



## Wayne's Words

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### 'The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength'

Of the first three fruits of the Spirit that are listed by St Paul, I believe 'joy' is the least publicised. We hear plenty about Love and Peace, but where does that leave Joy in our ranking of these attitudes to life?

I still remember the Lutheran Chaplain at Melbourne University, Ps Vernon Kleinig, who spoke on this subject to the Christian Union. I don't recall the detail of his address, but I cannot forget his countenance. He was a living demonstration of enthusiastic joy.

We may all be familiar with St Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.' Many of you will have sung these words often in your younger years at Christian camps and youth groups.

It is surprising though to see some of the places where the word 'joy' pops up in the Scriptures.

James 1:2 says to 'Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds – hardly our instinctive response. He goes on to give the reason – 'because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.' Maturity and growing Christlikeness seem to be valued more highly in the Scriptures than material security and freedom from the troubles and the ills of life.

Even more striking is Hebrews 12:2 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.'

So the anticipation of joy is meant to sustain us through the hard times, as well as be our response within those trials – as with Paul and Silas singing the house down in the Philippian jail. (Acts 16).

Our focus then is to be on God – on what he is shaping in us, on what awaits us and on his purposes in the world rather than on our own way remaining smooth; being confident in God's love - that he is working all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. So choose to surrender your worries and trials to God, and in your meditation upon his faithfulness allow the rivers of living water within you to bubble up in joy.

As Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us – 'the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

*Wayne*