

Overcoming Disappointment
(Turnpike Wesleyan - January 3, 2021)

Scripture Text: Ezra 3:1-13

Introduction

The year is 537 B.C. The place is Jerusalem. The Jews have just returned from a long captivity in Babylon. Some have been gone from their homeland for **70** years. Others have been gone for **50** years. They were sent into captivity as part of God's judgment on generations of **disobedience**. Now at last the first wave of Jews is returning to the land.

So, the Jews go to work with vigor and determination. First, they rebuild the **altar** (vs. 1-6). Second, they relay the foundation of the **temple** (vs.7-9). Then they pause for a public **praise** celebration (vs. 10-11).

Note Ezra 3:12-13 ... "But many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation. The others, however, were shouting for joy. The joyful shouting and weeping mingled together in a loud noise that could be heard far in the distance." The young folks **danced** and **cheered** while the old folks **wept** bitter tears. And the shouts of joy mixed with the weeping so that no one could tell them apart.

Misplace Expectations

Everyone knows **disappointment** sooner or later.

English author Joseph Addison declared, "Our real blessings often appear to us in the shape of **pains**, losses and **disappointments**."

Dr. Jerome Frank at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore talks about "our **assumptive** world." He means that we all make certain assumptions about life. Deep down, we believe that if we do certain things, others will treat us in a certain way. If those **expectations** are not met, we are disappointed.

Why were the old people disappointed? They remembered how good things used to be. And because they were living in the **past** with all its glory, they could not deal with the **present** reality.

Renew Your Covenant - Rebuild the Altar

Ezra 3:5-6 (Even though the people were afraid of the local residents, they rebuilt the altar at its old site. Then they began to sacrifice burnt offerings on the altar to the Lord each morning and evening. They celebrated the Festival of Shelters as prescribed in the Law, sacrificing the number of burnt offerings specified for each day of the festival. They also offered the regular burnt offerings and the offerings required for the new moon celebrations and the annual festivals as prescribed by the Lord. The people also gave voluntary offerings to the Lord. Fifteen days before the Festival of Shelters began the priests had begun to sacrifice burnt offerings to the Lord. This was even before they had started to lay the foundation of the Lord's Temple) ... They built the altar even before they started rebuilding the temple. Why? **Worship** must always come first. Out of the rubble of their past disobedience, they first made sure they were **right** with God. In a sense, by making sacrifices first, they were saying, "Lord, we want to get right with you."

There are times when we all need a **new** beginning with God. Sometimes we need a new beginning because of our own sin. Sometimes the circumstances of life have so defeated us that we need a **fresh** start. Sometimes we feel that hope is gone forever. And in those moments, we must do what the Jews did. We must return to the altar of sacrifice. For Christians, that means returning to the **cross** of Jesus Christ where his blood was shed for our sins.

No matter how great sin may be, if we turn to the Lord, he will abundantly pardon. "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy" (Micah 7:18).

Get Back to Basics - Fix the Foundation

Ezra 3:7-8a (Then the people hired masons and carpenters and bought cedar logs from the people of Tyre and Sidon, paying them with food, wine, and olive oil. The

logs were brought down from the Lebanon mountains and floated along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa, for King Cyrus had given permission for this. The construction of the Temple of God began in midspring, during the second year after they arrived in Jerusalem. The work force was made up of everyone who had returned from exile) ... As I study this story in its larger context, I am struck by two facts: First, they committed themselves to follow the Lord in the **details** of life.

Second, they fixed the foundation in spite of the **enemies** all around them. It takes **courage** to stand against a **hostile** world.

Put it all together and it looks like this. In spite of the **rubble** and in spite of the **opposition**, and in spite of all that had happened in the **past**, the people of God **banded** together and got to work.

Establish a New Priority - Resolve to Praise the Lord

Ezra 3:10-11 (When the builders completed the foundation of the Lord's Temple, the priests put on their robes and took their places to blow their trumpets. And the Levites, descendants of Asaph, clashed their cymbals to praise the Lord, just as King David had prescribed. With praise and thanks, they sang this song to the Lord: "He is so good! His faithful love for Israel endures forever!" Then all the people gave a great shout, praising the Lord because the foundation of the Lord's Temple had been laid) ... Once the foundation was laid, the people and their leaders stopped and gave **thanks** to God.

I am struck by the fact that they did not wait until the building was **completely** done to praise the Lord.

Anyone can praise God when the **sun** is shining. It's something else to praise God when things are far from **perfect**.

The Young & Old Need Each Other

The young need the old to remind them of the **past**.

The old need the young to encourage them about the **future**.

Wrap Up

Yield your **memories** and your **dreams** to the Lord. Take the past with its happiness and sadness, take the future with all its unlimited possibilities, and give it all, past and present, to the Lord.

Accept your **present** situation as from the Lord.

Resolve to **obey** God right where you are.

Praise God for his goodness in spite of your circumstances.