

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

God's Word is a Light.

At the completion of each article there is that much quoted and loved verse from Psalm 119 and the truth is that no matter how old we get that lamp continues to be a blessing unto my feet and the path that I have chosen to walk.

Looking back on my journey in life and the religious circles I found myself in from birth I continue to be amazed how that lamp of God's word never seemed to fade but if anything appears to be shining brighter day by day and continues to reveal the path of heavenly truth as the songwriter puts it.

Nevertheless there have been periods of time when the lamp seemed to be either very weak or almost out and in those times one wondered if God had moved it to shine on someone else's path but it was never so I realise that now, instead it was as I turned and regarded the bright lights of the world that His lamp faded from my field of vision.

During the years that I spent at sea there were the corresponding times when we came into a harbour and no matter what country that harbour was located they all had one thing in common, a lighthouse, and by the timing and colour of the light being sent forth we could know for a certainty where we were and use that light as a certain guide into the harbour.

Of course coming into harbour always brought a sense of rest and comfort because out on the wide open ocean it can be and often is tempestuous and the smaller the ship the greater the discomfort and danger but the best harbour of all was the one we called home knowing that here we could truly be at home with our families and friends.

Having come to that period of life some call the sunset years once again I am looking forward to coming into harbour and that final anchorage in a haven of eternal rest with Jesus my Saviour and it is the lamp of God's word that guides my feet and lights my path through the storms of life.

In these days of turmoil and strive on the ocean of life the words in Psalm 107:28-30 can be our comfort as we call out to the Lord, He will bring us out of our distresses, calm the storm so that the waves are still and we will be glad because of that and so He brings us into our desired haven.

May we cry to the Lord with the songwriter: Guide me O Thou great Jehovah, lead me all my journey through!

J.V.L.



From the Pulpit

A Dedication That Defeats the Devil
From a message by Brother Merle Ruth

You may open your Bible to Nehemiah chapter 6.

This chapter concludes the dramatic story of the rebuilding of the broken down walls of Jerusalem, it also brings into view the opposition that the returned exiles faced as they laboured at this enormous project but for this occasion my main reason for selecting this book and this particular chapter is because it depicts so well the dedication that ought to characterise every child of God.

That dedication is seen best in Nehemiah himself, due largely to his dedication that project was completed and in a remarkably short time despite bitter opposition.

That being the case I have entitled this message: "A dedication that defeats the devil."

We have already been introduced to the devil, what is it on the human level that defeats the devil?

I am proposing that one answer to that question would be in Nehemiah like dedication. If you have that kind of dedication you will have a dedication that will defeat the devil.

Before the modernisation of the railroads one highly important function was performed by a workman called a switchman, he was responsible for switching the railway tracks so that trains would not collide and so that they would reach their destination.

Among the ranks of Satan there are also agents engaged in a similar activity however with a different purpose in mind. They like nothing better than to side-track some express train, one of God's express trains sent on a special mission, they succeed again and again.

Consequently they sabotage the purposes of God in one life after another.

When they it attempted to employ that tactic on Nehemiah it didn't work, so dedicated was he to the work to which God had called him that he refused to be side-tracked.

Chapter 6 of Nehemiah verse two records an especially devilish effort to sabotage the work of God that Nehemiah had undertaken: Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. *Nehemiah 6:2.*

The next verse records the reply of Nehemiah: I sent messengers unto them saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? *Nehemiah 6:3.*

Never was there a better reply to a more wicked plot, Nehemiah was dedicated to a great work, he was dedicated to the service of God, his was a dedication that defeated the devil. For although Sanballat and Geshem were not robots, they were free moral agents, nevertheless they were serving as tools of Satan, Satan was obviously bent on sabotaging God's plan for bringing the Redeemer into the world, the restoration of Jerusalem was a link in that plan.

So I feel we may rightfully say that Nehemiah was demonstrating a dedication that defeated the devil and to defeat the designs of Satan today requires the same degree of dedication.

In the remaining time I plan to take a closer look at the dedication of Nehemiah from these six points of view:

Number 1: The soil out of which it grew.

Number 2: The cooperation it drew.

Number 3: The opposition it aroused.

Number 4: The courage it inspired .

Number 5: The compromise it refused.

Number 6: The success it obtained.

1] Taking them in that sequence let's think now upon this soil out of which this dedication grew.

About 140 years had passed since the walls of Jerusalem had been pushed over by the engineers of Nebuchadnezzar' s destroying army, and nearly

100 years had passed since the first exiles have returned from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, but they had made little progress beyond the rebuilding the temple because whenever they would start the rebuilding of Jerusalem their envious neighbours, the Samaritans, the Ammonites, the Arabians, would bluff them into stopping by the use of threats or through dishonest representation they would get orders from the Persian court to stop the work.

Upon their return from the captivity the Jews had settled in villages outside of the city of Jerusalem. Frustrated in their attempts to rebuild they gradually became reconciled to the sight of seeing the broken down walls, the burnt gates of their once glorious capital city.

This accommodation process gradually blinded them to the impropriety of it all, even sadder was the fact that some Jews had intermarried with the local half pagan people; they had established close ties with them.

In contrast to them over in the region of Babylon among the exiles there were still some loyal Jews who were deeply grieved over existing conditions. Nehemiah was one of this number.

When we first meet Nehemiah he is the King's cupbearer in the royal palace at Shushan, the capital of Persia, which by this time had overpowered Babylon. One day a group of visitors from Judaea arrived in Shushan and although Nehemiah had risen to a very responsible position in faraway Persia and although he probably had never seen the homeland of his forefathers, he evidently had parents who had instilled into him a deep appreciation for his spiritual heritage.

And so he asked these visiting Jews about the state of Jerusalem. We find this back in chapter 1 verse three: "And they said unto me, (in response to his enquiry) The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also be broken down, and the gate thereof are burned with fire." *Nehemiah 1:3*.

Now Nehemiah might have lightly dismissed these tidings, he might have shrugged his shoulders and said: It is too bad, what a sad ending for the once glorious city of David, but really that no longer concerns me. My career, my future is here in Persia.

There were no doubt some Jews who would have reasoned thus and did, but not Nehemiah!

In spite of his holding a responsible position in a foreign court he retained his spiritual identity, his interest was in the ongoing purpose of God, his spiritual roots had grown deep, and the cry of his heart was the cry of every devout Israelite of that day. "If I forget thee O Jerusalem let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember not Jerusalem above my chief joy." *Psalm 137:5-6.*

That was the cry of Nehemiah's heart and the other devout Israelites even though they were in captivity, they remembered who they were.

Listen now to Nehemiah's response to that sad report, on reading verse four, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." *Nehemiah 1:4.*

And as he prayed his burden grew heavier and finally he perceived that God was calling him to rebuild those broken down walls.

Now it was hard enough to get into the Persian court but it was harder still to get out alive. Should he speak to the King or should he wait and trust God to somehow open the door? Nehemiah evidently concluded that if God was calling him to do this work than God would somehow, some way, sometime give him an honourable release from his present responsibility. However he continued to weep and pray and fast!

Four months later God answered his prayer and opened the door.

The King on this one particular day noticed his sad countenance and enquired about the reason for it. I'm reading now the account of that conversation as it begins in chapter 2 verse two,

"Wherefore the King said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the King, Let the King live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gate thereof are consumed with fire?

Then the King said unto me, For what doest thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the King, If it please the King, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou sent me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it.

And the King said unto me, (the Queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? And when will thou return? So it pleased him to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the King, If it please the King, let letters be given need to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; And a letter unto Asaph and the keeper of the King's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the King granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." *Nehemiah 2: 2-8.*

What a wonderful answer to prayer!

As quickly as possible Nehemiah is on his way back to the homeland of his fathers, he is going in the capacity of a civil governor with authority to rebuild the city walls and to restore Jerusalem as a fortified city and with him goes the assurance that he is on a God sent mission.

Any man who possesses this kind of assurance is not easily turned back. This is the soil out of which Nehemiah's dedication grew, behind his working was his weeping, behind his weeping there must have been some powerful spiritual forces at work and consequently the heart that went into that work was a heart that had been moved and melted by God like concern.

Before leaving this section may I ask you:

Into what are you my friend pouring your very best energy?

Where is your dedication being directed?

Is it directed into the cause of God, are you dedicated to the service of God?

That was the soil out of which Nehemiah's dedication grew, he had parents, perhaps grandparents too, who had instilled into him and appreciation for his spiritual heritage and therefore even though he was exalted to the position of cupbearer in a foreign court he had not lost his spiritual identity He was willing to throw in his lot with the people of God.

2] That brings us to section number two.

Here we want to note the cooperation that Nehemiah's dedication drew.

After conducting a secret night-time tour of the wall Nehemiah gathered together the leaders of that colony of returnees, in chapter 2 verse 17 we hearing speak to that group: "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gate thereof a burnt with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told off the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the King's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

Nehemiah 2:17-18.

A truly dedicated person doesn't use the Lord's work as a personal pedestal. Did you notice how Nehemiah addressed these people? Come watch me build. Is that the way he put it? No. Come, let us build.

In the Kingdom of God work it is better to put 10 men to work then to do the work of 10 men. But how can you put 10 men to work? What is they are not interested let alone enthused?

The best way to solve the problem is to follow the example of Nehemiah, be yourself a thoroughly dedicated worker.

Chapter 3 is an account of how well these men cooperate with Nehemiah. The work was wisely organised so that a share of it was allotted to every family, according to verse 12 even the daughters of these men got behind the project (*Nehemiah 3:12*).

The outcome is stated in chapter 4 verse six, "So built we the wall and all the wall which joined together unto the half thereof: four that people had a mind to work." *Nehemiah 4:6.*

Nehemiah dedication had inspired others to get on with the work of the Lord.

Dedication is attractive, dedication is contagious, we need more of it, be an example of that yourself and you will inspire it in your brother and in your sister.

3] I am moving now to number three.

Here we want to observe how Nehemiah's dedication aroused opposition. That opposition appeared as soon as Nehemiah arrived, we learned this from chapter 2 verses nine and 10: "Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave him the King's letters. Now the King had sent captains

of the army and horsemen with me. When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, The Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." *Nehemiah 2:9-10.*

Nehemiah had not come to Jerusalem to make a name for himself, he had not come to pile up finances for himself, Nehemiah had come for a more worthy purpose.

Our neighbours soon discover what we are really living for.

It soon became common knowledge one Nehemiah was there! These enemies of the people of God were quick to perceive that Nehemiah was dedicated to getting these people in a protected position, getting them back under the blessing of God.

A selfish man they probably would have feared very little, for that kind of man always has a price at which he can be bought.

There were many other Jews living in the vicinity of Jerusalem, they had been living there a long time but because of the spiritual dullness and blindness they failed to perceive that the ruins of Jerusalem were a reproach to them and to their God.

Because they were in that condition the devil and his forces had nothing to fear from them!

In sharp contrast to them Nehemiah was a man with a burden, a burden to see that reproach removed, he saw clearly that a great deal was at stake. This accounts for the opposition he drew. Whenever such a man says: Let us arise and build! the enemy says: Let us arise and stop him! And that is what happened here.

As already noted the leaders of the opposition were grieved over Nehemiah's arrival. Mention is made of them again in verses 19, chapter 2:19: "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing ye do? Will you rebel against the King?

Then answered I then, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, and Jerusalem." *Nehemiah 2:19-20.*

In chapter 4 we find them intensifying the opposition, here they laughed them to scorn and despised them, in Chapter 4 verse one: "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we build the wall, he was wroth, and talk great indignation, and mocked the Jews. Any state before it brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they built, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stonewall." *Nehemiah 4:1-3*.

One of the hardest things to bear is ridicule. It seems the enemy knows that.

When all else failed these enemies prepared to go the limit, verse eight, "And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." *Nehemiah 4:8*.

But they never did carry out this plan possibly we should attribute that to God protecting them in response to the prayers that were ascending to Him.

Whenever we undertake to rebuild that which the enemy has torn down, whenever we undertake to establish an outpost in enemy territory we can count on it we are going to be opposed by the enemy.

And that is when the level of our dedication really begins to show, when we face that opposition, when we face that ridicule, that scorn, the laughs, the mocking, I say that is when the level of our dedication really begins to show.

Well that was a look at the opposition that Nehemiah's dedication drew from the enemy. They knew he was a man that was going to really make inroads into their territory.

4] I am moving now to the next point number four: Dedication inspires courage.

The courage of Nehemiah is seen at its best in chapter 6. Let's listen to verses five and six: "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein it was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashum saith it, that thou and the Jews

think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be the king..." *Nehemiah 6:5-6.*

Nehemiah's enemies and of the Jews wrote an open letter as indicated here in verse five, one that was deliberately make public in which they slandered Nehemiah with a charge that he had no higher motive then to be king himself.

The next verse, verse seven, they warn him that this is going to be reported to the King of Persia unless he meets with them and presumably proves that the charge is false.

Nehemiah answers them in verse eight: Then I said unto him, saying, There are no such thing done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." *Nehemiah 6:8.*

God helped Nehemiah to see this to for what it really was, a plot. Fearlessly he labels the report a lie, wisely he evades their trap.

Verse 10 relates another plot, a false Prophet, evidently a fellow Jew who allowed himself to be hired by Tobiah, trying to lure Nehemiah into the holy place of the temple as a means of escaping from another supposed plot, by that persuading him to go into where only the priest was permitted to go they hoped to bring Nehemiah into disgrace among his people. *Nehemiah 6:10.*

But Nehemiah's courage foiled their scheme.

Verse 11 his response to that proposal: "And I said, Should such a man as I flee? And who is the, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." *Nehemiah 6:11.*

This kind of courage is borne out of a dedication to God which puts duty first and commits to God the safety of one's life. The courage of Nehemiah, the courage that he displayed on these various occasions has won for him the distinction of being called the bravest man in the Old Testament.

What was it that accounted for that bravery?

The dedication, the dedication of Nehemiah inspired his courage.

It will inspire courage in you too my brother and sister, oh that we might have the courage, the courage that dedication produces.

5] And now under number five let's view Nehemiah's dedication from this point: The compromise it refused.

Nehemiah's dedication fortified him against the slyly made compromise proposals that came to him right and left. This temptation was in more than one of the proposals but it is seen most clearly in verse two of chapter 6, the point where we began the message, that is where we hear these enemies make that proposal: Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono. To which Nehemiah replied; I am doing a great work so I cannot come down. Why should the work cease whilst I leave it, and I come down to you? (*Nehemiah 6:2-3*).

Nehemiah is remembered as the man who said No! On the plain of Ono.

You no doubt have already been tempted many times to compromise, the future will bring you more such temptations. When those temptations come our spiritual safety lies in being fully dedicated to the Lord, for out of that dedication is borne the will to say No! to those who entice us to come down from the heights of holiness.

The location mentioned here, Ono, was about 20 miles north-west of Jerusalem. If Nehemiah had accepted the invitation they almost certainly would have tried to either kidnap him or kill him, and they were persistent, four times they begged him to come down to one of the villages on the plains of Ono and talk it over.

Nehemiah stood firm, No! I will not come down!

Had Nehemiah consented it would have evidently involved a geographical descent for he put his refusal in these terms: I will not come down.

However if Nehemiah had yielded he would have come down in more ways than just a geographical way, he would have come down morally, he would have come down in his standing with God but he did not yield and neither should we.

The latter part of Nehemiah's reply contains a much needed truth: Why should the work cease whilst I leave and come down to you?

Even if it had involved no more than a debate Nehemiah was wise in declining. The man put on the defensive is taken off the offensive. Progress stops when we start chasing the dogs that bark at our heels.

Nehemiah was wise enough not to do that.

Distractions, of which there are many, are nevertheless perilous against dedicated people like Nehemiah.

6] And now very briefly number six let's look at dedication from this angle: The success it obtains.

Nehemiah's dedication held him to his purpose until that purpose was completed and thus through it all Nehemiah remained undistracted by ridicule, unintimidated by scorn, undeceived by craftiness, unensnared by plots, unfrightened by danger, undiscouraged by obstacles, unmoved by threats.

In God's dictionary that spells success, spiritual success!

And now some questions for reflection.

Do you see any parallels between their day and our day?

What is our Jerusalem?

In what condition is it?

Are there today any broken down walls?

Have the Sanballat's and Tobiah's all died?

Who provides today the soil for the growth of Nehemiah's?

May I suggest that the church of the day ought to be to the New Testament saint all that Jerusalem was to the devout Israelite of that day.

To the end of time God will always have a people loyal to Him. The Church composed of these people will never be reduced to ruin.

But there is in the spiritual world an ongoing conflict in which because of human failure the enemy does win some battles, he does push over some walls.

It is sad but true that in some quarters those pushed over walls lie in ruins for a long time. Human nature is such that we too quickly allow the enemy to bluff us into believing that there is just nothing to do about it. That is where the Jews of that day had arrived at.

Praise God for the Nehemiah's who appear now and then, here and there and rally the people of God to rise up and build! I say Praise God! For young Nehemiah's

And No, the Sanballat's and the Tobiah's have not all died. Although this changes the terminology;

Be a Christian if you must but don't be so radical!

You don't need to change jobs!

You don't need to get rid of your TV!
You can be a good Christian in any church whatever!
A little jewellery won't hurt, just be moderate in your use of it!
As for the Bible well sure, it is good reading, but those people you're associating with they treat it like a book of rules. That's a big mistake!
And as long as you remain so separate from the world you will never even get to first base!
Don't be so holier than thou! Come down and join us, we are Christians too but we have learnt you don't need to be so radical!

How are you my friend responding to these voices?
If you are a Nehemiah you will detect these sweet sounding voices and the lying craftiness of the enemy of your soul.
If you are a Nehemiah your response in every instance will be: I cannot come down!
And I hope you can add too: I am doing a great work.

Sometimes to come down has every appearance of being friendly, innocent.

One time over in Indonesia the Standard Oil Company was looking for a man to represent that company in that country, they were informed that the best qualified man for that position was a missionary. They approached the missionary to determine his availability; the salary they offered was large, \$30,000 annually. The missionary declined.

Then they made another offer higher yet, still he declined.

After the third offer he told them plainly: It is not the salary, that is big enough, but the job isn't!

There is no bigger job than the one God has called you to do. If you are truly God's man no rival will be able to buy your service at any price.

The way some so-called Christians ride the tailgate of the church and drag their feet one needs to wonder: On whose side are they?

By the actions they are saying: Come down with your standards to where we are.

That sounds too much like the language of the enemies of God's people.

Refusing to compromise in the so-called little things is the way to prepare for times of more severe testing.

Joseph met a really big test with Nehemiah like resistance when that wicked woman invited him to come down he too refused to do so. *Genesis 39:9*

One time an army was advancing up the mountainside in the face of devastating gunfire, gradually the advance came to a standstill but the flag bearer kept advancing;

The Officer in Charge shouted: Bring the Colours back to the columns!

The young flag-bearer shouted back: Bring the columns up to the flag!

That gallant spirit is desperately needed in Christian circles today. God needs young standard-bearers like that.

Young people you can do a great deal for your church by exemplifying Nehemiah like dedication. It is inspiring to read of how David, young as he was is, challenging and conquering Goliath and by so doing inspired the entire Israelite army to attack the Philistines, Now put them to flight! (*1 Samuel 17*)

One young man, a dedicated young man, inspired that whole army.

I challenge you, my young brother, my young sister,

Give of your best to the Master; give Him the strength of your youth,

Clad in salvation's armour, enter the battle for truth!

There is no greater cause to espouse, the world at its worst needs the Church at its best and for the Church to be at its best your dedication must be a Nehemiah like dedication, a dedication that defeats the devil.

May the Lord grant to all of us the grace, the will to pray for that kind of dedication.

May we come before the Lord in prayer.



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

REJOICE AND BE GLAD

Rejoicing is the natural result of a living faith and right understanding of the almighty God and our Lord Jesus. When one rejoices, he is glad, happy, and full of joy. Those who rejoice find it easy to praise. Rejoicing and praise go hand in hand. Rejoicing is so clearly taught and enjoined in the New Testament that we may believe it is a grace that is to be ours by the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is right that God's people should be a sober people, aware of Satan's tactics and the menaces of sin that surround us. We are charged to watch and pray and live with fear and trembling, because we live on a spiritual battlefield. For us to live frivolously is a contradiction to our calling. However the fact that we serve a risen, victorious, omnipotent, omniscient Lord who cares for us personally gives us hope and cause for rejoicing in any situation.

Christian rejoicing is not a superficial attitude. It is the joy of one who, in the midst of an arduous task, lifts his head and is assured of success far greater than his efforts deserve. Or it is as when we thought we were alone, then to realize there is a very familiar and helpful friend close by. Again our rejoicing is finding that in what seemed to be confusion and disorder, there is a clear plan and an open way.

Often our immediate circumstances cause us to doubt that we have reason to rejoice, but that is because of our human frailty and short-sightedness. It is so common for man to walk joylessly that David repeated the same interjection four times in Psalm 107: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Those who walk with God as David did see many evidences of the Lord's work being accomplished, and they rejoice in it.

Our joy is deep, transcending the range of emotions to which we are constantly subjected. Paul described his personal experience as an apostle and minister of the gospel: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ... as having nothing and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10). Often, in the stillness of night or while in the sanctuary or while feeding on the Word and in prayer, that holy joy will anoint our spirit and renew our courage. These are precious times for the saints. We may receive them with thanksgiving.

Times come when one doesn't feel so well. Perhaps there are offenses that raise their ugly heads, or sickness or depressed feelings. Then how are

we to rejoice? A short verse from Romans 12:12 offers clear answers. "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Although rejoicing is contrary to the flesh in times of trial, God will bless with grace when we choose to turn from our melancholy. Often the last thing we want to do is to meditate on the hope we have; yet that is what we need to do. Just to open our lips and begin to sing a hymn of hope and praise has wonderful power to awaken the grace of rejoicing in our heart. We need to fall to our knees and give thanks for our great God and His infinite wisdom, for His plan for our life, and for His all-sufficient salvation. By so doing, we crucify the flesh and open the door for the fruit of joy that the Holy Spirit wants to work in our hearts.

Second Chronicles 20 records a beautiful story about the value of rejoicing and the way it opens the door for God to do great things among us. Hezekiah was Judah's king when a great army of their neighbours united against them in battle. It is to the king's honour that he called a fast and led his people to seek the Lord's face. By the mouth of one of His prophets, God gave directions that His people should "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

In simple faith, Hezekiah and his people accepted the message, and the next day they went forth to meet the enemy. The striking thing is that when they went forth to battle early in the morning, they "appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." Then, "when they began to sing and to praise," God delivered them in a marvellous way, making the enemy destroy themselves while the worshippers watched.

Sometimes more is accomplished by doing less and praising more. When we, with the faith of Hezekiah, can turn to God in our problems, seeking His face in fasting and prayer, it could well be that we have done all He requires. He will be glorified in opening doors and accomplishing His will in His own good way. Such an approach is contrary to the intellect, but, at times, it is the way the Lord pleases to work.

One thing is clear: it is God's will that His children rejoice. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 3:1). "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Evidently the Philippian believers needed special encouragement in this line. Nevertheless, the reasons for rejoicing are amply taught in the New Testament, and we can all

profit by them. Following are a few of the reasons.

We have an abiding joy because our names are written in the book of life. "... rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This is a joy neither man nor circumstance can take from us.

Furthermore, we may rejoice because we have found the truth. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). That truth is God, the great "I am," the unchanging rock of our security. In Him we have a solid basis for living and an assurance in dying. Although iniquity abounds, Truth is victorious, and we are on His side. Why shouldn't we rejoice?

Seeing and hearing of the salvation of souls causes our hearts to rejoice. "And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). Our hearts are bound to the Lord's work, and when we see He is gathering in His lambs, it is a deep joy, whether we have been actually involved or not.

Even trials are an opportunity for a special kind of rejoicing. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13). Again, such rejoicing is the fruit of faith that there is a supremely wise power who is in control of our life.

Finally, we rejoice because the day of consummation is approaching. The marriage of the Lamb is at hand when the church will be finally joined to Christ. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified" (Psalm 40:16).

Brother Keith



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

BANNERS FOR CHRIST OR FOR SELF?

"We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfill all thy petitions" (Psalm 20:5).

Most of us don't frequent places like the Olympics or the assembly of the United Nations, but we have read about them or seen pictures of them. There we see pennants or banners identifying different countries and sponsors. It is a very important part, and perhaps needful, of the games and also for the countries they represent.

I wonder what kind of banners we carry or display in our everyday walk of life? Do we have our own flags, or whom do we represent? The Scriptures say we have been given a banner to carry. "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" (Psalm 60:4).

King Saul was more concerned about upholding his own name than wanting to do what was right. Therefore he asked Samuel to honour him before the people. And I'm sure most of us would feel the same way if we were faced with some of our own wrong doings. But if we feel that way, we're thinking only of flying our own flags.

We are all made of the same stuff, we're cut out of the same kind of cloth, and we like to fly our own flags and uphold our own standard. But we should aim to be vessels that portray Christ and not self.

The world seems to press in on every side, and the devil has a mastermind to influence our thinking and human reasoning. So we need to take the time to search out God's way for us in all aspects of our life, or we'll find it hard to fellowship with God as we ought. We should be like the psalmist in Psalm 42:1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

When we walk humbly before our God, we are willing to lose our identity in the jobs we need to do or the position we have. We can't all play the lead tune. We must also be willing to play a minor part, and it should not bother us. Yes, we know that we'll never be singled out for honours or medals, but there is a certain banner that we should carry, and it is not our own. It is the standard that the Lord requires of us. That is where we will find true happiness.

King Nebuchadnezzar was parading his own wealth, wisdom, and power when he made an image for the people to worship. This wealth he claimed to have gotten by his own might and his own power and wisdom. "The

king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

At times it becomes apparent that we fly our family flag. While it is true that in that way family strengths are magnified, it is also true that when there are family weaknesses, they are compounded. Family banners are sometimes exhibited with the wealth or positions a family possesses. That often excludes others from acceptance or consideration. The mother of James and John wanted her offspring lifted up before the people and before the other disciples. "And [Jesus] said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:21).

It is strange how we often hold up our own banners where we want people to notice us. At the next instance we have something to hide. Just like the apostle Peter when he denied that he even knew Jesus. We are unwittingly sending messages to those around us even if we are unaware of it. Just like a proud look is a banner not easily hidden.

There are many ways in which we are attracting attention to ourselves. We like to be important; we like to be noticed. Our very manner and speech tell on us, just like it did in Peter's case. Knowing no gender and no age limits, we want to be important and to be noticed. Jesus warned against loving "the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matthew 23:6). We perhaps all can think of some ego trips that we've made in our life, and we're not proud of that today. Proverbs 3:6 tells us, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." We all would like God to direct our ways.

Matthew 7:7 says, "Seek, and ye shall find." As we entertain our own selfish efforts, and as we are seeking, are we finding what we are looking for? Some of the things that are highly esteemed among men are flags of worldliness. We should refrain from carrying such banners. If we have too much worldliness about us, our banners are confusing. We may even become confused ourselves. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4). We are all trying to make a name for ourselves if we seek for attention and want to be noticed.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). It would be nice if we could always

be so detached from ourselves that we could say and feel like the Apostle did. We would know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. There would be no lifting up of self, but a lifting up of Christ and praising Him who has done so much for us. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

When the last battle is over and our call comes, we will not be holding up any banner of our own. But we will be looking for the ensign set up to direct us into heaven. That is our duty now as Christians. We also want to hold up high the name of our God to praise Him for our salvation. "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain" (Isaiah 13:2).

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12). That is the question for all of us. We can live for self and honour or we can live for Christ. There is a thread running right through the Old and New Testaments of people living either for self or for the Lord. What are we going to do? We all know that if we are Christ's, all these things will fall into their proper place.

But as the full impact of the situation hits us, we suddenly realize that over on the other side of Jordan, it won't matter if we had not been honoured before the people. Or who will sit beside Jesus in His kingdom, or if we don't get to sit in the chief seats. It won't matter if we don't get into the forefront or have to play a minor role or are not even a good singer. And if it won't matter over there, why should it matter here?

Brother Robert



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Jesus is the perfect example of humility. Satan, the foe of our soul, is the ultimate figure of pride. What a contrast! Because man's nature is infected with the virus of pride, his being is naturally permeated with self-interest and self-preservation. The original manifestation of pride was rebellion against the high and lofty position of God. Pride feeds every evil inclination of the human nature. However, there is an escape route from the tyranny of our inclinations. The route leads directly to the cross of Jesus

Christ. Here contrite souls are revived and humble spirits are renewed. Here is found grace to be a partaker of the mind of Christ.

Humility is a state of the mind and heart. It is an upward and outward look. It first looks upward toward heaven, then outward toward others. Pride, on the other hand, is natural to mankind. It is an inward and downward look. It looks inward to one's own interests and then looks down upon others.

The wise man of old has recorded many observations about the effects of pride as contrasted with the profound effects of humility. Humility is depicted as a lowly way. It is also described as a way of honour, full of vitality, and possessing wisdom. It is notable that the very qualities we wish to be admired for are not found in promoting ourselves but rather in lowering our estimation of our own selves.

In the Scripture, humility is closely connected to the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord promotes a humble attitude, and humility brings a greater respect for God's judgment against the froward mouth. A froward heart is not submissive. It is unwilling to follow God's order and plan. There is no escape from God's hatred of pride. No conspiracy of man is able to break the chain compassing the proud heart. "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6).

Seven things listed by the wise man are hated by the Lord: proud looks, lying tongues, hands shedding innocent blood, hearts devising wicked imaginations, feet running swiftly to mischief, false witnesses, and people who sow discord among brethren. All of these are fruits of pride. God hates them because they dishonor His plan for mankind. They cause untold suffering and calamity, disrupt charity, and destroy trust and confidence. Godly principles should govern our personal behavior and our relationships with one another. Contention always has its origin in some avenue of pride. Pride always precedes the destruction of character or relationships.

The fact that every person possesses some measure of haughtiness is difficult for us to admit. When we cease to resist the truth, God is able to make our spirit humble. Anything that would tend to stir us inwardly or happen to us outwardly becomes a blessing to us if we possess the spirit of the publican when he smote himself on the breast and cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This spirit puts us in touch with a continual

source of grace that enables us to grow in divine meekness. It brings rest to the spirit of man. It secures our faith in God and quiets our thoughts.

When Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they and their posterity entered into a new dimension in their relationship to God. What caused them to disregard the command of God not to eat of the tree? They knew no inner pride, and there was no predisposition to arrogance. The power of choice was given them by their Creator, but the subtlety of the master of pride deceived them. Likewise today regenerated people often find themselves trapped by their proud nature because of its subtlety.

Jesus gave His life to break the stranglehold the devil had on our soul. A great part of redemption had to do with the humility of the Son. He was entirely submitted to His Father's plan. His attitude, perception, and compassion are without equal, and He is the ultimate example of humility.

No amount of self-condemnation will set us free from the chain of pride wrapped around our hearts. If we could pulverize our hearts by ceaseless pounding, we could not loosen that chain. All the alliances of man or spirits in the world cannot release the binding force of pride. It will continue to bear its fruit, yielding increases in fear and offended feelings, slashing and devouring others, and jostling itself to the forefront in appearance and attitude. All the while our eyes are blinded to the truth of our condition.

The leaven of the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' time was their hypocrisy. Outwardly they had a godly piety, trying to appear as humble servants of God. Inwardly they were full of pride and extortion. It is possible to have the same mind-set today. Satan sets every trap possible to waylay the Christian.

The fear of the Lord is our only answer. It is the beginning of wisdom. It is the source of the stream of humility. It leads quickly to the cross of Christ and on into deeper waters. Jesus, our divine example, said, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus taught his followers to have the attitude of a little child. "Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4). One of the most endearing qualities of little children is their lack of pretense. Another is their eagerness to learn and willingness to be taught. Let us take a lesson from them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus taught His disciples about position. He said, "Whoever will be

chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27). The lowliest position is the one nearest to Jesus. The most responsible position is to be servant of others. Jesus' service was to provide other's needs, fulfilling their wishes, and providing for their nourishment.

Again He said, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). Humbling ourselves involves lowering our estimation of our opinions and the value of our service. The extent of pride is revealed in our unwillingness to be less so the Holy Spirit can be more. What utter weakness is apparent in our own efforts! When we reach this state, then the nature and mind of Jesus is revealed to us and made evident in us.

What then will be lifted up? Humbling ourselves in this way lifts up godly virtue. In the seedbed of humility, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity will flourish and grow into mature plants abounding in much fruit. All the while, the person bearing this fruit must continue to sink his roots deeper into the lowly nature of Jesus. The "I" and "me" continues to be abased, and the humility of Jesus continues to feed the fruitful plants. From these virtues others receive direction, courage, and nourishment.

This humbling of self is not to be an occasional effort. It should be continual and progressive. It should be our determination to become more and more like Christ.

The evidence of true humility is apparent in our relationships with others and in the attitude of our service to them. It is readily perceived by those close to us. We should not think it strange to receive correction or admonition. If we resist reproof, we should realize that our inclination to pride has caught us off guard.

Persevere then, fellow Christians. Be courageous. Be humble. Work at overcoming your nature. Do not be weary in the battle, for in due time, you shall reap bountifully if you do not faint.



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

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