

FRUIT OF SPIRIT 2: 'JOY' (Nehemiah 8:2,8-12, Philippians 4:4-9)

What makes us strong? Where do we get strength from? Think of ways (**ASK**)

- Good food (**S**) – Mr Strong (what was diet? – ASK)
- Good exercise (**S**) – Paralympics, Ali Jawad
- Support of family and friends (**S**)

Look at something else that gives us strength: Neh passage – it's JOY (**S**) – what mean?

Joy

- often overlooked – love and peace more than joy
- often misunderstood – sometimes as happy or everything going well – but Paul in prison, summary of this letter is 'joy in the midst of trial'
- or sometimes as praise (**S**) – temporary state of exultation. Of course that's important. But not whole thing, either

So what does Paul mean when he says v4 **Rejoice – are you listening, church? – rejoice!** (NOTE Repetition – really important – like God to Joshua: have I not told you, be strong and courageous!)

Permanent state of joyfulness, of rejoicing – about our minds, our hearts and our lives (S) – that's what he deals with here. Reverse order in terms of passage:

Minds v8-9 – joy through what we focus on. Glass half full or half empty? Here's a message especially to 'half-empty' people: GIGO (EXPAND). Not garbage, but good! We cultivate a state of joy by what we choose to focus on. Things that inspire us will cause us to rejoice.

What inspires you? (**S**) (SHARE WITH NEIGHBOUR) If focus on that, the promise is that God's joy will be more present in your life.

Hearts v6-7 (S) – joy through what we pray for. Lack of peace causes lack of joy – so joyful life needs prayer at its heart. Note importance of thanksgiving even in offering our needs to God. What God gives us passes understanding.

Phrase has 2 meanings – so much better than we could imagine for ourselves; OR supernaturally given. Both true. Fruit of Spirit are cultivated but also given supernaturally – we can ask for and receive peace of Christ. Likewise his joy. We rejoice 'in the Lord'. Thankful prayer is a key to joy because God can work his presence miraculously in our hearts. (**Will be praying later**)

Lives v5 – joy manifested through gentleness evident to all – in other words, a joyful contentment to live like Jesus (another theme of letter e.g. Phil 2) – that's connection. Often wondered how v4 and v5 connect – to rejoice in the Lord is to be content to live like Jesus lived.

God's word for us today: rejoice! It's our strength (**S**). But as we've seen more than praise, it's a state of being, a state of our minds, hearts and lives. What is God saying to you today:

- Maybe challenge is to focus more on things to inspire you and cause you to praise
- Maybe it's to pray with thanksgiving and ask for and receive peace of Christ
- Maybe it's to rejoice Mon to Sat through a gentle life which exudes joy of Christ in challenging circumstances.

Either way, the message is clear: rejoice. I will say it again: Rejoice. Amen.