

**Grace Bible Church
The Tree of Life
A Weekly Review
Week ending 020512
Nehemiah. Part 8.
Blood, Sweat and Tears.**

This past week we noted two men whose names are given to us in Neh 2:10 when it says, **And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it,**

Nehemiah had agonized with God for a few months and had seen the miraculous influence of God persuading the king's heart in his favor. So far, the battle has been invisible, now the battle becomes visible and it no longer would be fought in the prayer closet behind the scenes. It became a battle fought out in the open where everyone could see and hear. Nehemiah refused to surrender to the enemy and promised his people final victory. Together they discovered the painful, yet deepening, maturing truth that there is no such thing as spiritual opportunity and victory without opposition. This is not exactly what you would expect to read.

We have noted that Nehemiah has the permission of the king. He also had the financing that he needed for the work of rebuilding the wall. But for three days, he has not told anyone in Jerusalem why he has even come. And the truth is that as of now many of the Israelites had given up hope. They had grown so accustomed to their history of failure and defeat, and they could no longer even conceive of anyone trying to build their walls again.

But, here he is, the man with the plan, the permission, and the power to make it happen, yet he's not even announcing his arrival! Wisdom or the truth is that an announcement like that would have been a terrible mistake. Because those who have wisdom have learned the importance of waiting.

Isa 40:28-31, Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, And to {him who} lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up {with} wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

Nehemiah arrived into town, and for three days he said nothing; this does not mean that Nehemiah was not doing anything. It was three days of waiting, and no doubt, three days of reading and meditating on the word of God which for the Old Testament saints was equivalent to praying. I am quite sure that Nehemiah was also taking inventory of their spiritual condition, along with the condition of their walls. Because of another reason: Wisdom also takes the time to investigate.

Jer 29:13, "And you will seek Me and find {Me,} when you search for Me with all your heart."

Ecc 7:25, I directed my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom and an explanation,

Then, without any explanation to the readers, he gets up late one night, and with a few of his armed escorts, takes a closer look at the conditions.

Neh 2:13-16, So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who did the work.

This is Nehemiah's "midnight ride." Wisdom causes those who possess it to have an abnormal life. In verse 13 we are told that Nehemiah "inspected" the walls. Having gathered the people of Jerusalem - the priests, the nobles, and the officials - Nehemiah now announces his intentions.

Neh 2:17-18, Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach. And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me, and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, 'Let us arise and build.' So they put their hands to the good work.'

Now if you are like me, perhaps you are a little surprised that after such a short speech, the text says the people responded by saying, "Let us arise and build." At first glance verses 17 and 18 do not seem to include enough of a motivational speech from Nehemiah to make any person willing to risk his life. Certainly not enough of a speech to motivate people to attempt something so terribly difficult that they have not been able to do it for many, many years.

There are four key principles that Nehemiah used in rallying others to work together in getting ready to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. There are volumes of motivation and incentive in his words. However, the point was the influence and the power of wisdom.

First, an honest attitude. **Neh 2:17, Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire."** Nehemiah's honesty is refreshing. He does not sugar-coat the problem. He does not start his motivational speech by ignoring the problem and saying, "I've seen the walls, and it's not all that bad." That is what you call an excessive optimist; a person who does not operate in reality. He did not overlook problems, nor was he overwhelmed by them. He immediately earned respect by verbalizing his understanding of the people's painful condition. Notice his refusal to mince words, "It's a bad situation - desolate - the gates are burned by fire."

Secondly, there is a humble identification. He did not say, "Man, are you in a bad situation, what you need to do is to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that you will no longer be a reproach." No, he said, "we." If you want to discourage someone whose life is in ruins, just say, "Man, are you a mess; you really ought to do something about that." It will work every time. On the other hand, if you want to encourage them, start by saying, "Man, are WE in a mess. How can WE, together, get out of it?"

Thirdly, there is also an honorable invitation. Nehemiah did not approach the people by saying, "Listen, let's build a wall so that we'll have a nice wall," Nehemiah invites the people to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach. The word translated "reproach" means, "to speak down or to speak poorly concerning the character of someone." In other words, "Let's rebuild the wall so we, the people of God, will so represent Him that the people around us cannot speak poorly of our character, nor disparage the character of God!" This motivated the people into action!

4. Then finally he had a hope-filled testimony. **Neh 2:18, "I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me, and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me."**

Can you imagine how the people must have hung on every word? “God is here with us,” Nehemiah declares. “God has prepared the way. He has turned the heart of the king. He has supplied our financial need. He has not forgotten His holy city.

Neh 2:19, But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”

So, there were volumes of motivation and incentive in his words, however. But the point was the influence and the power of wisdom. Remember, Wisdom waits. Wisdom investigates. Wisdom causes those who possess it to have an abnormal life.

Let’s note some wise principles concerning wisdom:

When you decide to build anything for the glory of God - a godly home, a spiritual mind, honest character, everything that opposes God, will oppose you. There is no opportunity from heaven without opposition from hell. If you think that walking with the lord Jesus Christ is a path paved and dressed up with flowers, think again. The Lord warned His disciples that the object which would grace their necks would not be a garland but a cross.

Mat 16:24, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

/Christianity is not always blessings, sweetness, and triumph. Sometimes it is blood, sweat, and tears. More often than not, the enemies of the Cross seem to outnumber its friends.

From the book of Nehemiah, there are two forms of opposition:

Public ridicule - Neh 2:19b, “they mocked us and despised us.”

Personal intimidation - Neh 2:19c, “What is this thing you are doing?”

Public ridicule was intended to produce personal embarrassment. Intimidation was intended to produce fear. These two forms of opposition - fear and embarrassment - have worked wonders in keeping Christians from doing or saying anything for God. Perhaps it would work against Nehemiah.

Note Nehemiah’s response.

Neh 2:20, So I answered them and said to them, “The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.”

Nehemiah responds to the opposition by saying six significant things:

- This is God’s work.
- We are God’s servants.
- This work will be accomplished by God’s power.
- You have no portion here. (i.e., “no property” inside the city)
- You have no right. That is, they have no claim of authority over Jerusalem.
- You have no memorial. This is a religious implication that could be amplified to read, “You have no place of worship within Jerusalem’s community of believers.”

What courage, fortified by the power of God Almighty. The enemies' intimidation and ridicule did not discourage the work. What about you and me? What about the "divine good work" we have been given to do? Are we moving forward, or are we discouraged and defeated by ridicule and intimidation?

Wisdom teaches us to avoid the danger of discouragement. Understand that God's will is not always easy, but it is always possible by His might. **"With God, all things are possible" (Mat 19:26b).**

God's wisdom also teaches us to rest in the fact that God will never command you to do something without providing the strength and the means to accomplish it.

Phi 2:13, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Whether it's loving your spouse, witnessing to friends and relatives or remaining pure, you will be enabled by Christ if you obey Him.

Phi 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

Imagine what Nehemiah must have thought as he toured the city that night. There were huge stones lying on the ground, even piled up at places. There was a century of weeds and underbrush, as well as the rotten wood of former gates crumbling in his hands. Had you or I been Nehemiah, we would have probably taken the first camel back to Persia. But he knew that God's good hand was upon him, strengthening him for this monumental task.

God's wisdom teaches us to rejoice in the principle that opposition only means opportunity is close at hand. Since there is never opportunity without opposition, you learn to welcome not only the opportunity, but the obstacle as well. Do you remember a difficult experience where you were tempted to quit, but you kept on going? Like the British under the leadership of Churchill, by refusing to surrender, you also can say that it was your finest hour. Paul encourages us as we follow the leadership of Christ, to never surrender or throw in the towel. He challenged the Corinthians and every Christian to be, "Steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58).

What a great promise, your toil is not in vain. Endurance that demands blood, sweat, and tears will be rewarded one day. In the meantime, by the Lord's empowering, you can triumphantly shout, "Let us arise and build!"

Neh 2:18, And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me, and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.