



SMYRNA
KYRKAN
Göteborg



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From Dream to Reality

January 15 – February 5 2023

A warm welcome to join our journey together as a church through 21 days devoted to Prayer & Fasting at the beginning of this new year.

In this season we experience more than ever a special need to seek the face of the Lord and receive His guidance and provision how to handle the next step of our journey as a church her in Gothenburg.

As a support in this we invite you to read and be inspired by the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, an exciting book that covers God's guidance and provision in times of challenges and difficulties.

The account starts with Nehemiah, a person you and I might not have primarily chosen, but who hears rumours that the walls of Jerusalem stand crumbles and demolished by the enemy. Nehemiah is filled with grief, prays and cries before the Lord and experiences how God challenges him to be one of the keys used in seeing the city walls rebuilt in record time, all to the glory of God!

Allow yourself to be captivated, fascinated, and challenged by this powerful story. Receiving insight that you and I can in all manners of speaking play a part of the great miracle God wants to accomplish in and through a people that place themselves 100% at His availability.

Welcome!
/Mark Beckenham

4 Sunday's with headlines:

January 15. From Dream to Reality, Vision
January 22. From Dream to Reality, Resistance
January 29. From Dream to Reality, Action
February 5. From Dream to Reality, Victory

Prayer gatherings in Smyrna Church:

Monday to Friday: 18.00-19.00
Wednesday: 12.00-13.00 with Holy Communion
(check with your unit pastor when it comes to other prayer gatherings)

Daily:

1. Daily text to read from the book of Nehemiah (the entire book divided into 21 days of reading)
2. Daily devotional thoughts from some of our team
3. Prayer: Let the Word & devotion assist you in forming and praying a simple prayer.

Fasting:

We want to encourage you to contemplate exercising some form of fasting during part of, or the entire prayer period. We need to refrain from certain things in order to gain time and concentration for other things. It is a help if you sort out in your calendar to make space for focus and talking with God.

Of course, it can be refraining from food, but it needn't only be about food. Fasting helps you to have limits for things that risk having too much influence over your time and life. You can for example fast from social media and internet to create space for prayer and reading the Word. You're best at deciding what will give you space and attention for quiet times with God.

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

To be hit!

Having a passionate heart is something that is commended and described as a gift. But it's not necessarily something that is connected with joy and easiness. To be hit by something, to bear another person or situation in your heart can demand quite a lot from an individual. But even if it's uncomfortable and lack of sleep is caused, carrying something and praying for something is desirable.

This is where the story of Nehemiah starts. A cupbearer is hit with a love for the Jewish people, he sees their suffering and wants to see a change. This is where vision and a view of the future take their place. Prayer to God regarding change along with steps of faith and a large portion of sacrifice, that's what makes the book of Nehemiah an inspiration for change and renewal. Perceiving your surroundings with open eyes and praying to be used is taking the risk of being hit with love for your neighbour and the surrounding society. It can be people and circumstances we know of, or somebody or something we don't know, but that God puts on our hearts.

History is full of examples of people that were hit, that opened their hearts and their hands to seek a change for their neighbours. The work of change always starts with small things and many times in the unseen. A quiet prayer to God when others are asleep, a looking eye of love when others look away. When our heart is hit and dreams come alive, unexpected powers can be released from both heaven and earth.

*/Mats Särnholm
Lead pastor in Smyrna*

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 2:1-20

A touched heart

The burden became too heavy for Nehemiah to carry. He couldn't carry it by himself any longer. The king perceived that he was burdened with something greater than himself. Then, God touches the heart of the king. God always has individuals that He has prepared in order to fulfill His purposes. Nehemiah carried the burden, God opened the door. It's never you and I that open the doors! God is an expert at changing the direction for our thoughts and hearts. Nehemiah experienced the vision and calling and God met the needs.

In Philippians 4:19 it says: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Sometimes we're too busy with working to please people instead of waiting on the Lord and doing His will. Waiting on the Lord can be challenging and not all are prepared to pay the price. But you've actually not prayed if you haven't first waited upon the Lord. We are called to pray until we receive an answer, for God's timing is always perfect. What a sense of security, standing in His service!

*/Mark Beckenham
Pastor in Smyrna central church*

DAY 3 – JANUARY 17

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 3:1-19

Next to them

Have you experienced the difference between working together with someone compared to doing it yourself? Of course, there are mathematical and practical advantages. It's twice as effective when someone stands besides you. But the gain is greater than that. It's great hearing the other person hammering when your own arm needs a rest. Someone else is working around the corner. You can't see it, but hear and understand that there are more of you. When things go wrong or you don't understand, all it takes is for you to turn your head and ask for help. The phrase "next to them" (hebrew *v'alyado*) occurs 16 times in this chapter. Nehemiah wants to emphasize that they worked together. *V'alyado* means literally "by their hand". They worked hand in hand, next to each other.

What are you working with right now? Probably multiple things. We as a church are building Frihamnskyrkan, you're a part of that work. We all work on the project called "everyday life".

What challenges are you facing? What can't you understand? If you stop and pause. Listen carefully. Try to obtain a wider perspective.

Can you hear? Can you see? You're not alone! There are many of us that want to stand next to you, hand in hand. That's the church. And best of all is that Jesus Himself is standing round the corner working energetically and whenever you want, you can turn your head and speak to Him.

/Christofer Öhrvall

Pastor in Smyrna central church

DAY 4 – JANUARY 18

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 3:20-4:6

Building stone by stone

Nehemiah received the vision to build up Jerusalem's walls. Here we have the role of the vision bearer and the leader. God's kingdom can't be built by just one person. As bearer of the vision, your task is to share it with others. We read in our text how the whole city was involved and in action and connected with the vision of a new Jerusalem. The set-up was to build simultaneously around the whole so that the construction could move ahead a lot faster. When the vision and the burden from the Lord has its roots well planted, that's when the church starts to grow. Working fellowship and the common goal is part of the joy. We do the work together.

The Lord has revealed for us that He has a plan to transform the lives of our cities most vulnerable individuals. We continually see people leave criminality, vulnerability, and drugs for a transformed life through Christ. They become living stones in the building of God's kingdom.

This is how the broken-down city is rebuilt in our city day by day. Leadership is all about keeping the direction of the vision given by the Lord to us and being persistent. So let us build with our eyes focused on Jesus.

/Bittan Ekman & Jan Hilding

Leaders in Dream Center Church, one of Smyrna's units

*Daily Bible reading***NEHEMIAH 4:7-23****Nehemiah and the burden**

The book of Nehemiah is an example that there is no spiritual life and a normal one. This becomes extra apparent when it comes to our work. Nehemiah worked in close cooperation with Ezra. Nehemiah was building developer and Ezra was a teacher of the holy scriptures. When the torn-down walls of Jerusalem are to be rebuilt, both are needed together with all the other people – with various knowledge and giftings – in order to complete the complex construction. They each build their own bit, but part of the same wall. Bricklayers, priests, blacksmiths stand side by side. And as if the work wasn't heavy enough, the building and builders are attacked by exterior enemies that want to stop it. They work with a sword hanging in their belt and with guards surrounding them. When the burden is too heavy and there's still too much gravel left, courage and strength come to wits end. But not the power of God to carry both them and the construction. Nehemiah reminds of what we also need to remind ourselves and others when strength fails because of the burden: "Don't be afraid" and "Think about the Lord".

*/Tomas Sjödin**Pastor in Smyrna central church**Daily Bible reading***NEHEMIAH 5:1-19****Stop and think**

The church has stood united against exterior enemies, but now things stir from within. Those that have stood side by side in the building project are split. If the conflict isn't resolved, fellowship within will be threatened but also the outward testimony. The church is in a real state of danger!

Nehemiah gets annoyed. It's nice that he's human...

He calms down and *"thinks things through carefully"*.

We, he says, are responsible for our own, but also for non-believers. In this he gives us some pointers. Our Christian life is personal but not private. We are individuals but also a fellowship. We have different lives and perspectives but belong together in an incredible fellowship that's called the body of Christ with all it carries regarding privileges but also obligations.

Nehemiah is a good example of handling conflicts. He doesn't hide the problem hoping it will solve itself. He handles it, conscious that conflicts get deeper if they're left to themselves. He has sorted both thoughts and feelings when he enters and challenges the core of conflict. We think differently. We can survive that. But when differences develop into feelings of bitterness, hardness, and hate, then something has to be done. Today's chapter starts with a boiling temper; *"there was a great outcry..."*

Things can boil and boil over. Let's do as Nehemiah did:
Stop and think things through carefully.

*/Anne-Jorid Ahgnell**Pastor and vice lead pastor in Smyrna*

DAY 7 – JANUARY 21

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 6:1-19

A great and important job

The Watergate scandal came to light after a security guard discovered a piece of tape on a door. He called the police who then arrested five thieves. The young guard had unveiled probably the largest political scandal in modern day just by taking his job seriously and doing it well.

After four months of prayer (1:1-2:1) Nehemiah starts to build up Jerusalem's walls, a task he took very seriously. When the walls were almost completed, the enemy realized, it's now or never. If they didn't do anything now, the walls would soon stand totally finished. It might seem unpolite to refuse their invitation, but Nehemiah had the gift of discernment. He realized it was a trap (6:1). So, he replies: *I'm in the middle of a large task and can't come. Why stop the project while I leave it and come to you?* (6:3).

Nehemiah was neither king nor soldier. He was a cupbearer that became a building constructor. Despite this, Nehemiah was convinced that he was doing an important task for God. Let us all take our God-given tasks seriously and do them well with the power and assistance of God.

What has God called you to do?

Why do you think it's important that you take your task seriously?

/Johan Mörlid

Pastor in Mölnlycke, one of Smyrna's units

DAY 8 – JANUARY 22

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 7:1-19

God, our help

Nehemiah was a man that often prayed to God. He worked as the king of Persia's cupbearer, an important job that demanded responsibility. This led to the king trusting in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah used to talk with God and allow his prayers to lead to action. He was courageous when he talked to the king. When God urged Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah was made responsible, but he didn't feel that it was going to be an easy task.

Nehemiah experienced a great deal of resistance that even you and I can experience sometimes. Like getting up early in the morning, feeling scared when having a speech, or intervening when someone unknown needs your help. Someone that overcame their fear was the good Samaritan, (Luke 10:25-37). He dared to help an unknown person that had been hurt, you and I can do that too – simply be a fellow human being.

We can all learn something from the life of Nehemiah.

Dare to leave the state of comfort in our lives and take on the challenge that God gives that always leads to great blessing.

Continually ask God to help us follow His will and not give up.

Work together towards a mutual goal creates participation and makes the job easier and more effective.

/Rosalie Zakrison

Pastor in Smyrna central church

*Daily Bible reading***NEHEMIAH 7:20-38****Don't be surprised**

The battle between good and evil is one of the main themes in history. Likewise in the Bible. Resistance towards God's plan can come from various directions. Outside and within. The Bible speaks of a battle in three areas. Battle against the devil – the evil one, battle against the world – the one turned from God. And the battle against sin in our own lives.

At the same time that the burden is placed on Nehemiah and the vision is born, Nehemiah's focus is turned inwards towards his own and the people's sin. Seeking God in fasting and prayer wasn't primarily a question of fighting against people and powers outside of the own context. It started with Nehemiah and his own family: *"I confess the sins that we Israelites including myself have committed."*

If we start at the right point, we receive help in meeting the resistance from the outside. In the story of Nehemiah, the names of exterior resistance are given: Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. You almost get the shivers when the names are mentioned. If you read closer you find that the names represent structures of power. Powers interested in stopping the healing of Jerusalem and restoration of God's people. I think we should be careful demonizing individual people or groups of people. Paul says: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6)*

*/Urban Ringbäck**Pastor in Smyrna central church**Daily Bible reading***NEHEMIAH 7:39-57****Focus**

It's easy to focus on what seems impossible, but how does that help us?

How far will that lead us? At least not forward anyway.

Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem lacked a protecting wall. He realized what needed to be done and just couldn't get it out of his mind. Nehemiah, who had a close relationship with God, spoke to God before he did anything else. And also acted likewise when he faced resistance. A big difference between us and Nehemiah is that God is no longer far away, he is always close through His Holy Spirit that lives in all those that believe in Him.

When we face resistance, it's up to us to choose to focus on what is impossible or to speak faith and say that for God, nothing is impossible (Matthew 19:26). Nehemiah spoke faith. He saw a need, received a vision and stood up to resistance.

When you face resistance, choose to:

- focus on Jesus instead of the resistance
- speak faith instead of doubt
- listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to say to you instead of acting out of your own strength

*/Frida Ekespong**Leader in Kyrka för livet, one of Smyrna's units*



DAY 11 – JANUARY 25

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 7:58-8:4

Preparing the way

When things in life face resistance, it's important to know what we're doing. And especially why we're doing it!

I think about Nehemiah who's going to read the law in order to create order and stability in people's lives (8:4) and he steps up on to the platform. Someone has stood there and worked on preparing the platform just for this special occasion. Built and fixed it.

All the people that are mentioned can return because others have been there and worked under hard opposition from both people with bad intentions and under a scorching sun.

Now people's lives can be transformed. Others have prepared the way. Not only by loving to carry stones, but for a reason that was all about the people receiving hope for their future. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:46 *"The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual."*

Our actions prepare the way for people's lives to be transformed, restored and hopeful. This is why it's worth facing resistance!

/Anders Svedstam

Pastor in Kyrka för livet, one of Smyrna's units

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 8:5-18

His strength is enough!

Throughout history the people of Israel turned their backs on God time and time again.

Despite many examples of His freeing them, it is clear that many lacked faith. Jerusalem's walls are demolished. But God had promised to lead His people back to Jerusalem to reinstate His kingdom. The prophecies had been fulfilled!

Now that the work was completed, Nehemiah and Ezra knew that the day was sacred before God. But instead, the people grieve because they realize that they had lived for so long without the law. Nehemiah encourages them with the insight that their grief was unnecessary. God gave them a chance to repent and walk with Him once again. Israel's people were encouraged to celebrate God and their commitment to Him. We can be joyful knowing that God gives us all we need.

God's power is sufficient in all situations. The people became submitted to the word of God. The leaders made sure that they understood the law, prioritized worship, God's Word and fellowship.

When we confess and acknowledge that God is with us, we can find joy in Him and then we'll want to share that joy with others and tell them what God has done for us.

/Lorna Hamrén

Leader in Smyrna International

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 9:1-19

When all the people repent

Here in Nehemiah's ninth chapter we find the entire people in a state of humility before God. They clothed themselves in sackcloth. Clothing yourself in sackcloth is uncomfortable. Just imagine clothing yourself in a potato sack that itches. It's a clothing you won't be comfortable wearing. The people want to show that they couldn't just lean back and be comfortable when they had turned from God's ways. The soil on their heads was an expression for the people realizing their dirt and sin. And that they separated themselves from the outsiders was a statement: They needed to feel their own faults and not blame it on others. How was such an act of repentance initiated? Well, the people had an encounter with God's Word and God's promises. They perceived their sins, they started to desire for the life that God had for them, and they started to trust that God's faithfulness and grace was for real.

You and I can experience this to an even greater extent and live it out through our lives. When we are faced with our dirt or when it itches because we aren't living the lives we are called to, then we can step forward before Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who gave His life for the forgiveness of sins for each and every one of us – for in Him, a new life is possible.

/Lars Cedergren

Pastor in Smyrna Gårdsten, one of Smyrna's units

DAY 14 – JANUARY 28

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 9:20-38

Let us humble ourselves

Nehemiah and the Israelites came humbly before God in order to confess their sins and the sins of their forefathers.

This time they not only ask God for forgiveness by confessing, but also regret the paths of their forefathers. They decide to turn from their evil ways, to not continue with the same sins, but decide to follow and obey the Lord their God's instructions.

Nehemiah and all of the Israelites are willing and determined to regret by signing a sealed agreement from the leaders – levites and priests.

We see clearly by Nehemiah's confession that God is righteous in all things that we have experienced, for He has shown Himself to be faithful while we still were ungodly. Today, the same Lord says to us all to come close to the throne of grace full of confidence, in order to receive His mercy and grace in the time of need.

Prayer: Come boldly before the throne of grace. Confirm who God is

Confession: The church and your own sins

Repentance: Preach the truth regarding God and be willing as a church and individual to obey and live in it.

/Kiumbiro Murigu

Leader in Smyrna International

DAY 15 – JANUARY 29

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 10:1-19

All are needed

When I was 19 year's old, I still lived in my hometown and my heart burnt with eagerness to do something for someone else, to build church.

At that point in life, me and my best friend were asked to start working in Östersund Pentecostal church. We accepted and stepped in with expectation to be a part of building something that would affect people's lives for the better. Because it was a smaller church, we went all in with the resources we had, which was basically just us. Despite of that we started seeing young people find a natural place in church.

My heart still burns for making a difference for people in our city and our country, but I've grown in wisdom. It's impossible to do it if we don't join together and do something that has the same direction. We read in our text today that there was a combination of governors, priests and levites. There were different roles and different tasks, but together they made things happen.

It's the same today. We're all needed with all our various giftings, especially when you think about the type of church, we dream of building at Frihamnen.

/Jonathan Boström

Youth leader in Smyrna central church

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 10:20-39

Divine cooperation

Today's text challenges us to the burning point.

"The first seed and fruit, the first of all that we bake, the first of all types of trees, wine and oil, a tenth of all I have, all belongs to the Lord."

Sharing the first and best with God is the most important idea when it comes to the Jewish Pentecost. The Jews took their first harvest to the temple to share it with God just like two partners share with each other. Together, man and God bring life to the earth. God takes care of the sun, rain and warmth. Man adds seeds, workers and knowledge. The harvest is a result of cooperation between God and mankind.

The church is cooperation in all manners. We can go to church without giving a single coin. But it is the joy of giving that determines what we can achieve. Our mission gathers us together and challenges us to take part with all the resources we have available: spiritual, human and financial. Our harvest is also a result of cooperation between God and mankind.

Today's text is about a new commitment to God. A restart wherein words become actions. With our eyes turned towards a greater mission in a larger church, the final words come with rare timing:

We will not neglect the house of our God!

/Anne-Jorid Ahgnell

Pastor and vice lead pastor in Smyrna

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 11:1-19

A faithful God

Jerusalem, a name that echoes throughout biblical history. A city that to this day bears great meaning for both Christians and Jews.

In Nehemiah we get to once again look back towards the holy city. How the wall that once was broken is built up again with the assistance of Nehemiah himself.

In Nehemiah 11:1-19 we can read about a census, where they go through all those that lived in Jerusalem at that point in time. Leaders, priests, Levites and watch-guards. We read of all these people with different backgrounds, some that have grown up in the city, some that have just moved back. They had various occupations and various experiences. Sometimes they had a hard time getting along with each other and saw things in life very differently. But reading all these names and all these people gives me hope regarding God's faithfulness and not in the least the victory of the Lord. That He has already won.

Despite storms, troubles, war, differences and similarities, God still stands as faithful. He has already won; the victory is His. God bless you today!

/Lukas Holgersson

Youth leader in Mölnlycke, one of Smyrna's units

DAY 18 – FEBRUARY 18

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 11:20-36

Complete victory

No victory is won without a battle, and sometimes the battles and resistance can last for a long time. When problems arise, we have to try and resolve them without losing our hope and at the same time keep on doing our job.

But the question is: When can we reach a complete victory?

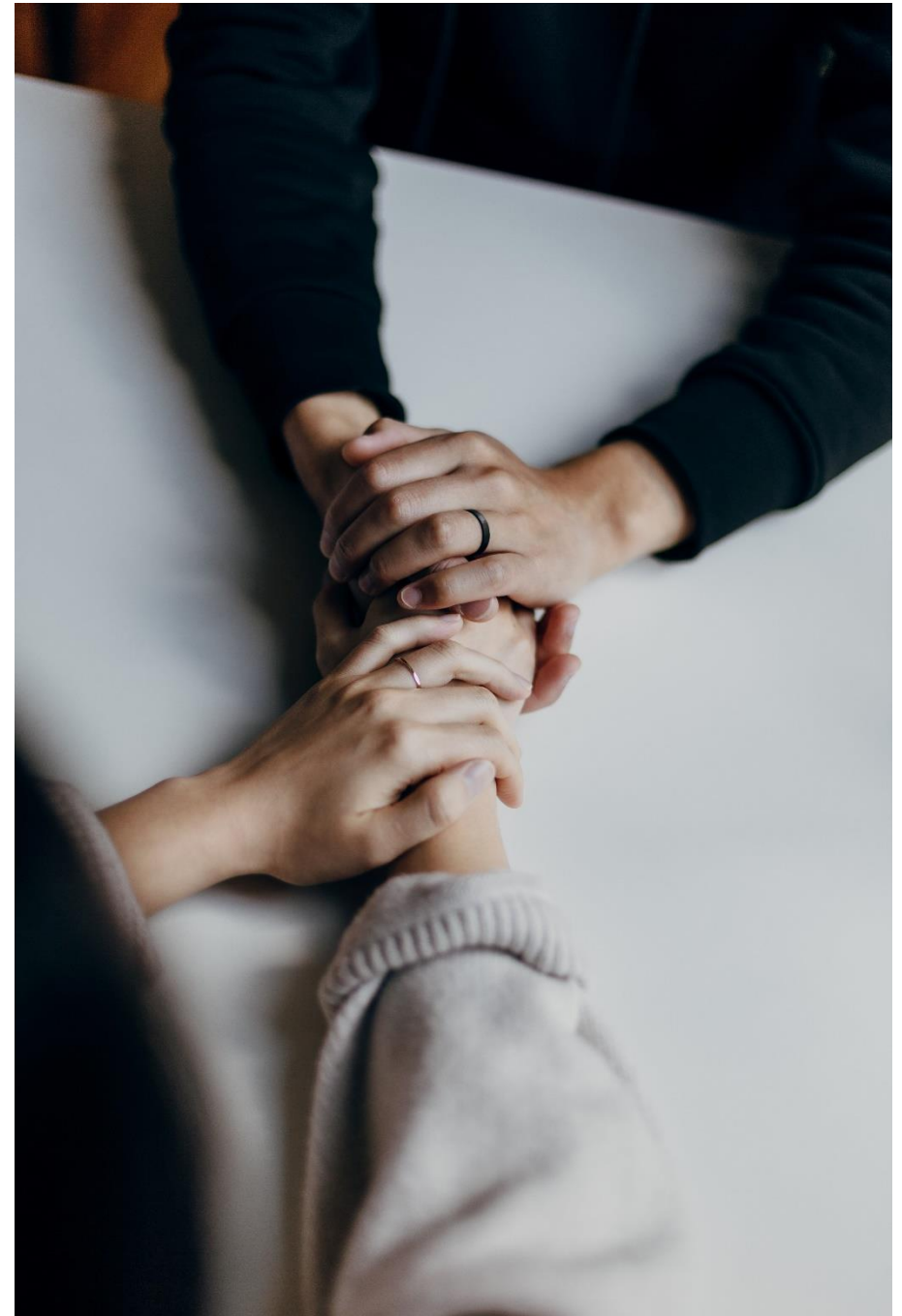
The wall was completed, but the mission was not finished until the people had been renewed. That meant that the wall could be completed, but it still didn't count as a complete victory.

We read in Nehemiah chapter 11 of the co-worker's genealogy and that most of them came from believing families, generation after generation. This tells me that your present faith makes a difference for the destiny of the generations to come. It not only leads to victory on their behalf, but also the possibility to serve the Lord in God's house.

What a joy, honour and blessing to have the possibility to believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ today and know that the future generation is already blessed. But their faith will need to be renewed in due time to experience the complete victory.

/Foad Khorshidi

Leader in Smyrna Farsi



Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 12:1-19

Thank you very much!

Nehemiah 12:24... who stood opposite them to give praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.

Saying thank you is a sign of a good upbringing. When you get a gift or an encouragement, then of course you say `thanks´ It ought to be natural and spontaneous. This type of thanks is common in a warm well-functioning fellowship. Where people see and want the best for each other. That´s where giving is natural but also the gratitude that follows. There´s also another type of `thanks´ that maybe goes deeper, and that is the planned `thanks´.

After a well completed job or a large party it is fitting to express a great, well-planned `thanks´. You are prepared and thoughtful and know what you want to say to the person it´s all about. You know who´s participated and know who´s done what. Towards the end of Nehemiah is where this `thanks´ comes. They´ve succeeded building the wall and now there´s a long list of people that took part and the well planned `thanks´ is firstly directed towards God, but then also to others that were a part of the success. This is important in life when things are going well. I know who´s participated and who should be thanked. Every little victory should be celebrated, and `thanks´ expressed, this is where a healthy environment grows and thrives. Give God the place He deserves and the thanks and praise He should receive.

*/Mats Särnholm
Lead Pastor in Smyrna*

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 12:20-39

Time for jubilant song!

Everything is setup for jubilant song! The praise will sound. To make sure the song is heard in all directions, the worship leaders are divided, half on the left and the other half on the right. The wall is completed, and He who deserves the glory is going to receive it. God has shown Himself as faithful. What seemed to be an impossible task is completed by the power of God and His care. Celebrating and worship should be a part of victory.

In verse 30 we read: "When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall."

Have you ever sensed the feeling of freedom like a really refreshing bath after a long and tiresome day? And on the contrary. When sand and dirt remain too long it starts to chaff and irritate.

It´s similar when it comes to the divine cleansing process. It happens on the inside. Life leaves traces. With time chaffing is caused both here and there. The Gospel is all about that Jesus Christ stands ready with a real bathtub. The water starts to lather with the generous amount of soap. Step into the bathtub and allow Jesus to cleanse you. When you step out, you´ll be able to move easier and hopefully you´ll also have a new fragrance. Let us be cleansed and sing praises – Jesus has won the victory! That´s worth celebrating.

*/Christofer Öhrvall
Pastor in Smyrna central church*

DAY 21 – FEBRUARY 4

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 12:40-13:11

All glory to my God

Nehemia hears the news regarding the situation Jerusalem is in, broken down walls and a people that are in great need.

He's touched by it and turns to God in his desperation, prays and cries. This leads him to handling the mess that is apparent.

On crooked paths God leads to victory. Many challenges on the way and sometimes hard to perceive if it will lead to victory.

But Nehemiah was faithful towards God.

How do you know if you are to keep on fighting?

I heard the following in a bible-study from Open Doors a few weeks ago. "As Christians, disobedience is the only defeat."

Nehemiah was faithful even in the midst of difficult challenges and that led to victory.

The wall is rebuilt, victory! How do you inaugurate and celebrate what God has made possible? Well, the praise team go first, triumphant as they pass the walls, they lead the people in to the temple. The entire crowd are joyful when they are led in praise and worship to the Lord who has made it possible. Nehemiah, the leader, was present but didn't take first place.

Give glory to the One who deserves the glory.

/Daniel Ånskog

Pastor in Centrumkyrkan Gråbo, one of Smyrna's units

DAY 22 – FEBRUARY 5

Daily Bible reading

NEHEMIAH 13:12-31

With open eyes

We have now come to the end of our journey through the book of Nehemiah. Exciting, following the process where we have seen God's grace and love in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and people's hearts. Above all, it's a story about the renewal of hearts amidst dreams, resistance, action and victory. Unfortunately, the story ends with the sorrowful realization regarding the people's lack of commitment to God. A dangerous area and unfortunately a threat that we all need to be aware of.

If we're going to be able to live a life in victory, I believe that we need to open our eyes and be constantly conscious regarding:

That we very easily forget our identity in God, v.23-27

That we in ourselves cannot transform our hearts, v.25, 28-29

That we always think we're more righteous than what we really are, v.30-31.

That's why I want to encourage us all to realize the risks, but at the same time turn to the Holy Spirit that has as a part of His mission, to assist us and help us discover and live a continual life in victory.

All blessings during 2023!

/Mark Beckenham

Pastor in Smyrna central church