**Daily Prayer and Encouragement for Sunday 3rd January 2021**

**Welcome to 2021!! "May the joy of the LORD be your strength this year.**

Fear, sadness, Uncertainly. Those are just a few words that described last year's current affairs and do describe the current state of emotions swirling across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, God calls his people not just to be content, but thriving and joyous in every season of life. Jesus said His people are "not of the world, even as I am not of the world", (John 17:14). Despite all of the trouble and hardship the world is facing, the children of God have a source of strength that sets them apart from everyone else. Nehemiah 8:10b say’s "**do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength**". This verse is famous for providing some encouragement when people are going through a challenging time; however, God never intended for this verse to be just a good statement. He desires a joy for his children that is firm and can withstand even the greatest of trials. This scripture is strategic in its context to provide a means of exhortation and hope for the people of God. The book of Nehemiah lays a clear foundation on how God's people can obtain strength through the joy of the LORD today.

We do not know how this year will look like, perhaps we may still have a few storms: Our storms can be a financial storm, a business storm, a relationship storm, a storm of illness. Suddenly, your whole life is turned upside down. You can be in the very centre of the will of God, and be going through a cyclone, or a hurricane of all kind of troubles. When this happens, you do not have to look at the circumstances and give up, but look at God's promises and His character. Fear is looking at the circumstances, but Faith is looking at God. I love this song:

**And because he lives I can face tomorrowBecause he lives all fear is goneBecause I know he holds the futureAnd life is worth the living just because he lives**

The Lord is calling you this year to depend on him and trust Him more. For in Him we live, move and have our being. Our future is secure in Him. And so whenever you feel discouraged and your soul is downcast, look up!  Fix your eyes on Jesus the author and the finisher of your faith. Look in his Word and be reminded the words of Nehemiah 8:10b that says "**do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength**".

My prayer for you and you family year is that the LORD will keep you in the grip of his grace always, and that you will emerge stronger in faith, wiser in counsel and love for God and his ways enriched and deepened.

Every blessing to you all.

Patches Chabala