

Third Presbyterian Church
Bible Study - Nehemiah
Sermon 9
The Joy of The Lord is My Strength

Nehemiah 12:27-43 (NIV)

²⁷ At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. ²⁸ The singers also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem--from the villages of the Netophathites, ²⁹ from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. ³⁰ When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall. ³¹ I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate. ³² Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them, ³³ along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, ³⁵ as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, ³⁶ and his associates--Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani--with musical instruments [prescribed by] David the man of God. Ezra the scribe led the procession. ³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east. ³⁸ The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people--past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped. ⁴⁰ The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, ⁴¹ as well as the priests--Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets--⁴² and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. ⁴³ And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

Questions

1. What has the Lord done in your life recently that motivates you to praise Him?
2. Why must we praise God even when things are not going well for us?
 - a. What benefit have you received personally from praising God thru your storm?
3. What does this passage reveal about how believers should respond to the written Word of God?
4. What role did prayer play in Nehemiah's life?
 - a. What role does prayer play in your life?
 - b. What would your life look like if the privilege of prayer was taken from you?
5. Why is it important to have someone in your life that holds you accountable in your Christian Walk?
6. In what ways do you think Christians today tend to neglect worship?
 - a. Describe how society would look if public Christian worship was outlawed and punishable by death.
7. Discuss the following statement:
 - a. Praise is an expression of the worth of God in your life and in the life of the church.
8. God does not lose His worth in my life because I suffer loss.
 - a. Why do you feel loss in life (employment, health, marriage, loved one etc.) cause many to devalue God?
 - b. How do we prevent losses in life from devaluing God's worth in our mind and actions?
9. How has this study of Nehemiah impacted you the greatest?
 - a. If possible, recall what have been your biggest takeaways from this book?

(12:27-43) Thinking, Positive, Need for, Example—Positive Thinking, Need for, Example—Attitude, Positive, Need for, Example—Joy, Need for, Example—Attitude, Joyful, Need for, Example—Jerusalem, Wall of, Dedication—Dedication Service, of Jerusalem’s Wall—Service, Dedication, of Jerusalem’s Wall: right after the population and housing crisis had been solved, the dedication of the wall took place. However, remember that the people had already rededicated their lives to the LORD. The people knew that their real security lay in the hands of God, not in the stones and mortar of a protective wall. Once they had made their personal dedication to the LORD, built up the population of the city, and constructed adequate housing, it was now time for the wall to be dedicated to the LORD and His protective hand.

1. Nehemiah summoned all the religious personnel together to prepare for the dedication celebration (vv.27-30). The Levites were summoned from throughout Judah to assist in the ceremony. They were to provide the choir and instruments for music. A special invitation was also sent to the Levites within Jerusalem itself and its surrounding villages (vv.28-29). After gathering together, the priests and Levites cleansed themselves ceremonially (v.30). Ritual cleansing included the following activities: bathing, changing into clean clothing, offering sacrifices, praying and rededicating one’s life to the LORD. Following their cleansing, the priests and Levites dedicated and purified the people, the gates, and the wall itself. Obviously some of the same ritual activities would have been performed for each of these (1 Chr.23:28; 2 Chr.29:15).

2. With the cleansing ritual fulfilled, Nehemiah divided the leaders and musicians into two processional groups. He then led them to the top of the wall (vv.31-39). One group, placed under Ezra’s leadership was instructed to walk in a procession to the right toward the Dung Gate (vv.31-37). As they walked in the dedication procession, they were to play musical instruments and sing. Just as Nehemiah instructed, Ezra led his group in a processional march heading south. By marching along the top of the wall, Ezra’s group saw the results of their hard labor. They passed over the Dung Gate (v.31), the Fountain Gate, the steps that led to the city or house of David, and the Water Gate (v.37).

The second group, led by Nehemiah himself, walked in a procession in the opposite direction (vv.38-39). As they marched along they also saw the results of their diligent labor. They marched over the Tower of the Ovens, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, and the Sheep Gate (v.39). When they reached the Gate of the Guard, they stopped. Both processional groups halted when they reached the temple area, for it was there that a worship service was to be held.

Obviously, it was a very wise decision for Nehemiah to dedicate the wall in this way. Having the people walk along the top of the wall caused them to focus on the results of their labor. Realizing that they had accomplished such a massive project would stir them to continue the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Since they had accomplished so much in just 52 days, they would be confident they could achieve any task, even the rebuilding of the city and nation. But there was also another benefit of marching across the top of the wall. The enemy nations surrounding Jerusalem would have had spies observing the festive occasion. Seeing such a joyful experience and the strength of the wall would make the enemy think twice before attacking.

3. When the processional groups reached the temple area, Nehemiah gathered them for the dedication worship service (vv.40-43). All the choirs, civil officials, priests, and Nehemiah the governor took their places (vv.40-41). After the music and worship, the worshippers offered their sacrifices (vv.42-43). Afterward, the people rejoiced greatly, including the women and children. Everyone was flooded with joy. In fact, the celebration and rejoicing were so loud that the noise was heard from far away.

Thought 1. In order to continue building the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah, Nehemiah needed to arouse a positive and joyful attitude in the people. It was for this reason that he organized the dedication service around a procession on top of the wall and a joyful worship service. What a lesson for us! We, too, must develop a positive and joyful attitude. We must think optimistically, casting all pessimism and negativity out of our minds. Positive thinking is essential in order to live a successful and victorious life. Therefore, we must develop positive thoughts, focusing our minds upon things that are...

- true
- honest and noble
- just and right
- pure and clean
- pleasant and lovely
- excellent and admirable
- good and honorable
- virtuous and praiseworthy

Good and wholesome thoughts are to flood our minds. Nothing else. No negative thought—whether immoral, unjust, lawless, violent, or any other wicked behavior—should ever be harbored or meditated upon. We cannot keep thoughts from flashing across our minds, but we can keep from harboring them and allowing them to nest. We can refuse to think upon negative behavior, instead focusing our minds only upon positive, virtuous, and uplifting behavior. This is the way to develop a joyful attitude. And a joyful attitude based upon the Word of God will always lead to a righteous and fruitful life as well as a righteous and productive society. Listen to what God’s Holy Word says about our thoughts:

“And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?” (Mt.9:4).

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Mt.15:19).

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full” (Jn.15:11).

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Ro.1:21).

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (Ep.4:17).

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

“Meditate upon these things [righteousness]; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Ti.4:15).

“We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple” (Ps.48:9).

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies” (Ps.119:59).

“The thoughts of the righteous *are* right: *but* the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit” (Pr.12:5).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Ro.12:3).

3. (12:44-47) Worship, Duty, to Be Faithful, Consistent—Faithfulness, Duty, in Worship—Consistency, Duty, in Worship—Worship, Organized, by Nehemiah—Organization, of Worship, by Nehemiah—Temple, Organization of, by Nehemiah: it was at this time at the joyful celebration, that the religious workers were organized to conduct permanent worship services at the temple. Custodians were appointed to be in charge of the offerings, tithes, and storerooms (v.44). Throughout the land the people were to provide food and money to support the priests and Levites.

The priests and Levites had already been appointed, but a significant statement is made about them in these verses: they performed their service faithfully both in personal conduct and in ministry. They lived pure, clean lives, and they faithfully performed their service for the LORD, ministering to the people and helping to meet their spiritual needs (v.30). As a result, the people throughout the nation were well pleased with the priests and Levites.

The singers and gatekeepers also faithfully performed their service for the LORD and His house, the temple (vv.45-46). Two facts in particular are mentioned: they fulfilled their duties exactly as prescribed by David and Solomon, and they followed the custom of having choir directors as described by David and Asaph.

Lastly, all the people were faithful in supporting the priests and Levites (v.47). Under the leadership of both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, the people proved faithful in supporting the religious workers. Even the Levites scattered throughout the cities and villages of the nation were faithfully supported.

Thought 1. Everyone of God's people need to be faithful, consistent in their duty. No task ever gets done unless a person diligently works to complete the task. Thus, being loyal and reliable are absolutely essential in order to achieve anything worthwhile in life. No matter who we are, we must be faithful in the task assigned us.

⇒ Ministers and other church workers must be faithful for the Word of God to be carried to the world and for the needs of people to be met.

⇒ Business managers and employees must be faithful for businesses to succeed and for jobs to be available to the people.

⇒ Spouses must be faithful for marriages to survive.

⇒ Friends must be faithful to one another if their friendship is to be maintained.

⇒ Laborers must work diligently if their jobs are to be secure.

⇒ Students must study consistently if they are to pass and graduate and be prepared to secure adequate employment.

⇒ Citizens must be faithful in paying taxes and supporting their nation if the nation is to be economically sound, militarily strong, and able to provide basic services for society.

No matter what the task or who is responsible for the task, faithfulness is demanded if success is to be achieved. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about faithfulness, about being consistently diligent in carrying out our duties:

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Ro.12:11).

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ep.4:28).

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col.3:17).

“Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged” (Col.3:21).

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Th.4:11-12).