

Sunday, February 14, 2010

The Task Ahead

Nehemiah 2:9-20

Nehemiah's Return: Nehemiah 2:9-10

9Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. 10But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

- *Nehemiah's Travels*
 - Difficulty, Danger, Duration
 - In order to follow the example of Nehemiah, you have to worship the God of Nehemiah
- *Opposition to the Work*
 - The rebuilding of God's city will face continual opposition
 - People will oppose the work of God's people
 - From the outside
 - In Chapter 6: a man named Shemaiah will tell Nehemiah "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night."
 - Here's the startling revelation, all of the opposition that Nehemiah faces isn't from outside the city
 - Chapter 13: One of the religious leaders of Jerusalem moves one of Jerusalem's enemies into the temple "I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God."
 - Here's the startling revelation: Nehemiah's problems aren't so much an outside thing as they are an inside thing.
 - Acts 20:28-30 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Nehemiah's Inspection: Nehemiah 2:11-16

11So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. 13I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. 14Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. 15Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. 16And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

- *The Intermission:* I went to Jerusalem and was there three days
 - Nehemiah has spent months in prayer
 - Nehemiah has spent months traveling
 - What is the first thing he does when arrives in Jerusalem?
 - Takes a three day weekend
 - Like Ezra (Ezra 8:32)
 - Mark 6:31 - And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.
- *The Intention:* "I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem"
- *The Inspection:* I went out by night

Nehemiah's Speech: Nehemiah 2:17-20

17Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." 18And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. 19But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" 20Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

- *Nehemiah is brutally honest*
 - He doesn't pull any punches
 - You see the trouble we are in
 - We may no longer suffer derision
- *Nehemiah seeks unity*
 - Notice how Nehemiah addresses the people
 - The trouble **we** are in
 - Let **us** build
 - That **we** may no longer suffer derision

Three Big Things from Nehemiah 2:9-20

1. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem

- a. Nehemiah has a vision for God's city that comes from God
 - b. We should have a vision for God's city (the church) that comes from God
- The Church Universal
 - Matthew 16:16-20 - Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - Ephesians 5:25-30 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body.
 - Matthew 5:14 - You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

- Three Problems With Our Vision of God's Church
 - *There are those who view the church as something to be consumed*

 - *There are those who view the church as unnecessary*

 - *There are those who have been wounded by the church*

- 2. **You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned.**
 - a. Nehemiah sees God's vision and he sees the current state of Jerusalem, the comparison is not good.
 - b. We need to compare where we are to where we should be

- 3. **And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me.**
 - a. Where do our vision, strength, resources and protection come from?
 - i. This task is monumental
 - ii. This task is terrifying
 - iii. This task is dangerous
 - b. God is the one who gives the direction, the strength, the equipment, and the protection

How will we respond?

- As the people of Jerusalem? "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.
- OR**
- And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.