

October 18, 2015

“Rebuilding”

Nehemiah 6:15-16

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.

Today I want to talk to you about the shortest man in the Bible, “Knee high miah” (Nehemiah). As the book opens, Nehemiah receives a report that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, the gates were burned and the survivors were in distress. Nehemiah is deeply affected by the news and within 4 verses of the beginning of the book, he is weeping.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

In late autumn... I was at the fortress of Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

The name Nehemiah means, “God comforts.” Which Person of the Trinity do we refer to as the Comforter? The Holy Spirit! The wall was broken down and Nehemiah was in harmony with the will and purpose and desire of the Holy Spirit to rebuild the wall.

A wall does two things

1. It keeps things safe inside
2. It keeps things out

1. It preserves, keeps safe, keeps the right things in
2. It protects, keeps the bad things out, the wrong things out

The wall was a protection for the people of God in Judah. Today the people of God is the church. What is the safeguard for the church? It is trust and obedience to Christ and His Word, it is keeping a standard of holy living. The wall represents the standard, the power, the strength, the character, the integrity of the church.

Nehemiah is a book about restoration, about bringing back the glory of God to the church. But it is also about restoring the life of people who seek God. And it starts with an honest assessment of the brokenness and hopelessness and despair of a people who have lost faith.

In other words they had given up. They had no hope, no expectation for change, they couldn't see past their present dilemma.

Somebody needs to hear this today: You've been looking at some situations that have been stamped, "no hope – give up"

The devil says, "no hope – give up"

Your enemies are saying and even some friends are starting to agree, "no hope – give up"

You're looking at the broken down wall and it looks hopeless, beyond repair.

You can't see how God could ever put that marriage back together.

You can't see how God could ever heal that illness.

You can't see how you're going to get out of that debt.

You can't see how God is going to deliver that prodigal son or daughter.

Nehemiah is coming - The Holy Spirit is coming!

So don't accept the enemies report, don't even accept the report of your own senses.

The first part of the message is this, "it's not over."

It's not the end

It can be restored

It can be rebuilt

That's the word of the Lord to you as well: "it's not over, it's not beyond repair, it's not hopeless, and it's not useless.

Whether the rebuilding has to do with the church, or an individual's life, there are those who will try to discourage you:

Nehemiah 4:1-3

Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends and the Samaritan army officers, "What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap—and charred ones at that?"

Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, "That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!"

Sanballat = "*the god sin has been given life*" (represents the devil)

Nehemiah = "*God comforts*" (represents the much more powerful Holy Spirit)

So what does Nehemiah do in response to Sanballat's anger and mocking?

Nehemiah 4:4

Then I prayed, "Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked.

He prayed, just as we should do when the devil antagonizes us. When we pray we are confirming our trust in God, but trust means obedience and faith is seen in our works.

Nehemiah 4:6-9

At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm.

But when Sanballat and Tobiah and (others) ...heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

Did you catch that? They prayed and guarded. Trust God, but do what you must do as well. E.g. if you are in debt, pray, and look for job or way to either increase income or cut expenses; if there are problems in your marriage pray and look at what you must change to make it better, if you have a prodigal son or daughter, pray and live a Christ-like life as an example to them.

Tobiah's and Sanballat's say it's a useless waste of time a fox will break it down. The devil would have us believe that it's impossible; he would have us to believe that we can never be healed, your marriage can never be restored, your prodigals will never come home. The devil would have us to believe that this nation is doomed, that the church is beyond repair, that you are beyond help, that we have passed the point of no return. He would have us believe that evil has triumphed. The devil would have us to believe that it's useless; it's hopeless, that all our efforts are in vain. He would have us to believe that Cross-and the sacrifice of Jesus as the only remedy for sin and holiness and purity and truth and sanctification are outdated messages, and powerless now.

But the devil is a liar.

It's not hopeless and it's not useless, and there is no expiration date on the blood of Jesus and the message of the cross. The gospel is still the power of God to save all who believe. The preaching of the cross is still as powerful as it ever was, and the power of the Holy Spirit still sanctifies and delivers and gives us power over sin. God is still restoring lives wherever faith is put in Jesus Christ and that faith is acted on.

Tobiah's and Sanballat's are always going to object and resist the work of God. But greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

1 John 4:4

The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

The first part of the message is this, "it's not over."

The second part of Nehemiah's message is this: It's going to take some work.

Yes we can have restoration; Yes the wall can be rebuilt, but it's going to take some work on your part. It is going to take the cooperative effort of the Spirit of God and the people of God.

Nehemiah, (the Holy Spirit) wants to restore the wall, Nehemiah works with God's people to accomplish this purpose

Restoration/renewal is not an accident

Restoration/renewal begins with the desire for change

Restoration/renewal begins when we are able to see and admit what we have lost, and what's been broken down, and we choose to no longer accept it as normal, because Sin is not normal.

Restoration /renewal is God's people praying, fasting, sacrificing, putting off sin and worldly, ungodly desires, it's repenting, turning from our wicked ways, crying out to God and God will answer.

We can have restoration/renewal whenever and wherever we're willing to pay the price and do the work.

We can't expect the world to get better until the church gets right with God.

Restoration/renewal begins at the church, It begins with every child of God rebuilding the wall in their own hearts, the wall of honesty and integrity truth and righteousness. It begins at the altar of repentance, turning away from all that is worldly and sinful.

Sanballat and Tobiah tried to discourage the people of God and the work of God But here's the part I love: Their words were spoken in anger and hostility and meant to ridicule and criticize and humiliate, but to me it's probably the most awesome part of the whole story; verse 2 says: "What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap—and charred ones at that?"

He is saying, "Can they do anything with these old burnt stones piled up in the trash heap?" Really what he was saying is, "You can't do anything with garbage! You can't build anything with these used burnt stones." Really what he was saying was, "The stones are trash and they're not good for anything."

When I hear that I can hear the devil talking. I could hear the devil saying to so many people: "You're no good, you've been burned, you're all messed up, you've been broken, you've been abused, you've been a drug addict, you've made a mess of your life, you failed Christ and the church, you're a nobody, you're rubbish, you're trash, you're good for nothing, nobody wants you."

But I can hear another voice speaking: the voice of Nehemiah- the voice of the Holy Spirit saying: I want these old burnt stones. I want those stones piled up in the trash over there, the ones everybody threw away. The rejected ones, the broken ones, the ones that didn't fit, the burned ones; The ones who carry the scars of their abuse; The

ones who have been rejected by religion, the outcasts of society. I'm going to do exactly what you said I couldn't do, I'm going to take these old burnt stones and I'm going to make a new wall with them.

How many are glad today that God uses burnt stones?

1 Corinthians 6:11

Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

How many remember the mess you were in when God found you and picked you up? Some of you were drunk, some of you were high on dope, some of you were unfaithful to your spouse, some of you were behind bars, some of you were liars, cheaters, thieves, sexually immoral, or just plain selfish.

I'm look out at you this morning and the truth is, you weren't always this pretty, you didn't always have it together. The truth is some of us, have some ugly stuff in our past and the truth is if God was looking for perfect people you wouldn't have made the cut, I wouldn't have made the cut. And if God was only accepting good people who never broke the law never cheated, never lied, never stole, never abused their bodies, never been abused by somebody else, you and I would have been rejected. And such were some of you, some of us, But God... but God loved us, but God had mercy on us, but God forgave us, but God delivered us, cleansed us.

God didn't go down to perfect street to choose His material. He came down to the rubbish heap of life and he picked up the broken and the bruised the wounded and the burned, the most used and abused. And he said this is what I'll use to build my wall. This is what I'll use to build my church. I'll take these old burn stones and I'll build a new wall. I don't care where you came from in this life or where you've been or what you've been through...

2 Corinthians 5:17

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

There's an awareness of need for change in our land and Nehemiah is coming - the Holy Spirit is coming. Is your heart broken like Nehemiah because, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire." Like Nehemiah have you wept and mourned, do you fast, and pray to the God of heaven.

There are going to be churches that are flooded with the glory of God. But other churches are going to be dry, dead, no presence of God.

Why, what's the difference?

The answer is, the move of God is coming to where they have prepared for it.

It's coming to a people who have cleared the way for it

It's coming to a people who are hungry for it

It's coming to a people who are desperate for it.

It's coming to a people who have wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed for it.

It's coming to a people who are ready for change/willing to change

It's coming to a people who are rebuilding the wall, lifting up the standard, renouncing sin, tearing down the idols, rebuilding the altar.

Restoration is coming to those prepared places.

Suddenly it's coming to where the walls are being restored.

It's coming to the dry places, the thirsty places, the wounded places, the broken places.

The bound and the oppressed are going to be set free

Cry out to God, "Lord, restore our church, our family, our city, our schools, our nation.

Come on let's prepare: Let's get all the junk out of our lives, let's quit limping back and forth. Let's consecrate our selves to God. We see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that first the altar was built so sacrifices could be made, then the Temple was built for the presence of God then the walls were restored. So first we repent we put the sacrifice of our selves on the altar so God can bring His Presence to us and live in us. Then God will restore and rebuild. Here's the promise

Nehemiah 6:15-16

... the wall was finished ...(and) When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.