

# Satisfying Joy is Anchored to Christ!

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**Text:** Nehemiah 12

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**Series:** Building a City for God

**Introduction:** Open your Bibles tonight and turn to Nehemiah 12. Nehemiah begins with a bunch of displaced people in hard circumstances, and it ends with two choirs singing on top of the Walls of Jerusalem, with all the people rejoicing.

The title of tonight's message is: "Satisfying Joy is Anchored to Christ". Joy is one of the nine fold fruit of the Spirit. Christians are not sappy, but truly happy and joyful. Our joy is not anchored to the ever changing circumstances in life, but our joy is Anchored to Christ.

What kind of idea would people get about the joy and happiness of Christians if all they had was your life to look at? Is Jesus Christ truly satisfying for you, or are you struggling with joy in your life?

It is in this chapter that I want to show you an example of truly happy, trusting, joy-filled people who had a contagious JOY!

## I. **The first ingredient to satisfying joy is a God-focus.**

It is God's will for all of us all the time to be joy-filled trusting people. That doesn't mean that we are trite with a superficial smile. It means we know who's in control, and we are able to be at peace with life. We are contented and restful.

A. We read in this passage about the people who gather together out of all the towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem for a special celebration.

**Context:** We have a boatload of people listed in Nehemiah 11 and the first 26 verses of chapter 12. All had a place and a purpose in establishing Jerusalem.

The dedication of the wall is the obvious subject of Nehemiah 12:27-47. The people had left their homes surrounding Jerusalem in order to renew the old city. What you see is a people willing to undergo hardship for a cause. Despite having to scrounge for building materials to build their new homes and businesses, there is a very clear attitude among them: JOY.

B. Let us read **Nehemiah 12:27-28**, "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries [LYRES], and with harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;"

- C. The Hebrew word for “gladness” means “gaiety, mirth, pleasure, delight, or joy”—specifically, “joy of God”<sup>1</sup>. The people sought out the Levites to lead them in worship to God and the best musicians to celebrate this unforgettable day.
- D. Now don’t think all these people’s problems were over, and that’s why they were celebrating. Many of these people had just moved to Jerusalem. They had just built their homes out of whatever they could find. They set up struggling businesses. They were not out of the woods. There were many more trials to come. Yet these people were joyful. Despite the hardships these people had endured, the people were filled with GLADNESS. This occurred not because they ignored their problems but because they *fixed their eyes on the Lord*.
- E. Whatever your struggle, there is no need to get discouraged. You are in the hand of your loving heavenly Father. You are saved. Just ponder that. You will never perish. You are not going to Hell. God has set His love on you. You are His. Yes, that’s what kind of God we serve. You ought to remember that always.

- ❖ **Philippians 4:4**, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”
- ❖ **Psalm 34:1**, “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”
- ❖ Peter tells us to rejoice in suffering (**1 Peter 4:13**).
- ❖ James tells us to rejoice in the divers trials we experience (**James 1:2**).
- ❖ John tells us that it’s God’s will that our “joy be full” (**1 John 1:4**).

II. **The second ingredient to satisfying joy is purity.** If our joy comes from God Himself, then we must be in right relation with Him. We see this in **verse 30**, “And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.”

- A. We cannot overlook the fact that *purification* came before *celebration*. Remember, Jerusalem is the holy city. The life of the city and of the people revolved around the Temple, where they had the continual reminder of God’s manifested presence on earth. These people were the leaders of Israel, and before they could lead others, their hearts had to be clean.
- B. Not one of us here tonight hasn’t tried to fake a clean heart and failed. Our laughter is hallow if our heart is unclean. If you want to lift someone’s spirit, you must first have a clean heart.
- C. Perhaps you have struggled with joy. You are discontent. Mark my words—joylessness has less to do with *circumstances* than it has to do with our heart condition. When our hearts are holy, then our lives are happy and joyous.
- D. You don’t set your table with dirty dishes do you? If you do, don’t invite me over to dinner! No, if you are going to eat, you want a clean plate and if guests are coming you

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<sup>1</sup> Strong’s. 08057 hxms simchah from 08056; TWOT-2268b;

will really work to spruce up the house. . . When we worship we are to serve it up on clean platters.

E. **Illustration:** A man went to see his doctor in an acute state of anxiety. "Doctor," he said, "you have to help me. I'm dying. Everywhere I touch it hurts. I touch my head and it hurts. I touch my leg and it hurts. I touch my stomach and it hurts. I touch my chest and it hurts. You have to help me, Doc, everything hurts. I think I'm dying"

The doctor gave him a complete examination. "Mr. Smith," he said, "I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is you are not dying. The bad news is you have a broken finger."<sup>2</sup>

F. Often when life seems joyless and we are defeated, we think things couldn't be worse. We think we are dying spiritually. But often the solution is an examination of self and a ridding of ourselves anything that is sin or even doubtful. God honors that and restores our spiritual fervor. I'll say it again: ***When our hearts are holy, then our lives are happy and joyous.***

**III. The third ingredient to satisfying joy is corporate worship.** The whole city participated in a formal celebration of God's blessings on the city and on the walls.

A. As you read this, you can see their joy building up and rising as they participate in all out corporate worship together.

1. Look at **verse 31**, "Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate". Nehemiah appointed two great choirs, one led by himself and the other led by Ezra the scribe.

2. Look also at **verse 36b**, where it says all these people made their way to the top of the wall "with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them."

3. Then **verse 38**, "And the other company [CHOIR] of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I [NEHEMIAH] after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall". Can you imagine the sight? Two choirs. Hundreds of people on the walls with all varieties of musical instruments. They were all singing to God from their heart. That will fill anyone with joy!

B. Now notice the effect of corporate worship that you see as a theme throughout the Scriptures. We see it in **verses 42-43**, "And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. 43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." What a sight! Have you ever been outside

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<sup>2</sup> David Holdaway, Kincardineshire, Scotland.

of a baseball stadium and heard the crowd roar? I think that must have been what this was like, except the people were filled with God-given joy.

- C. Let me encourage you to be faithful to the corporate worship of the church. Just as we are faithful to eat our dinner every day, we ought to get filled with the God-given joy that comes from corporate worship. We are here not only for the preaching, but for the worship songs. We are here for the fellowship. Fellowship with each other will fill our hearts with joy. Once you start feeding on that God-given joy, you will have serious withdrawal if you ever have to miss the services for sickness or some other providence that hinders you from coming one week.

#### IV. **The final ingredient to satisfying joy is cheerful giving.**

- A. Look at **verses 44-47**, “And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: **for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.** 45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. 47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions [PAYCHECKS] of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.”
- B. This is a bit of a surprise. When we are joyful in Christ, we tend to give. I think when we are walking with God and right with Him, we tend to appreciate the needs of the ministry more, and we are more inclined to give. We see that Jesus Christ is the only one that can bring the true joy of holiness to people. He alone can cleanse us from our sins. We want people to come to know Christ when we are right with Him. We ache to see people saved, and so we are willing to give to that work of God’s local church. We are willing to give to outreaches and missions.
- C. Around Thanksgiving a few years ago, radio commentator Paul Harvey shared a true story of a woman and her frozen Thanksgiving turkey. The Butterball Turkey Company set up a telephone hotline to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. One woman called to inquire about cooking a turkey that had been in the bottom of her freezer for 23 years. That's right--23 years. The Butterball representative told her the turkey would probably be safe to eat if the freezer had been kept below zero for the entire 23 years. But the Butterball representative warned her that even if the turkey was safe to eat, the flavor would probably have deteriorated to such a degree that she would not recommend eating it. The caller replied, "That's what I thought. We'll give the turkey to our church.”<sup>3</sup>
- D. Isn't that how we are sometimes tempted to be? Give the leftovers to God. No someone with truly satisfying joy in Christ will be one who gives to God the first and the best. Never give God the leftovers. We could study Malachi and see that God hates leftovers!

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Harvey daily radio broadcast (11-22-95); submitted by Charles Kimball, Allen, Texas.

**Conclusion:** If joy in Christ was a disease, there would be nothing more contagious.<sup>4</sup> Joyous people have no problem encouraging others and making lots of friends. People filled with the joy of the Lord are always in demand.

Listen saints of God, joy does not come from our circumstances. Joy comes from walking with God. Happy people are not those who have to control all their circumstances to make sure nothing bad happens. Those are the most miserable, and we've all been there. Happy people are those who trust that God is directing their lives and that He's in control.

How about you? Have you stopped singing? Has your joy gone? Why? Remember verse 42-43, "**rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.**"

How easy it is to become grim, intense, spiritually frustrated, and moody and broody. God calls us to rejoice in Him!

In closing, remember Paul and Silas. They were jailed in the Philippian jailhouse. They had just been severely beaten. They had reason to cry, but instead they sang. They sang at midnight, and they literally brought the house down! The jailer and his family came to know Christ!

How about you? Have you stopped singing? Rejoice in the Lord always! Rejoice evermore. We've heard about praying without ceasing, but I want to challenge you to rejoice in Christ without ceasing! Don't stop singing!

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<sup>4</sup> Charles R. Swindoll. *Hand Me Another Brick* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2006), 207.