

Bible e-Study Nehemiah #8
On the joy of success... and success' dangers.

²⁷ At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem,... ³¹ I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks... 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. Neh 12, various verses

NUGGET – The wall is done and as we saw last week, the Word of God was again restored to the hearing of those in Jerusalem. In the intervening chapters much is done in response to that word of God. There is a time of repentance, and of the preaching of the covenant, the establishing of leadership and a renewal of the priesthood orders.

Now this week we see the dedication of the wall amidst great rejoicing. All this rejoicing, last week with the feasting and now again this week you have great sacrifices made amid great rejoicing. Seems like a lot of effort going to a frivolous waste, huh?

I'm not so sure about that. I'm reminded of two places in Jesus life where there was great rejoicing and even a bit of frivolity.

- That was at the first miracle that Jesus did, at the wedding in Cana where He turned water into wine. And not just any wine, but the best wine. Jesus simply would not restrain Himself and just supply what was needed for the rejoicing to continue. No, He did it with gusto and supplied the best. ([Jn 2:7-11](#))
- And the other instance of great rejoicing was when Jesus entered triumphantly into Jerusalem (into this same city where the walls have been rebuilt that we've been following for the last few weeks.) There He was told that His followers were being too noisy and to quiet them down. Of course He didn't and made reference to the stones themselves starting to sing if they did.

Interesting thought about Jesus mentioning the stone themselves would sing. In [Luke 19:37-40](#) Jesus is entering Jerusalem where, 400 years before the 2 great choirs in our verses today sang and rejoiced over the rebuilding of the wall that Jesus is entering through, and the restoration of the Hebrews to their home in Jerusalem. If stones had memory and voice...

At any rate, today's verses from Nehemiah speak of the rejoicing done by all at this dedication of the wall having been restored. Everyone from the leaders up on the wall to the children in the streets below join in this celebration. And this celebration is one for the books. We're told that the joy of Jerusalem could be heard for miles.

So also for us who have been restored to God through the work of Jesus Christ. We can rejoice in our restoration and let others hear our joy. Joy shared, is joy multiplied.

APPLICATION –

1. When we come to church much of our worship celebrates God's love for us. As your family prepares to come, invite them to enter into the joy of the restoration to God that is ours through the work of Jesus.
2. Sometimes we lose sight of the joy that's ours in Jesus. Put some 'party' in your day and if someone asks why, trust the Lord to give you the words.

PRAY – "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1Thess 5:16-18

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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GOING DEEPER

Success can be a reason to rejoice. Especially like today's reading when the success comes by the hand of God. But there is temptation for us in success and that temptation can come in laziness and overconfident self-reliance. Read [13:4-11](#)

The wall and Jerusalem have been restored and the law of God had again been restored to the hearing of the people of Jerusalem, now after this, they return to evil ways. Now they have brought the enemy, Tobiah, into their midst, into the temple even and have given him a place to reside. He has brought his furniture into the place where the temple offerings of grain and spices, of wine and oil and even the vessels of the temple were to be stored. These things were removed in order to make a place for the home furnishings of the enemy to be put so he could live among them!! How like the redeemed.

Think of when Moses had brought Israel up out of Egypt and while he was on Mt Sinai receiving the law from God, the people forced Aaron to make a golden calf for them to worship ([Ex 32](#)). It just doesn't take long for people to turn from God even after being shown His hand of mercy, grace and forgiveness.

We have been given restoration by God, and yet we make a place for sin in our lives. So, like those living in Jerusalem, we have a need of constant repentance. Look at [chapter 9: 2-3; 16-18 and 32-33](#). It's almost embarrassing after reading this to then read what we did earlier in chapter 13 to see how they sinned again.

Look back in chapter 13 now reading [verses 15-18](#). Notice that there is a progression of their sin. They started in [verses 4-11](#) by making a place for the enemy in the courts of the temple, that's a bad start. But then the people began to violate the holiness of the Sabbath day themselves. It was no longer enough that the enemy was given 'space', now the people were acting and doing the wrong things for themselves. They were acting contrary to what they knew to be right from the covenant they made with God.

They had success by the hand of God. And now we are witnessing their laziness in keeping their promises. They have felt confident, too confident in themselves, and now they disregard their relationship with God. Again, they portray us very well. How we can take God's grace for granted and trample it underfoot. Romans 6 leaps to mind especially [verses 1-3 and 15-18](#).

Our friends in restored Jerusalem have been generous with the lessons they've shared with us over the past few weeks. And in this last lesson we also take to heart the lesson of vigilance against the enemy. We are restored, as they were, thanks to the work of Christ. We are given a fresh start, as they were, to living in a right relationship with God, thanks again to the work of Jesus Christ.

And like them we too must be on guard against inviting sin in our lives and giving it a place to reside. We must not be like the nobles desecrating the Sabbath outside the walls. But we know that when we do 'step out side the walls' of restoration that Christ has built for us, we are always welcomed back. The door is never shut to us because Jesus has opened it by His sacrifice.

What other pitfalls besides overconfidence and laziness accompany success?
Are there warning signs to these?

What safeguards against overconfidence and laziness have you found helpful in your Christian walk?

We find our own ways to avoid enjoying worship – what are some of those?
And why is that?

What can steal our communal celebration of what the Lord has done for us?

If you were to let yourself enjoy, really enjoy, gathering together with God's people what might you do differently in preparing for Sunday or any other gathering time?

Peace in Christ, Pastor Rhodes.