

Nehemiah, builder of the walls of Jerusalem

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I hope you've had a little time to read a bit of Nehemiah. When we last met Nehemiah, he was praying in chapter 1 and then getting permission from Artaxerxes to come and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

You might remember that his prayer started because he heard this message in chapter 1, verse 3. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. Its gates have been burned with fire.

Why worry about walls? Well, of course, in those days, the only protection you could have from your enemy was to gather in your city or town, and you are protected by the walls around the town.

And as I'm sure you're aware, if you have walls, you need gates so you can get out or in. Otherwise, you'd be stuck inside forever, which wouldn't be very nice. But if you have gates and no walls, then the people just slip around the side.

So, got the picture? You need walls and gates to protect yourself from the enemy. And if you read through to the end of Nehemiah, chapter 13, you'll know that at one stage, Nehemiah has the gates locked so that people can't come into Jerusalem and trade on the Sabbath.

[1 : 2 4] So, the gates are also keeping God's people as a separate people, a distinct people who are obeying and serving their God. Now, we have an infatuation with buildings.

And so, what people most know about Nehemiah is that he built walls. I guess it's because when somebody does a building, you can see they've achieved something. You might know that Winston Churchill used to spend his relaxing hours building walls in his garden.

And I visited his house with his cigar still in place, though he'd gone many years ago. And you could see the walls scattered down the valley, including, sir, in the ponds of black swans he'd got from Western Australia.

But the thing I've found in Christian ministry is often that Christians like giving to buildings. And the people of this church are well experienced in paying for buildings to be repaired or put up.

Because there's something very satisfying about a building. You don't have a building and then you give some money and the building is built and you think, well, we've achieved something. But, of course, dear friends, buildings are just a means to an end, aren't they?

[2 : 4 1] You might have buildings and they might be empty and unused. And all around Australia you can see that people have built churches, which are now pancake parlors or something like that.

So buildings are just a means to an end. They're not an end in itself. And, of course, what Nehemiah is trying to do, his big purpose is not to build walls for the sake of building walls.

His big purpose is to bring God's people back together in safety in one place under one God and under God's word and under God's protection and promise.

And Nehemiah is a people person, not a wall person. That is, his main concern is with the people of God. And if you read through the whole of Nehemiah, you'll see that's very clear.

And at the end, he's got the city, he's got the walls. His frustration is the people won't yet serve God wholeheartedly. So please don't think if you're going to have a building program for your church, read Nehemiah.

[3 : 50] That misses the point of the book. If you're going to have a church building program, I mean building up the people of the church, then read Nehemiah, not if you have a building building program.

We need building building programs, but actually they're just a means to an end. It's a bit like a family home, isn't it? The point of a family home is the family, actually, not the home.

And you can have a family home where there's no kind of sense of family in it at all. You can have a family home in which the family is dysfunctional.

The point of the family home is the family. The point of Jerusalem is the people, not the buildings or the walls. However, in Nehemiah's situation, it makes very good sense to have the walls in place, because as we heard so clearly in chapter four, the Jews in Jerusalem are surrounded by enemies.

To the north are the Samaritans. Now, that was the northern kingdom of Samaria. The northern kingdom, of course, had been destroyed by the Assyrians.

[5 : 05] The Assyrians had taken all the Jews away and replaced them with people from elsewhere in the Assyrian Empire. So the people in Samaria were kind of half Jews.

And you meet that enmity between Jews and Samaritans, even in John chapter four. But then the people from Ashdod and Ammon and so on and from the coastland, well, they would they'd been enemies of the Jews all the way through.

So when you're surrounded by enemies, what you want to do is to have a way of keeping your people safe. And the walls of a city like Jerusalem would provide protection, not just for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for those from villages nearby.

The villages wouldn't have a wall. But if an enemy came, they could all race to Jerusalem and find their safety there. So Jerusalem was like the mother of the area. And the walls of Jerusalem provided the safety.

Well, in chapter two, we find that Nehemiah did the reconnaissance on the walls. He went out by himself just with a few friends to find out how bad the walls were.

[6 : 07] In chapter three, we have a description of the builders of the walls. Now, I'm not going to go through chapter three in detail, but I do find the list really fascinating.

Please remember that these builders were untrained builders. They were the ordinary people who saw the need to protect themselves from their enemies.

And it's a long... I didn't get somebody to read it because it's such a difficult chapter to read with all these funny names. But actually, it's really good to read it because all the funny names are important people.

Let me just point out some of the builders to you. The first one named in chapter three, verse one, is Elishab, the high priest and his fellow priests. They went to work and rebuilt the sheep gate, which must have cheered up the sheep immensely.

I'm sure they had their own gate. Then we read in verse two, the men of Jericho, way down near the Jordan. They came up to build some walls because if they were in trouble, they could come to Jerusalem for safety.

[7 : 07] Then, amazingly, we read in verse five, the next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa. Please notice that, a little town nearby. But how extraordinary, their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

So the people were happy to work, but the nobles thought, no, I'm above that kind of menial task. I'm not a builder. I'm a noble. I give the orders.

I don't do the work. And then, extraordinarily, we see in verse eight that Uziel, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section.

And Hananiah, one of the perfume makers, made repairs next to that. So you had clever artists like goldsmiths and clever chemists like perfumers.

They were out there doing their work as well. It was all hands to the pump, as we say. In verse 10, we have Jediah made the repairs opposite his house, a very sensible thing to do.

[8 : 11] Not wasting any energy there. In verse 12, Shalom, he repaired the next session with the help of his daughter. So, you know, Dainty and Rosie and Bethel and whoever else, Ethel and Bethel and so on.

They were there, busy helping Daddy do the wall. I'm sure they were so pleased. And I'm sure they put their names in the cement when they had a chance. Well, in verse 17, we meet the Levites working hard.

In verse 22, the priests from the surrounding regions were working hard. We meet the men of Tekoa there back again in verse 27. The men of Tekoa repaired another section.

No mention of their nobles who were probably having a rest at home because the weather was too hot or something like that. And the chapter ends with the goldsmiths, verse 32, and the merchants making more repairs.

Now, I think it's wonderful that most of the people named in the chapter are unimportant people. Because it shows how God values unknown and unimportant people.

[9 : 20] It shows how much God values every individual who contributes to the work of God.

When you die, there may be a window put up in memory of you. There may not. It doesn't matter whether the people of the church remember you. What matters, dear sister, dear brother, is that God remembers you.

And that according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, none of our labor is in vain.

Think of every time you have prayed throughout your life. None of those prayers has been wasted by God or forgotten by God.

Think of every time you've spoken to someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. God has not forgotten that work. Think of every time you've served the gospel throughout the world.

[10 : 31] Think of every time you've served in this church, whatever task you've done. Nobody else might have thanked you at the end. But do you know who remembers your work?

God does. I love it in Revelation 2 and 3, where Jesus keeps saying to the churches, I know your works.

I know your works. And the lovely thing about being a Christian, one of the immense privileges that God knows our works.

And none of our works are wasted. God is a very good housekeeper. No prayer is wasted. And no work is wasted for his glory.

Well, it's a remarkable time in the history of the people of God, because it's not that the leaders only are working hard.

[11 : 33] Actually, everybody's working together. It's a wonderful picture, isn't it, of the people of God. It reminds me of that extraordinary moment, unrepeated moment in Exodus, when they're raising money to build the tabernacle.

And the treasurer has to say, please stop giving. I've never heard that in a church. I've never heard a treasurer say, would you please stop giving? We've got too much money. Extraordinary moment.

It probably happens here all the time, but not in the churches I usually go to anyway. And how wonderful when God's people are enthused and active in supporting the work of God as they are here in the early chapters of Nehemiah.

Unknown, many of them. We know their names, but that's all we know. But named by God, honoured by God, even named in his great book of the Bible. Just shows how God values ordinary people.

Well, actually, from God's point of view, there are no ordinary people. We're all made in God's image.

[12 : 43] How God loves his images. Us. But, of course, as we heard in the reading, there's opposition, discouragement, but there's work and wisdom and self-defense and trust.

The opposition, the strong opposition, comes from Sanballat. We meet him there in verse 1. And, of course, they use ridicule, don't they? What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall?

Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Of course they won't finish in a day, but it's all a way of discouraging people. Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble?

They're real rubble rousers, aren't they? Burned as they are. I mean, they're saying this is so hopeless. And Tobiah, the Ammonite, from the people of Ammon just nearby, he was nearby, you know.

What are they building? Even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones. No wonder Nehemiah praised fervently that God would recognize the strength of this opposition and bring their planning to nothing.

[13 : 54] So, despite the opposition, isn't this wonderful? We rebuilt the wall to the Lord that reached half its height. Well, then Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs from the Arab Peninsula and the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod, they gathered more and more people.

They were very angry. They plotted out not just to ridicule but to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God, and I love this in verse 9, and posted to God day and night.

How sensible to pray and post to God as well. Great combination, isn't it? Trusting in God, but also making very sensible precautions against an attack.

But notice, too, that there are some people who ought to be encouraging them. The people of Judah say the strength of the laborers is giving out, and there's so much rubble, we can't build the wall.

Whenever you try and do something adventurous for God, there's always a friendly person who's happy to offer oceans of discouragement. Discouragement in a sort of caring way. It'll never work.

[15 : 03] It's not worth praying for that. It'll never happen. I remember when I was young, never heard about Muslims being converted around the world. And I remember going to one country in Asia, and I met lots of missionaries.

Not one of them was working to convert a Muslim. Isn't that extraordinary? They're working with tribal people, not with Muslims. And there are good reasons for that, but it was still very interesting, I thought.

And then how amazing that nowadays we hear of Muslims being converted all around the world, including, praise God, here in Australia. Well, somebody might have thought it's not worth praying for Muslims.

But actually, it's worth trusting God. It may seem pointless. The resources may seem too small. But nothing is impossible with God.

In fact, if you read the Bible carefully, you'll notice that often God likes using weak resources, ourselves included, so that we know that the strength is his and not ours.

[16 : 16] It's like praying, isn't it? Praying doesn't feel like a very powerful thing to do. In fact, I've often said myself and heard other people say, well, I felt the only thing I could do was to pray, as if that was the most ineffective thing to do.

Prayer feels weak. But because we're praying to a great and a powerful and a loving God, a compassionate God, then God's power is seen, as Paul says, in our weakness.

Indeed, Paul says he'd rather be weak so that it's clear the strength belongs to God and not to us.

He says we have this treasure in clay pots to show the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. How wonderful to see an ill-resourced and weak group of people trusting God.

Now, the Jews who live near them came and said to us ten times over, wherever you turn, they'll attack us.

[17 : 20] So please stop. We don't want to get attacked. Well, you want your friends to encourage you, don't you? But Nehemiah and the people are not discouraged.

Therefore, he says, verse 13, I stationed some of the people beneath the lowest points of the wall, the exposed places, posting them with families with swords, spears and bows.

And I said, don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes. I love the fact that he says there in that verse 12, remember the Lord and fight, you fight.

And then later on in verse 20, he says, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight. And both are true, aren't they? They will have to fight, but their God will fight.

There are some battles in the Old Testament which God wins without any humans doing anything at all. But this battle is a battle that they have to fight and God will fight as well.

[18 : 29] But they mustn't fight as if God is not fighting for them. It must be trusting fighting rather than despairing fighting. It must be trusting fighting, not panicking fighting. And yet they must take responsibility.

And if they need to, use their swords to protect themselves. Well, how, what a wise leader Nehemiah was.

Verse 16, from that day on, half of my men did the work. The other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah.

And even those who carried the materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other. I can't imagine how you build a wall with one hand and held a weapon with the other. For those of you who remember the King James Version of the Bible, the phrase here is sword and trowel.

So a trowel to do the work on the wall and the sword to fight the enemy. Well, I've never built a wall, but I imagine it's hard work.

[19 : 42] I've never fought an enemy. I imagine it's hard work. They were working doubly hard, weren't they? Building a wall and fighting an enemy at the same time, or at least ready to fight the enemy.

And the man with the trumpet, of course, stayed with Nehemiah, the governor. They're widely spread. But if they hear the sound of the trumpet, then join us here and our God will fight with us.

So, verse 21, summary of the chapter. We continue the work with half the men holding spears from the first light of dawn until the stars came out. That's a long day. And I also said, we'll have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night.

So they can be guards by night and workers by day. I don't know if they had a day off. I hope they did. I'm sure they did. I'm sorry. I'm sure they had a day off. Neither I, my brothers, nor my men, nor the guards with me took off our clothes.

Each had his weapon even when he went for water. Well, when I was a young boy reading the Bible for the first time, I loved the dramatic stories. I particularly loved the plagues of Egypt with all that blood and all those frogs and the cattle dying.

[20 : 49] I thought this was really splendid. When I got to a bit of Bible study, I thought that was a bit boring, really. I remember reading through Acts and thinking how wonderful it was that Stephen was killed and Saul was thrown off his horse and then bitten by a snake and survived.

And we got to the end of Acts 28 and it was a Bible study. I thought, what an anticlimax that is. A Bible study? Why would you want that? And we love these great stories.

And we particularly love the stories of God defending his people because, as you know, I hope the people did build the wall and they established themselves as a city again.

And indeed, in the ruins, in the ruined part of Jerusalem, you can find that they excavated bits of Nehemiah's wall. It's not a very well built wall.

It's not a classy wall. It's an amateur wall. But it's a wall. And it was built to honor God. And God used it.

[21 : 52] Isn't that lovely? It wasn't a very good wall, but it was a wall. And the point was, actually, God was fighting for them. And how wonderful that the people of God trusted God's promises.

We talked about God's promises last week. We talked about, if you are unfaithful, I'll scatter you. But if you return to me, I'll gather you.

We thought about the great work of God, where Nehemiah says in chapter one, these are your servants, the people whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.

We love the fact that the people in the Old Testament trusted the promise of God, that he would bring them into the land, that he would give them Jerusalem, that they would live there. And then after they were scattered away to Assyria and Babylon, he would bring them back and establish them back in their own town and the city that he had provided.

But now we've looked at the Old Testament. Now let's ask the question, what does this message of Nehemiah chapter four mean for Christian believers in New Testament times and today?

[23 : 03] Well, I don't think it is that God will prosper all our building programs, though he often does in his kindness. I think the way to think about it is Jesus Christ's promise in Matthew chapter 16.

I love this. I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I will build my church. But what a great promise to believe today.

Whenever I go back to England to do some teaching, I hear more stories of persecution of Christians. And I hear more and more Christians discouraged because Britain is losing its Christian past, its Christian heritage.

And more and more ministers are being persecuted. And more and more ordinary Christians try to be a Christian at work are being persecuted as well. It's just awful. And often the people I find the people, they're immensely discouraged.

They say, well, we're losing ground. We're losing so much. And I try to cheer them up, say. But actually, persecution is a great time to do evangelism, you know.

[24 : 12] And often the church is strengthened under persecution and grows under persecution in the history of the world. And don't you believe Jesus promised, I will build my church?

There it is. There's the promise. There it is. I will build my church. We might be tearing it down. It might be collapsing in some places. It might look a bit rickety.

But Jesus said, I will build my church. Not a building, of course. But us. His people. And Jesus is so determined to build his church. I will build my church.

That is, we learn in Ephesians 5, that he lays down his life for her. He loves her and lays down his life for her. That he might present her to himself without spot or blemish.

Isn't that glorious? Not only will Jesus build his church, he will build a splendid and glorious church. A splendid and glorious people. Saved by his death.

[25 : 08] Washed clean by his blood. Saved by his love. Preserved by his grace and kindness. Preserved in his generosity and compassion and mercy and faithfulness.

One thing is certain, when Jesus returns, the one thing that will be there will be the church of Jesus Christ. Australia may be gone.

USA may be gone. China may be gone. Who knows what will be left? But one thing is certain, the church of Jesus Christ will be there. Because in Revelation 21 we see this great vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The bride let down out of heaven, coming down out of heaven. So, we should believe, not that Jesus will protect a particular church building.

That may not happen. But that he will protect and build his church. As he says in John chapter 10 of his sheep, I'm the good shepherd. He says, none will pluck them from my hand.

[26 : 14] Then he says, none will pluck them from the Father's hand. Well, dear friend, if you're in Jesus' hand, the good shepherd, and you're in the Father's hand, you couldn't be in a safer place, could you? But does this mean that Christians will always be safe?

And always protected by God? Well, the answer is, no, it doesn't. Can I remind you of Jesus' striking words in Matthew's Gospel?

He's about to tell us who are those who are blessed. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the people of heaven.

[27 : 49] I remember my last day in school. I was a young boy, as you might imagine, in those days. And only a new convert, a new Christian.

But we had, the school I went to, we had an old former student of the school who had become a very successful businessman, came back to address us on the last day of school.

And I remember his talk very vividly because he said that he hoped we would all be wealthy and prosperous and successful and healthy and have a happy life.

And I remember thinking, well, that's a bit thin, actually, because some of us may get ill and not of all us will make a lot of money.

And even those who make money might then lose it. What message do you have for people who find life difficult? And the answer was none. He was promising us, hoping for us, success and happiness.

- [29 : 04] And often we Christians have taken that drug, that happiness drug, and we have deformed ourselves by it. And we think that the great promise of the gospel is happiness. You're having a good year? Oh, yes, everything's fine. I heard of a lady in Queensland who took part in a marathon, the kind of thing I often do on a Monday morning, take part in a marathon.
- Anyway, she intended to run a half marathon, which is a bit weak, I think, but she took the wrong turning at the half marathon and ran the whole marathon by mistake and won it.
- Well, let me ask you, what marathon are you running? A happiness marathon or a holiness marathon? Are you running a happiness marathon?
- Or a holiness marathon? Let's think about 2016, that was last year. Did you have a happy year?
- [30 : 26] No, actually the more important question is, did you grow in holiness last year? Did you stop swearing at other drivers? And start praying that God would bless them instead?
- Have you become more patient rather than less patient? More forgiving? More forbearing? More generous?
- More loving? More for a year. More for a year. That's a good year, isn't it? When we grow more like the Lord Jesus Christ. What when we stuff ourselves with more happiness?
- Paul puts it this way at the end of Romans 8.
- Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it's written, for your sake we face death all day long.
- [31 : 28] We're considered as sheep to be slaughtered. That's what it was to be a Christian in Paul's day. To be ready to be persecuted. That was the normal state of the Christian life.
- Facing persecution. And then Paul can say, no, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Conquerors. Not conquerors because these things don't happen. But because they're not defeated by them.
- Well, I found this wonderful prayer request from the church in the Middle East a couple of years ago. And I've been quoting it ever since. This is from a persecuted church.
- Listen to the prayer request very carefully. Please don't pray for us. If you pray for us, you'll pray for our safety. Please pray with us.
- If you pray with us, you'll pray that millions will be converted. And we'll bear the persecution that follows. Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll say it again.
- [32 : 40] Please don't pray for us. If you pray for us, you'll pray for our safety. Please pray with us. If you pray with us, you'll pray that millions will be converted.
- And we'll bear the cost of the, you know, living for Christ. That is, facing persecution bravely and with full confidence in Christ.
- Well, my first instinct when I hear persecuted Christians is to pray for their safety. But actually, these ones are saying, please don't pray for it.
- It's a bit like if I'd been alive in Paul's day, I would have prayed to get out of prison. Dear Lord, he's such a great guy. You know, he's stuck in a prison. Get him out. Paul never asked to be taken out of prison.
- He asks that he'd be faithful in prison, as a matter of fact. Now, this is, friends, this is such, so diametrically opposed to the way every Westerner thinks.
- [33 : 37] Yes. And indeed, most people around the world think, I suspect, that it's really hard to get our minds around it. But as a matter of fact, it is, has been a great theme of Christianity in centuries past.

I love reading church history because I find that Christians in the past have had a very different view of the Christian life from the one which is prevalent nowadays. So, well, here's a recent example.

Nellie and Topsy Saunders were missionaries from Melbourne, and they went to China. They were there from 1893 until 1895 when they were murdered.

And here is Topsy writing home to her mother. As for talking about self-denial and discomfort, my experience is that God is never our debtor.

And we'd jump around this little boat where so overflowing with joy, only there's not room for one thing. And besides, it would shock the boatman. Here's a sister Nellie. The highest of all honors which Paul prayed for was to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

[34 : 47] It's only in this life we shall have the privilege of being partakers in Christ's sufferings and the priceless honor of glorifying him in suffering. Isn't that extraordinary?

Well, Topsy and Nellie were killed, and so their mother went out to replace them. Isn't that splendid? They were giants in those days, weren't they?

Well, here's the young George Whitefield, later to become the great evangelist of England and the United States of America. He went up to university when he was 17 years old and just recently converted to Christ.

A very poor student, so low down on the pecking order at Oxford University. He writes this in his diary, in his journal.

When religion began to take root in my heart and I was fully convinced my soul must totally be renewed, I was visited with outward and inward trials. I incurred the displeasure of the master of the college who threatened to expel me.

[35 : 52] My relations counted my life madness. I daily underwent some contempt at college. Son have thrown dirt at me. Two friends forsook me.

And you think, oh, poor George, isn't that sad? Young boy from the country, meeting all that persecution as a young convert. He wrote, these, though little, were useful trials.

Isn't that good? Useful trials. They inured me to contempt, lessened my self-love and taught me to die daily. Or here's one of his contemporaries, John Fletcher, who was vicar of Madaly in the United Kingdom.

And one day he was ill and someone visited him and said, I'm sorry to find you ill. John Fletcher replied, sorry, sir.

Why should you be sorry? It is the chastisement of my heavenly father and I rejoice in it. Well, I've never managed that myself. Although the Bible says, count it all joy when you meet various trials.

[36 : 59] I never do it. I always grumble and groan when the trials come and very quick to tell my friends about them so they can pray for me. Count it all joy when you meet various trials.

But I must say, looking back years later, I can see how God has used each one of those trials so powerfully to shape me and change me and make me more holy.

What a lovely gift of God a trial is. I say that by faith. Or here is another 18th century evangelical pastor, Henry Venn.

His wife died. He raised his five children. He was teaching them at home and he promised to show them one of the most interesting sights in the world. Sorry if you've heard this before.

I love this story so much. He took them to a miserable hovel in which a young man called Abraham Midwood was soon to die. He took his children to the hovel and said, Abraham, I brought my children here to show them that it is possible to be happy in a state of disease and poverty and want.

- [38 : 15] Now tell them if it's not so. What a risky thing to do. And in class ridden England, what an amazing thing for a minister to do to take his children to a hovel.
- Tell them, he said, if it's not so. Abraham replied, oh, yes, sir. I would not change my state with that of the richest person upon earth who is destitute of the views which I possess.
- This is nothing to bear. While the presence of God cheers my soul, while I have access to him by constant prayer through faith in Jesus. Indeed, sir, I am truly happy and I trust to be happy and blessed through eternity.
- And I every hour thank God who's brought me from a state of darkness into his marvelous light and give me to enjoy the unsearchable riches of his grace. What a remarkable man Abraham Midwood was.
- What a remarkable father to teach his children that lesson. They never forgot it. I bet they didn't. Because the world is saying you need money and position and power and health to be happy.
- [39 : 27] God's servant is saying you don't. Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?
- That's a different way of thinking about life, isn't it? And it means we shouldn't measure the love of God by how happy we are. We should measure the love of God.
- How much does God love you? The answer is he sent his son to die for you. Not he's made me happy.
- Because then if you're not happy, you'll think God doesn't love you anymore, which would be a great pity because he does so much. Loves you so much.
- Peter wrote, For to this you've been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you should follow in his steps.
- [40 : 32] When he was abused, he did not return abuse. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. Well, we've thought about the book of Nehemiah.
- Let's think as we finish in our last two minutes from the book of Revelation. Who is the conqueror in the great battle of the book of Revelation?
- The answer is the lion has conquered. Do you remember from Revelation chapter five? The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, has conquered.
- He's able to open the scroll and its seven seals. And I saw a lamb standing, if it has been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. So the lion or the lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the one, the slain, the dead, but now raised, standing lamb, seated near the center of the throne.
- He is the one who was conquered. And we conquer. And we conquer. We will conquer through him. And John describes how we conquer in chapter 12 and verse verse 11.
- [41 : 53] The war broke out, he said, and we triumphed over Satan. They triumphed over him by the blood of the lamb. That is, by the power of Jesus' death.
- By the word of the word of the lamb. By the word of their testimony. And they didn't love their lives so much as to shrink from death. And we will see not an earthly city of Jerusalem, but the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven as a bride beautifully adorned for her husband.
- And we will live in that city, in that heavenly city. As we read in Revelation 21, God will dwell with them and they will be his people and he will wipe away every tear from their eye.
- Friends, we carry many sadnesses in our lives and we will carry many sadnesses to our graves. But we will not be sad or bitter for eternity.

For one day, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And our joy will be to be in the presence of God and of the lamb forever and praise them forever.

[43 : 17] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great and precious gospel promises in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for his atoning death on the cross, for his mighty resurrection. We thank you for his sending of the spirit. We thank you for his ascension to your right hand in glory.

And we thank you for the promise of his return. We thank you for his promise. I will build my church. We thank you for his promise. None will pluck them from my hand.

And we pray that we might be those who conquer. Not because you arrange our lives to be happy. But because we trust in Jesus Christ and his power and live for your glory.

We ask this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.