

Nehemiah: *Building the Church One Person at a time*

(Nehemiah 2:1-20)

“God’s Leaders SEE His VISION”

Have you ever witnessed an abuse and you became indignant – HAD to act? - Intervene? Call 911? Ask neighbor?

Context: After 70 years in captivity, God moves the heart of the conquering King Cyrus to release the Jewish people from captivity: Ezra 1:1-4 “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also *put it in writing*, saying: ² “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to rebuild for Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! ⁴ Go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And every survivor, at whatever place he may ^{live}, the people of ^{that} place are to support him with silver and gold, with equipment and cattle, together with a ^{voluntary} offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.” 70 years = 2 generations. So the grandchildren of their parents/grandparents RETURN to Jerusalem. -Zerubbabel led 50K exiled Jews back to rebuild the Temple.

-60 years later, Ezra returns to rebuild the community of Jerusalem and re-establishes the Torah (God’s Law)

-13 years later [161 years after the destruction of Jerusalem] Nehemiah shows up to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem which had not been repaired.

What do the walls signify? = Strength, Safety, Security – Glory (glory of the city & glory of God as His city) **People** (their health, their prosperity, their safety) =w/o walls =they are **vulnerable**. **Just as skin protects our body’s muscles and organs from irritants, heat, bacteria, and virus’ – so the wall protects it’s people.** The walls symbolize that God’s people are protected, safe, and His honor is at stake. **Jerus. is HIS city.**

-Broken walls signify **shame & dishonor** over God’s chosen people; **their lives are in disrepair as are the walls**

In Chapter 1, Nehemiah hears the report (walls still broken; NO gates = people still vulnerable to attack; No glory) *as a Leader, unlikely servant, Neh. Prays for God’s favor and seeks to DO something about it.

READ Nehemiah 2: And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine *was* before him, and I picked up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, though you are not ill? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid. ³ And I said to the king, “May the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the ^{site} of my fathers’ tombs, is desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” ⁴ Then the king said to me, “^{What} would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, *I request* that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” ⁶ Then the king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. ⁷ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River, so that they will allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which is by the ^{temple}, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me. ⁹ Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite ^{official} heard *about it*, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel. ¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. ¹² And I got up in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my ^{mind} to do for Jerusalem, and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. ¹³ So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Spring and *on* to the Dung Gate, and I was inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which had been consumed by fire. ¹⁴ Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for ^{my} mount to pass. ¹⁵ So I was going up at night by the ravine and inspecting the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. ¹⁶ However, the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who were doing the work. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates have been burned by fire. Come, let’s rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a disgrace.” 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's arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite ^lofficial, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will make us successful; therefore we, His servants, will arise and build, but you have no part, right, or memorial in Jerusalem."

-God uses the most unlikely to be leaders to serve the most needy. (overweight introvert, academic, broken-pastor)

Main POINT: God calls His leaders to see real needs around them and invite others into that need! **Run to the wounded. Sounding the alarm: House fire. HELP!**

So, what do we notice that is happening in this narrative? 1. Faithful leaders PRAY

Vs. 4 Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

- This was the moment that Nehemiah had prayed for; he had prayed for an opportunity; for courage; favor

- Then he prays again: This is the most beautiful example of spontaneous prayer in the Bible.

-Nehemiah was a man given to prayer; Those who are the boldest for God have the greatest need for prayer

2. Faithful leaders respond to God's Vision for their life, church, and community

Vs. 5 Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, I request that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

-Nehemiah's Vision was singular: For God's glory, I must rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

-Nehemiah boldly asked the King to provide the materials to rebuild it

Vs. 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which is by the ^ltemple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go."

-Nehemiah felt the hand of God's favor upon him. Why? Because Neh. was fighting for **God's glory** above all else

Vs. 8 And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

3. Faithful leadership does not depend on circumstances, on detractors, on ease, or on quick success.

*When God is at work, when God's people are busy in obedience with God's presence, voice, & purpose – you can be sure the enemy is not far. John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy"

1 Peter 5:8 "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a **roaring lion**, seeking someone to devour." =We should never be surprised by attack; discouragement; disunity; distraction (in this world)

Jesus Jn 16:33 "In this world you *will* have trouble, but take heart, I have **OVERCOME** the world."

2Tim. 3:12 "For all those who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted." **We cannot be surprised when lost act lost**

Vs. 8 Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the Euphrates River and gave them the king's letters.

Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite ^lofficial heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

Vs. 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite ^lofficial, and Geshem the Arab heard about

it, **they mocked us and despised us**, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" =inciting lies and stirring up dissension (when they know the truth; they had already read King's letter)

4. Faithful leadership requires dependance on God for all things, Prayer, & radical obedience to His Vision.

-Nehemiah was a faithful leader in that he invited others into the Vision of God. He invited others to see the ruins, to experience the loss of God's glory, & to leverage their life to Run to the wounded & rebuild lives!

Vs. 17 Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates have been burned by fire. Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a disgrace." 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.

5. Faithful leaders cast God's vision, invite others into it, and lead by example:

Vs. 18 Then they said, "**Let's arise and build.**" So they put their hands to the good work. ²⁰ So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will make us successful; therefore we His servants will arise and build,

APPLICATION: - Are you in tune with God? What Is God saying to you? What is He leading you to do for Him?

-Whose life around you is in ruins? Who does God want you to run to their rescue? Spiritually? Emotionally?

-Who will you lead to rise up with you and help meet this need? Who will you invite into God's purpose for their life – to serve others? To share the gospel? To love the least of these?

- Will you PRAY.... God give me your eyes to see what you see; your boldness to LEAD OUT in your calling.

Community Group Discussion Questions

- 1. What is the significance of the time lapse between the decree to allow the Jews to return home, then Ezra leading a group back 60 years later, and then Nehemiah 13 years after that?**
- 2. How does the O.T. timing in years relate to how and when we read a text and think things happen in the narrative immediately, or sequentially, or in quick succession? What do we need to remember?**
- 3. What is your takeaway from this lesson on leadership? Does God still need leaders like Nehemiah?**
- 4. What is a time when you remember hearing a clear word from God (a Vision statement or calling)? What did God call you into? How did it go? Were you obedient to it? Do you still need to??**
- 5. Why do we often think we can keep expecting God to answer our current prayers and bless us when/if we have not been obedient to the last clear word of instruction (calling) that God gave us months ago? Years ago?**