

I believe **today** we have a **PICTURE** (Illustration)

of a **SECRET WEAPON**
that is at the **disposal** of **EVERY SINGLE CHRISTIAN**

It's a **Supernatural SECRET WEAPON**
that will **Strengthen**, & **Encourage**, & **Transform** us

Right in the MIDST of our **Circumstances** !

I believe it is the **Secret Weapon** to
Revive - **Rejuvenate** - & **Restore** our **walk with the Lord**

NO MATTER what our **circumstances** are

I want us to see a **Picture** in **NEH** today
that I believe **illustrates** **HOW** the **Apostle Paul** could say in

Philippians 4:11–13 (ESV)

11 . . . for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

13 I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.

I want us to see a **PICTURE** – of the **SECRET WEAPON**
that will **enable us** - to have the **same testimony** as **Paul**

The word **JOY** occurs **181 times** in the Bible,
The word **THANKSGIVING** (in one of its forms) **136 times**

In Just our CH today

Rejoicing is referred to 7 times

Thanksgiving – 6 times,

Singing is referred to 8 times

That is our HINT – as to WHAT the SECRET WEAPON is
that enables Christians – to Overcome their Circumstances

Let's Pray

Here's where we find ourselves in NEH today;

The PHYSICAL WALL was actually finished Back in CH 6

CH 7 was all about ORGANIZATION

CH 8 started the REVIVAL in the people of God

CH's 9 & 10 we saw the 4 MARKS of True Revival

CH 11-12(a) – The SACRIFICIAL VOLUNTEERS

agreeing to be part of The Spiritual Wall of Testimony

CH 12(b) – we have the DEDICATION of the PHYSICAL Wall

AND the Dedication of the PEOPLE

as they become the SPIRITUAL Wall of Testimony

Today – What the people Really Need

to KICK OFF their Living Wall of Testimony

Is some serious PRAISE & THANKSGIVING !!

& THAT is exactly what Nehemiah's going to give them

But - As we dive in to our text today

Would you ASK yourself a couple questions for me?

- 1) Is Organized Praise & Thanksgiving Meaningful to God?
- 2) What Priority do WE put on our Praise & Thanksgiving
Both Corporate & Personal
- 3) What Priority does GOD put on our Praise & Thanksgiving

OK – Do you have your answers recorded ?

Let's read the Text & see how you did

Nehemiah 12:27 (NLT)

27 For the dedication of the new wall of Jerusalem, the Levites throughout the land were asked to come to Jerusalem to assist in the ceremonies . . . [stop there]

Interesting - the Hebrew word for DEDICATION is - Hanukkah

Which is the celebration of the Re-Dedication of this same Temple
300 years later - in 165 BC

This word HANUKKAH *Can be Defined* as:

“A Worship Event of Celebration & Joy”

& so – for this Critical Dedication of the Wall
& because of what God was doing among the people

Nehemiah KNEW – He needed

a ***“A Worship Event of Celebration & Joy”*** – to kick it off

& So - - He needed . . . THE LEVITES !!

The Levites – were Specialists in Worship

& the people Needed - a ***“Lift the Roof Off”*** Worship Session

So the Levites were called in from all the surrounding areas

Cont'd in Neh 12:27 . . . They (The Levites) were to take part in the joyous occasion with their songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres.

You've heard of the Life of the Party
well – the Levites were the Life of the Worship

When the 1st Temple was Dedicated
It was the Levites who RALLIED the people to WORSHIP

When the 2nd Temple was Dedicated
It was the Levites who RALLIED the people to WORSHIP

& HOW'D they do it?

With Songs of Thanksgiving
& with the MUSIC of Cymbals – Harps - Lyres

These were the instruments of God's Original Praise Team

& they're describing basically - PERCUSSION Instruments (DRUMS)
& GUITAR Type Instruments

Even the Harp – is described more like a MADOLIN
than a Big Gold Harp like the angel on the cloud plays

I hate to break it - to some of our Brethren

But God's Original Praise Band looked a lot more like
Musicians with guitars - cymbals
than Pipe Organs & Cloud-Style Harps

It was the **LEVITES JOB** – to **Raise the ROOF** in **WORSHIP**
to **Light the people** up in **PRAISE** & **THANKSGIVING**

& **That's exactly** what they **came to town** to do

AND – They brought – **SINGERS**

Neh 12:28-29 - NLT

28 The singers were brought together from the region around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites.

29 They also came from Beth-gilgal and the rural areas near Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built their own settlements around Jerusalem.

That's COOL – the Singers were all **hangin' out** in the **Burbs**
in the ***“Rural Areas”*** – Like **King David** in the Shepherd's Field

But then the CALL went out

They we're **ALL going UP** - to **Praise the Living God** in **Jerusalem**

& so the Worship team - & the **Singers**

were all **comin in** for the Big Event – *they practicing, & warmin up*

Getting ready to Dedicate

the **WALL**, & the **CITY**, & **the PEOPLE** – **TO GOD !!**

BUT FIRST – **before** than can be **ANY** True **WORSHIP**

There **MUST BE** - some Purifying,

Neh 12:30 - NLT

30 The priests and Levites first purified themselves; then they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

The Purification Rituals are a PICTURE of OUR need
to address SIN *before entering* into the Presence of God

If we think we can stroll into God's Presence with HIDDEN,
UNCONFESSED Sin in our lives - & *have God* accept *our worship*

EHHH !!! - - We call that Hypocrisy
& it really doesn't FLY with God

Every single one of US - who call you into Worship today
We must FIRST Make sure - WE are RIGHT With God

We have got to come to God – AHEAD of the Worship Service
DEAL with Sin – & Be Forgiven & Be Cleansed

OR - we will Get in GOD'S WAY
INSTEAD of Leading people into His presence

That is a VERY HEAVY Responsibility

So the Priests & the Levites had to FIRST – Purify themselves

BUT look who ELSE had to be Purified . . .
THE PEOPLE, along with the GATES, & the WALL itself

Guys – Please Realize - - Conscience, Hidden Sin
SEPARATES us from God (Isa 59:1-2)

& OUR JOB - is to lead you into a place

where you can REPENT of your Sin
& Turn TO GOD - & BE HEALED !!!

Amen ??

& for the rest of us – who don't think we have any *“Hidden Sin”*
First of all – that may be a sign of PRIDE (the biggest sin)

But the Question is - DO WE Purify ourselves for Worship
DO WE Prepare ourselves for Worship

Or do we stroll in here out of habit & routine
not really thinking about anything but getting the last Maple Bar

Guys - We MUST (Each of us) PURIFY & PREPARE our hearts
BEFORE beginning WORSHIP

Which is Exactly What the people of God are doing here

& when we do THAT – LOOK OUT
Because Our Life – is going to begin - to be Radically Changed

& not only do the Levites & the People have to be Purified
but the Gates & the Wall had to be Purified too

Guys – this PLACE – is prayed over Every Sunday
to be “Set-Aside” for God’s use – *To Sanctify this building*

& the same thing should go for your HOME

& so if you have your Bible on the coffee table
& your Porn on the computer

You may be fooling someone – but NOT GOD !!!

If your house is full of VIOLENCE, or some other SIN
& you claim to be worshipping God

You may be fooling someone – but NOT GOD !!!

Here's the Truth - - We've got to DEAL with our Sin
BEFORE we can enter into

Life Transforming Praise & Thanksgiving !!

Alright – So Nehemiah Called all the Best Worship Musicians
& he Called all the Best Worship Singers

& they went thru a Purification Process
So they could COME into God's Presence with Confidence

& then - I love what comes NEXT

Neh 12:31 - NLT

31 I led the leaders of Judah to the top of the wall and organized
two large choirs to give thanks. . . .

Then Nehemiah leads the LEADERS to the top of the Wall

Listen – if you are a LEADER - & you're not WORSHIPPING God
DON'T expect the people around you - to worship God

If you're a Leader of your family
& you want your family to WORSHIP GOD

Guess What - - - YOU FIRST !!!

YOU Worship
& THEY'LL Worship

YOU let something PREVENT YOU from Worshipping
THEY will let something PREVENT THEM from Worshipping

LEADERS – GO – FIRST !!!

So **Nehemiah** takes **the Leaders** up on the Wall first
then he organizes **TWO Large Choirs** . . .

To **Do WHAT** ??? - - - **To GIVE THANKS !!**

This is now – a **HUGE EVENT**

Just like the **Dedications** of **Both** the **Temples**

Nehemiah has called in the **BIG GUN** ‘*Worshippers*’
& they’ve been **PURIFIED** - & they’re **PRACTICED UP**

& now - they’re **READY** to **LEAD the people**
in the **MOST POWERFUL RESPONSE** there is to our God

SACRIFICIAL Praise & Thanksgiving !!!

I hope you’re **NOT** still **Wondering**
what the **SECRET WEAPON** is . . .

These **Worship Players** & **Choir** are going to
MARCH, & **PLAY**, & **SING**, on top of the Wall

Singing the **Praises** of God - & **Thanksgiving** to Him

Along with the **LEADERS**
AND some **Trumpet playing Priests**

Cont’g in Neh 12:31(b) - NLT

***31 . . . One of the choirs proceeded southward along the top of
the wall to the Dung Gate.***

***32 Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them,
33 along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,***

34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah.

35 Then came some priests who played trumpets, including Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, a descendant of Asaph.

36 And Zechariah's colleagues were Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They used the musical instruments prescribed by David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe led this procession.

37 At the Fountain Gate they went straight up the steps on the ascent of the city wall toward the City of David. They passed the house of David and then proceeded to the Water Gate on the east.

This is an Incredible PROCESSION

of Musicians – Singers – Priests – Levites – And the PEOPLE

Marching on top of this 15 to 20 Ft wide WALL
Praising God - & Shouting Halleluiah

Dedicating the WALL, the CITY, & THEMSELVES
to God - & to the Work He is doing in that City

Here's a map of the Wall – to get some idea

Prob started at the VALLEY Gate

Down to the DUNG Gate

Around to the FOUNTAIN Gate

back Up to the WATER Gate – Where the Revival Started

Ezra the scribe LED this Procession . . . WHY ??

because Leaders GO FIRST !!

& the Musicians - & Choir, & the Trumpet Playing Priests

All Marched & Played & Sang - Along the Top of the Wall

HOWEVER – **ONE** Choir was **NOT enough**
& we **see** the **OTHER Choir** starting in V.38

Neh 12:38 - NLT

38 The second choir giving thanks went northward around the other way to meet them. I followed them, together with the other half of the people, along the top of the wall past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall,

39 then past the Ephraim Gate to the Old City Gate, past the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel, and on to the Tower of the Hundred. Then we continued on to the Sheep Gate and stopped at the Guard Gate.

THIS was an **incredible event !!**

We **don't know HOW MANY total** people
were **Marching & Praising** God on the Wall – But it was **A LOT**

There was just **A TON** of people
in a big **PRAISE & WORSHIP LINE**

Marching along this **wall**
Praising God & Giving Him **Thanks**

& **By-The-Way** . . . Their **Circumstances** had **NOT** changed
since last week

The people **still faced** a **HUGE** uphill **Battle**
in **Rebuilding** Jerusalem - & their **own lives**

But **right in THE MIDST** of those **circumstances**
they had a **HUGE Worship Blow Out**

& if you will **study** the **Life of Paul** – in the **NT**
& find out **What HE did** – in the midst of **Difficult Circumstances**

You'll find out - - - He **WORSHIPPED !!**
he **Learned to WORSHIP** right **THRU** his **difficult circumstances**

& **THAT**, My Friends, is the Christians – **SECRET WEAPON**
to **VICTORY** – Thru **Every** Circumstance !!!

PLUS - - This would have been a **HUGE Testimony**
to **ALL** the **people** in ALL of **Judea**

Remember – Back in **Neh 4:3**
the “**Arch Enemy**” of Nehemiah - - **Tobiah** – mocked . . .

*“That stone wall would collapse
if even a fox walked along the top of it!”*

& **Nehemiah prayed** back there in **Ch 4 V.4**
May their scoffing fall back on their own heads,

Well – **THIS** would be the **time** that “*mocking*”
fell back on the **heads** of the **enemies** of Israel

This is just an **incredibly GREAT Testimony**
to the **Goodness**, & the **Faithfulness** – of **GOD**

& God wants **US** – to have that **SAME Testimony**
Thru OUR Difficult Circumstances

Cont'g – Neh 12:40-42 - NLT

40 The two choirs that were giving thanks then proceeded to the Temple of God, where they took their places. So did I, together with the group of leaders who were with me.

41 We went together with the trumpet-playing priests—Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah—

42 and the singers—Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. They played and sang loudly under the direction of Jezrahiah the choir director.

Wait a minute . . .

They played & sang . . . **WHAT** ?? - - **LOUDLY** !!!!

They played and sang loudly !!!

I **CAN'T THINK** of a **place** in the **Bible**
where **you** could **SLEEP** thru the **Worship** of God

If you can **nod off** during **Worship** of the **God of the Universe**
SOMETHING IS WRONG

We've **Got** to have the **GUTS** to **Read** the BIBLE
& **BELIEVE** what it says

These Professional **Worshippers**
played and *sang* **loudly** !!!

Because **THEIR GOD** – Was **WORTHY** to be **PRAISED**
with **ALL** their **MIGHT** !!!

Maybe you're familiar with the **Famous Quote** from
Friedrich Nietzsche - You know the one – ***“God is Dead”***

Well – **HERE** is the **FULL QUOTE**

Friedrich Nietzsche – ***“God is dead. If you don't believe me go to a church, it's nothing but a funeral”***

Guys – if there's **NO Joy** here, **NO Celebration**, **NO Praise**
for **Who** God is - & **What** He's Done

If we're **walking around** with **long faces** & singing **Funeral Dirges**

then if an **unbeliever** comes in here

maybe they **SHOULD** think - **God was Dead**

& **Maybe** it would be **OUR FAULT** if they thought that

NOBODY Here in Neh 12 - was acting like **God was DEAD**

There was **Gladness** & **Praise** in their hearts

There were **Instruments** in their hands

& they were **PLAYING** & **SINGING** – **LOUDLY !!!**

Like **God was Alive**, & **Worthy** to be Praised !!!

& **We** want **people to see** that exact **same thing** *here*
if they **come in here** while *we're* **worshipping**

Worshipping God is a **CELEBRATION** – **NOT** a **FUNERAL**

Worshipping God is **NOT** an **Obligation to be Endured**
It's an **Opportunity to Express**

The **Joy** & **Thanksgiving** – that we **OWE to GOD**
For **Saving Us** from the **Judgment** we Justly Deserved

& I **PROMISE** YOU – *If* you will **Worship God** – LIKE **THIS**
It will **CHANGE YOUR LIFE** !!!

TWO Choirs

Trumpet playing Priests, Tons of Singers

ALL Playing & Singing LOUDLY

THIS was a Lift-the-Roof – God is GREAT –

Let the World Know – Worship Service

& they were JUST Getting Started

Neh 12:43(a) - NLT

43 Many sacrifices were offered on that joyous day, for God had given the people cause for great joy. The women and children also participated in the celebration, and the joy of the people of Jerusalem could be heard far away.

Many Sacrifices we're offered – Probably "THANK OFFERINGS"

The Women & Children also Participated in the Celebration !!

And - The Joy of the people of Jerusalem
could be heard FAR AWAY

Now THAT – is a Testimony to a LIVING GOD
Who is REAL - & Who has the Power to SAVE

Many SACRIFICES

Great JOY

EVERYONE Participating

& The Joy of the People could be heard FAR AWAY

The Truth that JUMPS OUT to me here is;
Worship is NOT a SPECTATOR Sport !!!

Worship is **not** something we **observe**, it's something we **do**
It is **Participatory** !!!

Many **SACRIFICES**

Great **JOY**

EVERYONE Participating

& The **Joy of the People** could be heard **FAR AWAY**

Everyone Joined in the **Praise** & **Worship** . . .

& the **Natural** – **Tangible** – **Response** was - **GIVING**

Neh 12:44 - NLT

44 On that day men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the offerings, the first part of the harvest, and the tithes. They were responsible to collect from the fields outside the towns the portions required by the Law for the priests and Levites. For all the people of Judah took joy in the priests and Levites and their work.

As a **Tangible Result** of this **Joyful** & **Thankful Worship**

The people **GAVE** to the “House of God” & it's servants

Nehemiah set up **store rooms** (side rooms) in **the Temple**
to **store** the **Giving** from all the People

Because **when** we start **Truly Worshipping** God

it **ALWAYS** comes down to **some form** of **GIVING**

& **even tho** the people

were in a **Very Difficult Financial Situation** . . .

they had just moved into to a Bombed-Out City

They had to get their own houses built
& their own income going

They were already under Heavy Taxes from the Persian Gov't

Even tho they had all the same excuses we do !
They STILL GAVE

They Gave – in RESPONSE – to the Goodness of God
They Gave in Sacrificial Praise & Thanksgiving

And the people's giving
KEPT the Temple & the Ministry GOING (just like today)

Neh 12:45 - NLT

45 They (the Levites) performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as commanded by David and his son Solomon, and so did the singers and the gatekeepers.

46 The custom of having choir directors to lead the choirs in hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God began long ago in the days of David and Asaph.

This is a Summary Statement
of the Work of the Levites & the Priests - in the Temple

They did the work of the Temple
& the people provided for their daily needs

Neh 12:47 - NLT

47 So now, in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel brought a daily supply of food for the singers, the gatekeepers,

and the Levites. The Levites, in turn, gave a portion of what they received to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

**ALL of God's people – brought offerings
to care for the Levites - who ran the temple**

& the Levites gave a portion of all they received – to the Priests

**& so – the Work of God was accomplished
& everyone was provided for**

But . . . **I think** there's something **even more Powerful** here

It was **on the heels** of this "Radical Worship"
that the **storerooms** had to be **set aside** to store all **the offerings**

& I promise you - we see the **same thing**
in the **People of God today**

When people really become **"All In" Worshippers** of God
they **GIVE** !!

They GIVE as **PART** of the **Sacrificial Worship**
& **as they do** – the **work of the Lord** is able to **Continue**

& I Thank God for that

As our **Praise** & **Thanksgiving** becomes **TANGIBLE**
it **turns into** Actual **Giving**

& as we actually begin to **Sacrificially Give**
as a **Tangible Part of** our **Worship**

Our entire lives become **Radically Transformed**

Hebrews 13:15 (ESV)

***15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.
16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.***

Let us continually offer up a Sacrifice of Praise
& DO NOT Neglect to Do Good - & Share what God has Given us

Guys - We are MADE to Worship
To PRAISE GOD – HONOR Him – ADORE Him

& if we, as Christians, are NOT doing that
then we have got to check our true spiritual health

Now – I know there are
different Personalities & different Expressions of Worship

But we need to be sure we're not using that as a COP-OUT

The Bible never says:

“Let all those who have an out-going & demonstrative personality, AND who can sing on key, Praise the Lord”

The Bible says

“Let everything that has BREATH Praise the Lord”

& so if you're a Christian today - & you have breath
& you're NOT Giving Praise & Thanksgiving to God

I would really encourage you to set out
on a Personal SEARCH – A Personal JOURNEY

Find out – thru Prayer & Study & maybe some Counseling

WHAT IS IT that's **keeping you** from
Praising God - & **Being Thankful** to Him every day

Find out what it is – because **the thing** that's **KEEPING** you
from **Praising** God & **Being Thankful**

Maybe a **Very Serious Problem** in your Christian Life

& If you are **struggling** with **God** today
If you're **questioning** **God**, or **Mad** at **God**

If you have **NO Motivation**, **Enthusiasm**,
or **Joy** in your Christian **Walk** . . .

Don't pursue those things **themselves**,

Pursue a **Praise-Filled** & **Thankful Heart**

Immerse yourself in **WHAT** He's **DONE** for you,
& **PRAISE HIM** For it - & **BE THANKFUL**

& it will **Radically Change** your **Life**

William Law, (English Theologian in 1700's - both **John Wesley** & **George Whitfield** were influenced by him) said, ***“Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most, it is not he who gives alms most, ... but it is he who is always thankful to God, ... who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.”***

Guys - We were **MADE** to **Praise** & **Worship** God

& **WHEN** we Truly **Develop a Heart** of **Praise** & **Thanksgiving**

We **will have Accessed** – the **SECRET WEAPON**
that **will carry us** thru **ANY Circumstance** or **Difficulty**

The Christian's **SECRET WEAPON** –
Is a **HEART** Filled with **PRAISE** & **THANKSGIVING** to God

it is – at the Very Least – a **Critical** & **Crucial PART**
of **the VICTORY** - That **all Christians** have access **to**

It is **the Secret Weapon** - that **enables us** to say – with Paul

Whether I'm **ABOUNDING** or **ABASING**
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

Please – *Cultivate* – *Grow*
A *heart* of **PRAISE** & **THANKSGIVING** to God

It is your **SECRET WEAPON** – to **Overcome**

Would you **stand with me** - as **we practice** this a little

The **Hymnal of the Bible** (PSALMS)
Ends so Appropriately – with **PSA 150**

HERE – is your **Call to Worship**

Psalm 150 (ESV)

1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!

2 Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

3 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

4 Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

5 Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let's Pray