

**Nehemiah 6:**

**“15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.**

**16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.”**

# **The Story of Victory in the Bible!**

**Eschatology can be a controversial subject! Thus, some might ask why would any Pastor take up that subject for a series of sermons. Well, such is the burden and benefit of expositional preaching, going verse by verse! You do not get to pick and choose your passages or subjects and since Mark included an entire chapter, you can see why it requires a series of sermons! Be thankful we are not in Matthew where the judgement of Israel & Jerusalem covers almost five chapters!**

- **So as Pastor Liberati is doing an outstanding job of teaching us about eschatology in Mark 13, it seems that the job of preaching falls to me!**

**And my preaching today will focus on how and what it means to be a people of Victory!**

- **I am going to challenge us with some Biblical examples of victory.**
- **I am going to challenge us to see the flow of history victoriously.**

**[I will briefly deal with two famous verses used to depress victorious thinking & living]**

**And finally I want to challenge us to live victoriously in the 21 Century!**

**The resurrected Jesus said that ALL authority in heaven and earth had been given to him and He commanded His followers to GO and disciple the nations and bring them under His Lordship, and that command still stands today!**

**First, let us consider the story of victory in the Bible by quickly reviewing some of what the Bible says about the advance of the Kingdom...**

**God first told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”**

**Sure sounds like a BIG mission and lest we think it was undone by the fall of man into sin, here is what God said to Noah AFTER the flood: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”**

**Sound familiar? God wants an earth full of righteous people? How many is that?**

- **The mission continues after the fall of Adam, only now, it is done under toil and groaning.**

**And of course, the Flood reminds us that history does not move in a straight upward line: We are reminded about the results of Adam’s rebellion when the sins of just ten generations of men bring God’s judgment on all the world.**

**After the Flood we come to one man, Abraham who becomes the patriarch of a family, then the twelve great grandchildren grow into a mighty nation which later becomes an empire under Kings David & Solomon.**

**Abraham is told that in him ALL the nations, or families of the earth will be blessed: Still a very broad vision!**

**And again the victory is not a straight line: Abraham has his set-backs, God’s people spend some time as slaves in Egypt and even after their conquest of the Promised Land they face exile.**

**It is after their fall into sin & exile, that Daniel is given the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream which we have reviewed many times here at Church of the King!**

There we learn that the coming of Jesus as the rock cut without hands, will crush the pagan empires and then His Kingdom will fill the whole earth.

- Again, does that sound familiar?

In the OT, we also have objects that reflect the same expanding & victorious vision:

The simple altars of Abel & Noah become the Tabernacle in the wilderness, which then becomes a mighty Temple under King Solomon. Even after its destruction by Babylon, Ezekiel the Prophet is given a vision of an even greater Temple where rivers of water flow out to the nations.

Thus, the Book of Revelation closes the Canon of Scripture describing the Church, the New Jerusalem, as a great city coming down from heaven, with a river & the tree of life for healing for the nations.

When we come to the New Testament Jesus describes His Kingdom with many abundant images that encourage us to see His Kingdom moving through history victoriously!

- He says that the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that grows into the mighty tree.

He calls us the salt of the earth, not the salt of the cupboard or even the dinner table ☺

- He talks about a plentiful harvest that requires many workers!

Even the parable of the wheat and tares has a great harvest of wheat.

The parable of the Sower has the seed in the good soil bearing thirty, sixty and a hundred fold [field v. road] He reminds us how a little leaven [like these 120 in the upper room] leavens the whole lump [like the Roman Empire].

- Jesus said the Kingdom is like a net that gathers fish of every kind.

We are to be a light of the world, not a candle under a bed.

- There is the great banquet where the master sends out his servants to bring in all the guests needed for his house to be full, picturing that full earth God desires.
- And of course, it was Jesus who gave us the Great Commission to disciple ALL the nations!

Despite all of this we have a mostly American myth of a small Kingdom for Jesus in much of the modern church.

Most of the confusion comes from only two places: The first where Jesus teaches that many are called and few are chosen, implying that things look pretty grim this side of the rapture.

- And second, we are reminded how Jesus told Pilate that His Kingdom was NOT of this world: Leading to a two-kingdom theology that ignores much of life here & now.

The narrow gate reference is in the Sermon on the Mount and Luke 13: The very chapter where, Jesus had just given the examples of the mustard seed and leaven to show the expanse of His kingdom! So, context is important! AND, Luke addresses the narrow gate directly: "23 Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?'" [sadly, the view of many modern Christians today] And [Jesus] said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'

27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'"

- The examples of the narrow gate and few being called are not meant to restrict the size of the Kingdom but rather the entrance to the Kingdom:

**There is only one name under heaven by which men must be saved!**

As Pastor Liberati is teaching us from Mark 13, most of the Jews refused to enter by that gate! Not only is this discussion of a narrow gate preceded by an expansive view of the Kingdom, with the examples of the mustard seed and leaven, but look what follows as Jesus warns these proud Jewish hypocrites:

“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you, the Jewish hypocrites, see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob & all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.”

- The faithful Saints of the Old Testament are saved & they will be joined by multitudes of Gentiles, just as God promised Abraham...

[Jesus said] “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.”

- The promise to Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven or sands of the sea will be realized as the fullness of the Gentiles are brought into the Kingdom.

Ultimately, only a remnant of the Nation of Israel was saved before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple... However, in just a few hundred years the Roman Empire would be considered a Christian nation and all of the pagan wisdom of the Greeks would be nearly lost.

The Apostle to the Gentiles had an impact on the entire Roman Empire which is why I believe Luke closes his orderly account with these words,

“[Paul] welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness & without hindrance.”

Paul should be the example for us with regard to our own boldness!

- And the Church has continued to look at history victoriously until our recent times.

Just as with what we saw in the OT, it is not a straight line, but one with the same up & downs. However, history has always moved toward the goal that God intended: A world full of righteous people.

So do we think things are desperate today in America?

Do we have sin abounding and wicked leaders?

Is the power of government growing at all levels and threatening our liberty?

Is anyone who believes in Jesus mocked & ridiculed on TV?

If Peter or Paul were with us here this morning: Do you think they would feel sorry for us?

No, I suspect they would be ashamed of our cowardice and lack of vision!

Paul was not afraid of the wisdom of his age, nor was he discouraged by a lack of response because he knew that he was called to proclaim the Kingdom of Jesus with boldness and to believe that it would advance without hindrance!

- He really believed that the gates of hell would not prevail under the assault of the Church!

Do we believe God’s promise to Abraham that his *descendants* would be like the number the stars or heaven and the sands of the seas?

Do we believe God’s interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream where He says that Christ’s kingdom will fill the whole earth beginning at the time of the Roman Empire?

- Do we believe Christ’s Great Commission that sends us forth to disciple the nations?

If our answer is YES then we join with those in the hall of faith we find in the Book of Hebrews which is a book of VITORY: [Study it!]

There we find Saints like Abel & Enoch & Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses & Joshua, Rahab & Gideon, Samson & Jephthah, David & Samuel and of course the *Prophets*!

- We are called to be victorious, though not always as we think, and certainly not as the “name it & claim it crowd” would have things:

We are told of victories by these Saints in Hebrews chapter 11 with the summary beginning at verse 33:

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of

fire, escaped the edge of the sword,

out of weakness were made strong,

became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again.

And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword.”

God’s plan is ultimately successful: Our part may involve being thrown in a pit while Jerusalem is destroyed [like Jeremiah] or standing on the wall that have just been completed in 52 days [like Nehemiah]!

That is for God to decide, not us.

Our command as Christians who believe in God’s victory, comes with Chapter 12 of Hebrews:

“1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,

let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus,

the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- If we believe that Christ has obtained the victory, it is much easier to live victoriously!
- If we doubt this, then as Paul explained to the saints at Corinth: We are the most miserable!

The writer Hebrews calls us to the proper place of victory in verse 22:

22 “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,

to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

And finally, at verse 28, we are reminded of the promise given to Daniel and confirmed by our Savior:

“ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire!”

- A Kingdom that CANNOT be shaken!

- This was the victorious confidence that Nehemiah had to press on and finish the wall in just 52 days!

**So just how do we live victoriously? This brings me back to why I chose that short passage from Nehemiah as our afternoon text, out of the many places we can see victory in the Scriptures!**

➤ **Surely there are more impactful passages on the subject of victory.**

**I went to that book because Nehemiah was part of an early sermon series I did here at Church of the King, and Nehemiah has served as a strong example in my life over the years.**

**Nehemiah was a man of prayer, teaching me how to pray without ceasing [in my Bible I have highlighted his many prayers and I would encourage those who mark up their Bibles to do the same!]**

**Nehemiah had a burden for God's people and when he was sent back to Jerusalem he immediately assessed the damage and set out to rebuild those broken walls. He was NOT distracted by various enemies and when the wall was completed he gave God all the credit.**

**I trust you will consider his example as well, and now point to three places where I have found the wisdom and strength to lead a victorious life in a wide variety of circumstances over the past five decades.**

**First the oft quoted passage from 1<sup>st</sup> John where we have the assurance of forgiveness so we can know our peace with God and continue our work even in the midst of our many sins.**

**I John 1: "9 If we confess our sins,  
He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

➤ **The second is the confident example of the Apostle Paul that I have strived to follow...**

**Philippians 4: " I know how to live humbly, and I know how to live in prosperity. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."**

**And finally keeping my sights set on the day I can join with the Apostle Paul in saying, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.**

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." II Timothy 4:6-8**

**These promises give us the confidence TODAY to serve God acceptably... and victoriously:**

**Wherever and however God might call us to serve!**

**Communion meditation:**

***Hebrews 12:***

**"22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,**

**to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."**