**The Joy of the Lord**

When Nehemiah was governor in 445BC of the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem, he was concerned about the spiritual condition of the Jews living there. The people were failing to keep God’s laws, mainly because of ignorance. To address the problem, Ezra the priest and scribe built a public platform and began reading Moses’ law aloud to Jerusalem’s inhabitants.

When the people listened to the reading of God’s law, they were distraught. They quickly came to the realization that their lives simply didn’t measure up to the standards their God had set for them. They were heart broken.

The response of Nehemiah and Ezra to the people’s reaction was both touching and enlightening. “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep. Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:9-12). The genuine repentance and will to correct their error were precisely the attitudes that pleased God. Because of that mindset, they continued to make further corrections as they became aware of their shortcomings. The joy of the LORD was their strength!

Some Christians seem to lead lives devoid of joy and that may be due in part to a distorted view of God. Some people seem to think God wants them to fail; that He has hidden obscure “trip-wires” in the gospel designed to trigger His wrath toward unsuspecting disciples who are striving to do His will. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that God loves all men and wants to demonstrate His eternal kindness toward any who will demonstrate their love in return. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

The joy of the Lord is our strength; our perseverance, our source of courage, our motivation! What are the keys to this kind of joy?

**Love.** Jesus said we will keep His commandments if we love Him. The person who shows little diligence in determining what Jesus has taught and putting His teaching into practice betray that their professed love for Him is merely lip service.

**Humility**. We must face the realization that the basis for our salvation is not sinless perfection. I must continue to walk in the Light with Him, willing to humbly appeal to God for forgiveness when I fail Him.

**Trust.** The disciple who is diligently seeking God, striving to live by this teaching and humbly depending on His grace for forgiveness must trust in His love.

A lack of joy is a sign of a lack of faith. Christians are the most joyful people in the world because of the love of God and God’s grace is available to any who are humble enough to accept it. If you are interested, let’s talk.

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**