and that should minister a joy to us. This joy that is our strength partially comes through the revelation of knowing our salvation. The salvation and the experience of salvation, in and of itself, should be ministering to us the joy. And I think this is something that we want to pursue.

Now, I do not feel like this podcast needs to be very long. Honestly, as I was getting ready and going through the Scriptures, which is normally what I do – I go through a concordance and I literally go through the entire Bible and search out the verses of Scripture that are applicable to what the Lord is making alive to me. That is because I think you have to put everything together, all of what the Bible is saying about that, in order to get a true perspective of what the Word of God is saying. And in the process of doing that for this Word, I started thinking, "This is really meeting my heart as I am pouring through the verses about joy, and where joy comes from, and how we receive joy." And I thought, "You know what? I'm not going to get all these Scriptures and write them down in my notes and give them during the podcast. I really want this to be an experience for you." I think it is that important. I think it is that important and necessary, if we are going to have a joy that breaks the wearing out and the sorrow. And all of that happens – it is like Joel talks about, "The trees are languishing and drying up in the fields, because the joy has withered away from the sons of men." We are experiencing that. Joy is withering away from the sons of men. You can see the results of it even in the nature around us. I mean, people are worried about global warming and what is going on with the planet; but I don't hear anybody talking about this, that this wearing out of God's people, and this loss of joy in the hearts of men, is partially responsible for what we see transpiring around us in nature, in the natural world that is assigned to us. That joy is gone.

We must see this joy restored, as David was crying out and praying, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. Don't let my circumstances rob me from the joy that is available in knowing You, Lord, in receiving Your salvation in my life." So, I stopped writing down every verse that I was looking at.

There were so many – gosh, I would have had probably twenty different verses, and I am just going to give you a few. Because I honestly want to encourage you to take the time, go into the Word of God; get a concordance, look up joy, different aspects of joy, but just look up the word of joy, and start reading the verses that have to do with joy – both the loss of joy as well as the restoration of joy. You begin to realize that joy is something that can be lost, and is lost; and it is also something that can be pursued, and it can be received. Joy is part of the Holy Spirit in our life. Having joy comes from the infilling of the Holy Spirit. So, there is an avenue. You say, “I don’t have any joy.” Okay, start seeking to be refreshed and renewed in the Holy Spirit. Seek a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in and through your life, because in the Holy Spirit there is joy. Try like David was doing: repent of things where you have failed and fallen, and look for the restoration of joy about the salvation that we have in God. That is a beautiful way to pursue it.

Here is another one, in Jeremiah 15, verse 16. It says, “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” His Word, being immersed in His Word, should be the joy and delight of our heart. It should minister joy to us as we are reading the Scriptures, digging for life in the Scriptures, recognizing that we are called by His Name.

These verses are just beautiful! I want to read John 16, because this is from the Lord Himself. In verses 21-22, it says, “Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now,” speaking of Him leaving them, leaving the disciples. “But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.” Isn’t that amazing? So in His Presence, in beholding the Lord, in being with the Lord, there is a joy that will be ministered to us, and a rejoicing that will never ever be taken away from us. We should be seeking the Lord on that level, seeking to behold Him, seeking to be in His Presence – for in His Presence, it says, is fullness of joy. We want that joy and delight of being with the Lord.

He starts this with the fact that a woman in labor is in pain, and it is anguish, and it is not fun. And in the world we are going to have tribulation; because it is not just the spiritual battle, but we are in the time of the birthing of the Kingdom of God into this age, and there will be anguish, and there will be pain. But there will also be the joy that comes as the Kingdom manifests it. As the Lord returns into this earth and comes once again, He will bring to us joy unspeakable and full of glory. He will impart to us a joy that will never be taken away again. So I encourage you: I don’t want to spoon-feed this and give you every Scripture. You are going to have fun, trust me. Do this. You will have fun, you will find joy in seeing where joy is rooted and how it is imparted to you.

One other thought I had with this was out of Exodus the thirty-third chapter, in verse 18, very simple: “Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, show me Your glory!’” I always love this verse, because when you read Exodus 33, Moses was going through a pretty difficult time. The children of Israel sinned. They had built a golden calf, they were turning away from God, and God was mad at them. He was ready to destroy them, you know, “turn ‘em to toast,” and take Moses and build a whole new nation out of him, and put the promises on a new people. And Moses said, “You can’t do that.” Then He said, “Okay, well that’s fine, but I am not going with you. You can go to the land, but I am not going with you. I will send an angel with you.” And Moses said, “No, if You are not going up, don’t send us.” So Moses is in this really difficult time with the Lord; and yet, all of a sudden, out of the blue, he just says, “Show Me your glory.” I always think about that, because, you know, however tough it gets – well, read the verse for yourself.

It always seems to me like an inappropriate time to be asking the Lord to show you His glory. It seems like there was a lot of stuff going on, and so that was not the time. It is like you are in this argument with your dad, and that is not when you ask for the keys to the car, or if you can go out all night. It just seems like a strange time for Moses to stop and ask this. But then I think, you know, in the midst of the battle that we are in, the purpose of which is to wear us out and to wear us down, to make us throw in the towel and give up and lose our faith, that is the time to say, "Lord, show me Your glory. Show me Your joy. Bring to me the joy of Your salvation." There are so many ways in which it manifests; and we need to know how to manifest and seek after the joy of God in our life, and replace this worn out, raggedy faith that we can sometimes get into, feeling like we are never going to make it, and instead be able to break through into the joy of the Lord.

I want to leave you with a few points, the first of which I have already said: get the concordance, get your computer out with your concordance Bible and start looking up every occurrence of joy in the Bible. That is number one.

Number two, we know the aim of spiritual warfare. We are not ignorant; it is to wear us out. It is to make us give up. It is to make us quit, to lose our faith, all of that. So, we are not ignorant of satan's devices.

Next, the joy of the Lord is our strength. That is our strength, and we need to live in the joy of the Lord. Therefore, we must pursue, really be driven to pursue, His joy. In order to pursue it, we have to know how to do that. We find His joy in His Presence. We find His joy in His salvation. We find His joy in His Word. We find it in the Body. Paul talked many times about the joy that he had when certain things happened with the Body. Read those verses, because they are very appropriate to us.

I bless this to you. I want something so badly: I want us to be able to counteract this wearing out of the saints by knowing how to reach in and appropriate the joy of the Lord. And I am going to believe with you that we can all do this and be successful in seeing the restoring of our joy in His salvation.

Amen.