

Subatomic Strength

The Radiant Joy of Jesus

August 10, 2025



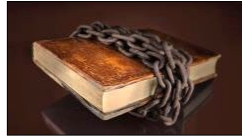
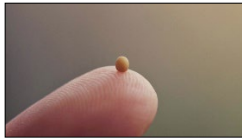
Today we're talking about the strength it takes to persist in spiritual growth!

What's the most dismissed fruit of the Spirit, in the church at large? Joy. We treat joy like a bonus feature of our faith—something nice if it shows up, but not necessarily necessary. And yet:

[Nehemiah said] "The joy of the Lord is your strength." – Nehemiah 8:10 NIV

And not just any ol' joy. He's talking about the joy that David was talking about when he said:

The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ... [For] You have made him exceedingly glad – Psalm 21:1-6 NKJ



Which means **joy isn't just a feeling, it's our fortification. Joy is God's spiritual muscle-building power** to push back against despair and hopelessness and misery and bitterness and pride and arrogance and spiritual fatigue. So if you feel like you're barely standing, the fruit of joy may not be the last thing you need—it might be the most significant thing you're lacking. Last Sunday, we saw that **we're called to take sacred, subatomic, baby-steps**. Because:

"If you have faith [that begins] as small as a mustard seed ... [in the end] Nothing will be impossible for you." – Matthew 17:20 NIV

[As long as we] Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all [gently growing] goodness, righteousness, and truth) – Ephesians 5:8-9 NKJ

So we're talking about the childlike joy that's required for ongoing growth. Because, **once we take the step to plant a seed of faith, we need power to tend it with persistence**. But the very thing that strengthens our spiritual disciplines is seldom taken all that seriously.

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." – Matthew 11:30 NIV

When you're doing it right. Like making an effort to just open your Bible every day, even without reading it, **till it's established as a habit in your heart**. And then adding reading in baby-size bites till that new nature takes root. And so on. And this goes for praying and giving and serving and every kingdom enterprise. But **we laugh at the size of sustainable sacred steps**. Because it hurts our pride. "It's silly! It's inadequate! It's embarrassing!" Because, **our ego prefers hard and heavy over easy and light**. So, we either put it off and feel guilty; or draft an ambitious plan, get overwhelmed, and give up, and then feel guilty. You can laugh, but I've tried it. It works. And I must say, I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it!

Joylessness may be the most tolerated sin in the church. Not our church. The big church.

Maybe it's because *joy's significance* is seriously misjudged. Or maybe it's because **it's the one sin the religious are prone to indulge in**. Jesus told off those joyless Pharisees:



"You load people down with burdens they can hardly carry" – Luke 11:46 NIV

And counteracted their joyless, self-imposed, religious burdens by saying:



"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and *learn from Me*, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light." [If you're doing it right] – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

Therefore let's make every effort to enter that rest, [for our soul] so that no one will fall away by following the same [joyless] example of disobedience. [By either avoiding heavy religious burdens, or burning out on 'em] For the Word of God is living [like a seed] and active [when planted] – Hebrews 4:11-12 NAS

[Cuz] "It is like a mustard seed, which ... is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs" – Mark 4:31-32 NRS

But we *must* grow. Which means we *must* change. Which means we must *humble* ourselves, and be *born again*, and *begin* to *learn* like little children, or we'll never enter His rest.

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [Cuz you'll see it as a burden, and either put it off or quickly wear yourself out] Therefore, whoever *humbles himself like this child* is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." [Cuz that's the goal!] – Matthew 18:3-4 NIV

You see, **our goal is not to become something we're not**. It's to *lift* the weight of whatever is preventing us from becoming our best and most blessed Christ-like self. Which is why, when we're doing it right, **spiritual disciplines don't load us with burdens, they remove 'em!** Cuz we're called to make every effort to enter His rest by simplifying our approach to building our faith. So:

Make every effort to add to your faith [a little] goodness; [by opening the Good News faithfully every day] and to goodness, knowledge; [by adding a bit o' reading. And if you can't do it consistently with joy – do less. Make every effort to find the size of the seed you're able to establish] and [then] to knowledge, [add] self-control; [by developing a sustainable reading plan] and to self-control, [add] perseverance; [and become fully devoted] and to perseverance, godliness; [in your private life] and to godliness, brotherly kindness; [in your public life] and to brotherly kindness, love. [As an ambassador of Christ] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your [limited] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Even as you're slowly growing] But if anyone does not have them, he is *nearsighted* and *blind*, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. – 2 Peter 1:5-9 NIV

[As David sang] The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ... For You meet him with the blessings of goodness ... [and] You have made him [his best and] most blessed [self] forever – Psalm 21:1-6 NKJ



At the *Last Supper*, after foretelling Judas' betrayal, and Peter's denial, and His own *departure* (on the cross) and *return* (from the grave), Jesus said:



"These things I have spoken to you so that *My joy may be in you*, and that *your joy may be made full*. [Therefore] This is My *commandment*, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. [Because *true love lives to serve and sacrifice for our Father, our family, our friends, and our fellowman*. And *joy-fullness grows in those who embody true love*. And] Greater love has no one than *this*, that one *lay down his life for his friends*." – John 15:11-13 NAS



Which *why* our *Savior* is the *most joyful* of all. And why *Paul* could say that:



In *all* our troubles my joy knows no bounds. – 2 Corinthians 7:4 NIV

Heroic faith doesn't just happen. It gradually grows from the seeds we plant and establish and consistently tend. And that requires *persistence*. And that requires *strength*. And that requires *childlike joy* to enter into that rest. On His way to His *crucifixion*, just a *couple weeks* before:

People were bringing *little children* to Jesus ... but the *disciples* rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was *indignant*. He said to them, "Let the *little children come to Me* ... for the *kingdom of God belongs to such as these*. I tell you the truth, *anyone* who will not receive the *kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it*." – Mark 10:13-15 NIV

This is like a *teacher yelling* at you for *running*. But the *principle* comes and says, "Hey, I want 'em to *run*. You should take *running lessons* from them!" I wonder if any kids stuck out their *tongue* as they passed the *disciples*. ***We serve a Savior who delights to take time, on His way to the cross, to take kids in His arms.*** Ever bounce a *kid* on your *knee*? Spin 'em around by their *hands*? Or lay down and hold 'em in the *air*? What do they say as soon as you're done? "Do it again!" So you do it again. And they say, "Do it again!" So you do it again till you're exhausted. And they say, "Do it again!" Because, ***children have a great capacity for joyful monotony*** ... till they throw up! And this is a mere reflection of the *inexhaustibly* joy of our *Creator*, who even made the *sun* so that it doesn't just glow in an *ongoing monotonous* cycle around a *globe*. Nope.

It bursts forth [in an *unending dawn*] like a *radiant bridegroom* after his wedding [night]. [And then] It rejoices like a *great athlete* eager to run the race. – Psalm 19:4-5 NLT

The Lord said, "Let there be *light*." And there was *light*. And then He said, "Do it again!" So:

The sun *rises* and the sun *sets*, and hurries *back* to where it *rises*. – Ecclesiastes 1:5 NIV

[And] His *mercies* begin *afresh* each day. – Lamentations 3:23 NLT

And He *never* gets sick of it! Know when we're temporarily *empowered* to *comprehend* the *joyful monotones* of *life*? When we're *near death*. That's when we can suddenly see that even ***the smallest, seemingly monotonous, elements of our daily existence are brimming with powerful, emotional, joyful meaning.*** As are your *tiny, daily, sacred steps of faith*. So:

Rejoice in the Lord *always*. AGAIN I say, *rejoice!* – Philippians 4:4-5 NET

[Cuz] “I tell you, [said Jesus] there is *rejoicing* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who *repents*.” [Each and every time it happens] – Luke 15:10 NIV

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a *great cloud of witnesses*, let us *throw off everything that hinders* [us from becoming our best and most blessed Christ-like self] and [also] the *sin* that so easily entangles, and *let us run with perseverance* the [lifelong] race marked out for us. [But] *Let us fix our eyes on* [the enter--prize of becoming like] *Jesus* ... who for the joy set before Him endured the cross – Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV

Because joy is a *non-optional Scriptural command* and a *work/fruit* of His Spirit. Because **the strength of the joy of eternal salvation outshines all temporary trials and tragedies.**

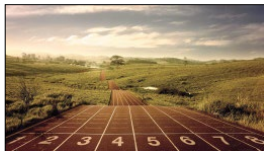
Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly – 1 Corinthians 9:26 NIV

And now the prize awaits me—the *crown of righteousness* ... And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His glorious return. – 2 Timothy 4:8 NLT

Despite their unpleasant sounding name, **spiritual disciplines shouldn't be burdens.** If they are, you're doing 'em wrong. **What makes a discipline enjoyable depends on how much you want what you'll be gaining by training** (like, say, a future gold medal); **and what you're training for** (like, say, a pie eating contest). One attracts with its promised reward. And one is eating pie. So:

[Run] to get ... a *crown* that will *last forever*. – 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 NIV

[And] Taste and see that the Lord is *good* – Psalm 34:8 NIV



[And] My soul will be *satisfied* [with rest] as with the *richest of foods*; [and] with *singing lips* my mouth will *praise* You. [With joy!] – Psalm 63:5 NIV

[And] He took a *little child* and had him stand among [the disciples].

[And] Taking him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever *welcomes* one of these *little children* in My name welcomes Me” – Mark 9:36-37 NIV



[So] Whatever you *do*, whether in word or deed, *do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus* – Colossians 3:17 NIV

So, what's it mean to *do it in His name*? **It means representing Him, by embodying Him,** by saying or doing what He'd say and do if He was you. Which begins with establishing a childlike seed of faith. **Most of us got the impression from some modern-day Pharisee that a spiritual discipline doesn't count unless we'd rather not do it.** And that's just sad. Which is the opposite of joy. So, **when it comes to consistent Christ-like growth, less is definitely more** – if you keep in mind the goal of what we're growing by sowing, and gaining by training:

The fruit of the Spirit [which] is [the greatest] love, [of self-sacrifice; rooted in the maturing strength of the full] joy, [of our salvation; which produces a] peace, [that passes all understanding; and increases our] patience, [to continue to cultivate Christ-like] kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. – Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

So don't dismiss Christ's radiant, joyful, power to persist – cuz we need the assist!