

Day 8

Joy – A Weapon In My Hand

START WITH HEART

Lord, as You speak please help me listen with my whole heart and Holy Spirit please meet me today and make me more like Jesus.

When Jesus surrendered He became victorious, and He won the greatest battle ever fought.

He overcame evil with good!

He overcame hatred with love!

He overcame lies with truth!

He overcame suffering with joy!

Lord, teach me to surrender all to you, work in me so that Your joy will speak louder than my suffering, transform me to know joy as my present reality.

The joy of the Lord is my strength!

Romans 14:17 (ESV)

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.*

The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. Paul tells us that eating and drinking, all the external circumstances of our lives do not bring us closer to God. It is not as important as we make it! What brings us closer to God is what happens in our hearts, the eternal values have to come first in our lives, which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And where do righteousness, peace and joy come from? From the Spirit of God when we

allow Him to work in our lives. When did Jesus have victory in His life? When He lived submitted and surrendered to God. As we follow the example of Jesus and live a surrendered life, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, we will know righteousness, peace and joy.

Happiness is fickle and fleeting and based on circumstances. But joy is something that rests very deeply in the heart of God's children. In John 15:11 Jesus says: *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"*, Jesus can speak about joy; His joy was in His surrender and in His self-sacrifice. Jesus knew what it meant to do what His Father had sent Him to do; in His sacrifice of offering His life He knew joy. To live a fulfilled life, a life overflowing with goodness does not come from our health, our wealth or our circumstances. Joy comes when we have a perfect understanding of God, our fellowship and oneness with Him. When we think about this world too much then we lose our joy. In Mark 4:19 Jesus said: *"but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."* The truth of God's word cannot thrive in us and bear fruit when we are overcome by the world we live in.

Joy is the second fruit mentioned, straight after love in Galatians 5:22, and the fruit of the Spirit can only come through our alignment with the standards of Jesus. We cannot always change our circumstances, so we need Holy Spirit to empower us so that joy reigns in our hearts, and joy becomes a weapon to govern our situations. What is in the power of joy if we do not know it in adversity? Joy and adversity seem to be a lifestyle in the life of Paul, he ruled his circumstances through joy and not the other way round; joy was a permanent possession no matter his circumstances.

Nehemiah 8:9-12: *"And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. [10] Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those*

for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” [11] So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.” [12] And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.”

The Israelites had been scattered and living in exile, and they have now returned and re-gathered in Jerusalem. When they returned to Jerusalem, they found the Law of Moses. Now while they were living in exile, under foreign rule, they did not get to hear God’s Word because they did not have it with them. Remember, in those days people did not have the Bible in their homes, like we do. The Priests would gather them together so that he could read the Law of Moses to them. The exile lasted about 70 years, which meant they did not get to hear God’s Word at all during that time. When Ezra the priest and the Levites read the *story of God to them, they heard for the first time who they were, why God had chosen them, how God wanted to be their God, and how they were meant to live.*

It is quite staggering how they had lived without God’s Word. Imagine what it must have felt like for them to hear God’s Word for the first time in so many years, and to hear His heart towards them. And it says in verse 2 and 3 that all could hear with understanding, so they actually felt God’s word resonating in their own hearts. In verse 3 we see how the people responded to hearing the Word of God; they became attentive, they were rapt up in the truth. In verse 9 we see how they understood God’s Word and as they heard His word they began to weep, they were learning things about how they had been living while in exile, and what they realised was that while they were in exile they had broken covenant with God because they had lived outside of God’s laws, know that they had broken covenant with God must have grieved them deeply.

The Word was read from early morning to mid-day, they would have stood for about 6 hours listening. Then in verse 10 Nehemiah steps in and gives them

some commands, which begins with *“go, eat and drink, do not be sorrowful for the joy of the Lord is your strength”*.

The people are standing together with Nehemiah on this day with a renewed commitment to the Lord. The people celebrated the feast with great joy, because of the renewing of the covenant; the people were repenting, and returning to God in obedience.

Our joy is the ‘who’ we trust in, when we rest in God we find our joy and we find our strength. What can we learn about joy?

Joy of the Lord is directly linked to my trust in God;
Joy of the Lord lifts me out of my situations;
Joy of the Lord overcomes fear and doubt;
Joy of the Lord knows who God is.

The joy of the Lord declares that God is my protector, He is the lover of my soul and my very great delight, He is my future and my present help, I am not defeated, I am not hopeless and I am not fearful. Let the joy of the Lord declare His goodness in your life.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you trust more in “what”, “why”, “how”, and “where” rather than “who” is at work in your life? What hinders you to know the joy of Lord in your circumstances?
2. The unexpected allows us to practice the truth of God’s word as He walks with us, what old mindsets is preventing you to live in the joy of the Lord?
3. How can you adjust your language to testify of the joy of the Lord in your life?

Thank you Lord for your son Jesus who came to give me life and the fullness of joy, thank you that He surrendered His all for me. Strengthen me to lay down my life and, in the laying down, I will know your joy.

WORSHIP SONG:

Goodness Of God, sung by Jenn Johnson live at Bethel Church:

<https://youtu.be/noFBb6hnwTo>

by Zelda Cronje