

REVIEW: WHAT HAVE WE SEEN?

1. Chapter 1 – Nehemiah heard bad news from his brother Hanani

- A. The walls are down in Jerusalem – gates are burned – people living in great distress
- B. God begins to call Nehemiah – showing him the need and placing a great burden on his heart
 - 1). How God works – calls men and women who are students – in secular jobs like Nehemiah
 - a). Opens their eyes to a need – places a burden on them – calls them to action

Thought: I always find it interesting how some handle this God given burden

- A. I don't want it – I know – I'll just hand it off to the Pastor
 - “I really see this need Pastor – I'm so burdened - you should do something about it”
- B. I have a feeling people think Pastors are omni-gifted and omnipresent
 - 1). Gifted for every task – and always enough time to be present to meet every need
 - 2). Most Pastors I know work 50-60 hour weeks or more – every week = their all tired
- C. I've learned to say to those who have a burden for me to do what God has shown them
 - “Have you ever thought that God showed you that need because He wants you to do something about it? Why don't you figure this thing out and we'll back you as a church.”
 - 1). Amazing how many burdens evaporate when they have to do something about it
- D. How a church grows – not by the Pastor doing everything – coming up with every plan
 - 1). It's when the saints in the church get serious about living for God – start listening to Him
 - a). He starts calling them out into different forms of service

Point: Nehemiah saw the need – took it to God with an honest heart in prayer

- A. As he prayed God called him to be the one who stepped out to do something
 - 1). He prayed “God something has to happen about that need”
 - God responds “Right. And I'm calling you to do something about it.”

Transition: The call to Nehemiah is so clear – so compelling – He must go

2. Nehemiah in chapter 2 answers the call and goes to Jerusalem

- A. Nehemiah tells the residents of Jerusalem what God has called him to do
 - 1). And gives them evidence of God's hand – confirming that call
 - 2). They get excited – “let's do this” – they're all in
- B. We also saw a clear call of God is not a call to ease but a call to battle! Spiritual warfare
 - 1). The devil will oppose everything the Lord is doing in us and through us

3. The first attack of the devil was doubt about the call

Ne 2:19 (ESV) But 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?”*

- A. This is common – usually soon after you step out to answer the call
 - 1). The enemy will take any resistance – any delay – if it takes longer than you thought it would
 - Fiery arrows start to hit: “Looks like God hasn't called you. Are you sure you heard correctly?”
- B. Doubt is brutal – it can sap you of all your strength and confidence
 - 1). If God didn't call me – then how can I rely on Him to help me in this?
 - How can I stand on the promises if I'm not in His will?

4. Nehemiah's response – Calm and confident

Ne 2:20 (ESV) Then 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.”

- A. Saw a godly leader must have this kind of character

- 1). This flows out of his time spent in the Word and prayer
He has spent enough time with God that he trusts Him in all things
 - 2). Why a person who does not read or pray is not fit for leadership in a church
 - B. This is necessary because people watch the leader
 - 1). If he panics they panic – if he is confident in God they will be
- Transition:** That brings us to chapter 3 – name after name of those building the wall
- A. Just bring out a couple of thoughts here and then move on to chapter 4

I. THOUGHTS FROM CHAPTER 3

1. The necessity of teamwork

The Jewish response: Ne 2:18 (ESV) 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. And they said, *“Let us rise up and build.”*

- A. It so easy to say that – a lot of sign-up artists in the body – excited and sign up for everything
 - 1). But when it comes to actually showing up – you never see them
- B. So easy to talk a good Christianity – know all the right words to say to impress
 - 1). But real Christianity has action to it – *God calls no sons who are not also servants*
- C. Singles Pastor – setting up room – man came in
Whole time I was setting up he was telling me how much he loved serving the Lord
 - 1). He never lifted a hand to help me – watched me set up chairs etc.
 - 2). Unfortunately the church is always made up of
Those who are willing to work and those who are willing to watch them work

Thought: We are not saved by works – but works are an evidence that we are saved

- A. The whole argument of the book of James
 - 1). You say you have faith – “I’ll show you my faith through my works”
Adds the man who says he has faith but has no works is fooling himself – dead faith
 - 2). Not legalism – James is simply saying the grace that saves us moves us – causes us to serve
Vance Havner: Too many are willing to sit at God's table, but not to work in his field.
C. H. Spurgeon: He is no Christian who does not seek to serve his God.
- B. There’s always people like the guy who said this
I’m afraid that fulfilling my potential would really cut into my sitting around time.
 - 1). Don’t be that guy! It’s not scriptural.

2. The Bible emphasizes the importance of total participation

- A. What we see in chapter 3 with a few sad exceptions – its emphasized even more in the NT
 - 1). Apostle Paul uses an interesting illustration to get point across – the human body
 - 2). In order for body of Christ to mature and function correctly it takes all of us involved
Eph 4:16 (NIV) From him the whole body, joined and held together by *every supporting ligament*, grows and builds itself up in love, *as each part does its work.*
 - a). God’s plan is NO spectators – everyone is needed for the church to be healthy
Tt 2:13–14 (ESV) (Christ) gave himself for us (**Why?**) to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself *a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*
- B. Problem: When one person sits – another is forced to do double duty – burn out
- C. Balance: I understand some have situations – work etc. where they can’t serve
 - 1). But that is the exception rather than the rule

3. Objection: I don’t come to church to hear this

- A. Sorry – I have to tell you these things – I am under command
To Pastor Titus: Tt 3:8 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy, and *I want you to insist on these things*, (What things Paul? What is the Pastor to tell his people?) so that those who have believed in God *may be careful to devote themselves to good works*.
- B. One of those things all of us should be encouraging one another too – you should be talking about this
Heb 10:24 (ESV) And let us consider how *to stir up one another* to love *and good works*,
- Transition:** But where does this all start? With the leaders – they are to set the example
- A. Remember we are looking at the characteristics of godly leadership
- 1). Seen they are people of the Word and prayer who are willing to deal with their own sin
 - 2). Out of that lifestyle flows a calmness in adversity that affects the rest of the church

Good and Bad Leaders

1. Bad leadership

Ne 3:5 (ESV) And next to them the Tekoites repaired, *but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord*.

- A. I have met leaders like this – tell everybody what they should be doing
- 1). But they don't do it themselves – they don't stoop to serve
- B. Elder in England – a small Sunday – can you help by taking the offering
“I don't do windows.” = He wouldn't stoop – Later he repented but still – shocking
- C. Jesus stooped didn't He – he did windows!

Mk 10:45 (ESV) For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- 1). He stooped down and washed feet – the most humbling job there was in those days
 - a). Job lowest slave in pecking order in the house did
- 2). Jesus chose the lowest – most demeaning – most degrading job people could think of
Then says “I have set you an example so that you should do as I do.”

Phil 2:5-8 (NIV) *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:* (6) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, (7) but made himself nothing, *taking the very nature of a servant*, being made in human likeness. (8) And *being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...*

Transition: I don't think a leader should expect anything from anybody he wouldn't do himself

- A. The leader sets the example – sets the pace
- B. Fortunately, there were also these kinds of leaders in Jerusalem

2. The good leaders

Ne 3:9 (ESV) Next to them *Rephaiah the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired*.

Ne 3:12 (ESV) Next to him Shallum the son of *Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters*.

- A. Here were rulers that didn't think it was stooping to be involved – to be helping

Summary: Godly leaders so far: Are devoted to the Word and to prayer – deal with personal sins

- A. Handle calamity with a calmness that comes out of really knowing their God
- B. Now are willing to serve – do what they ask others to do – get their hands dirty

Transition: That brings us to the second attack in Nehemiah

II. SECOND ATTACK: MISDIRECTED FOCUS

Ne 4:1–3 (ESV) Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. ⁽²⁾ And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the

heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" ⁽³⁾ Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"

1. Notice as Nehemiah presses on the attack becomes fiercer

- A. Sanballat and Tobiah were very much disturbed when they first heard about the work
 - 1). So they tempted the Jews to doubt the call – that was repelled – work continued
 - a). Now Sanballat and Tobiah are greatly enraged – from disturbed to enraged

Point: This is the way it is – as we press on the resistance increases

- A. It is never more than we can handle – that's a promise from God – but it increases

2. The components of this attack are interesting and very common

- A. The first attack was doubt about the call – now doubt about their ability to answer that call
- B. ***This is all about the wrong focus*** – Get the eyes off God and onto self and the difficulty of the work

Transition: Let's tear this apart to see what's happening here

The Elements of this Attack

- A. **"Feeble Jews"** – turning their eyes inward
 - 1). Who are you to take on such a task? Not talented enough – wise enough – strong enough"
- B. **"Will they restore it (the wall) for themselves?"**
 - 1). Focusing their eyes on the difficulty of the work
 - You! That wall!** Do you know what that's going to take! You think you can do that!
- C. **"Will they sacrifice?"** Do you know how much sacrifice will be required?
 - "Have you really thought this through? Have you counted the cost?"
- D. **"Will they finish up in a day?"**
 - "Do you know how long you're going to have to sacrifice? You sure you want to start this?"
 - 1). Probably going to take up all your free time – this is going to be brutal
- E. **"Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?"**
 - "Do you realize the resources this will take? Where you going to get them?"
 - "What stones are you going to use? Those burnt ones?"

Tobiah chimes in: Ne 4:3 (ESV) Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"

- F. Do you really think your little wall is going to protect you from us
 - 1). You're not wall builders – you going to sacrifice all that time – do all that hard work
 - To produce something that isn't going to protect you anyway! A fox could break it down!
 - 2). So much sacrifice for something so insignificant!

Question: Can you relate? This is normal – and it stops people before they ever start!

- A. You evangelize? What are you going to tell somebody? You know how few get saved today!
- B. You go to a prayer meeting? What kind of prayers do you think you can offer?
- C. You go to a study where they discuss things? What do you have to offer?
- D. You dream big about a ministry to Orange County – Reaching unreached – homeless? Helping widows?
 - 1). Do you know how hard that's going to be? You know what kind of resources that will take?
 - 2). Have you thought about the sacrifice? When have you ever done anything like this before?
 - Blah – blah – blah! Shut up Satan!
 - a). Nehemiah had probably never built a wall before – but God called him

Transition: Here's the thing – the devil will do anything to get our focus off God

And get it fixed on our weakness and the job's difficulty

- A. Remember the calling of Moses – watch what happens when we focus on ourselves

THE CALLING OF MOSES: FROM THE BURNING BUSH – TURN TO EXODUS 3

- A. God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush – Exodus 3:9-10
 “I’ve heard the cry of my people in Egypt and I am going to deliver them”
 1). Moses probably thought “Great Lord. Thanks for telling me. Good to know.”
 “Moses. I’m going to send you to do it” – “Yeah. Lord I’m not really feeling that!”
- B. Moses doesn’t want to do it - why? Watch where he fixes his gaze – on himself – his abilities
Ex 3:11 (ESV) But Moses said to God, “*Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”
 1). Who am I to do something like this? – God’s answer v. 12 “I will be with you”
 a). I didn’t expect you to do this alone Moses – I will go with you
- C. Next one – yeah but I don’t know what to say
Ex 3:13 (ESV) Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”
 1). God says in v. 14-17 “I’ll tell you what to say.” Gives him specifics
- D. Next excuse – but what if they don’t believe me? I mean it’s only me!
Ex 4:1 (ESV) Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’ ”
 1). God says “Fine I will enable you to do signs and wonders to validate your words”
 a). Turn rod into snake and back again. Put hand into cloak leprous – put in again gone
 Take water from Nile and turn it into blood
 “Moses don’t worry. I’ll do whatever it takes for you to succeed. Trust me”
- E. Next one. “But I’ve never been eloquent. I am slow of speech and tongue.” = stutter
 Lord you want me to be your spokesman – I can’t – Have you heard me speak – wrong guy
Ex 4:10 (ESV) But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”
 1). I love God’s answer
Ex 4:11–12 (ESV) Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ⁽¹²⁾ Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”
 a). Moses my calling on a life comes with my enabling!
 Get your eyes off yourself – your ability doesn’t matter – MINE DOES!
 b). I’ll tell you what to say and I’ll help you say it – NOW GO and I’ll go with you
- F. Now look at what focusing on ourselves can do – so restricting
Ex 4:13 (ESV) But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”
 “Lord this is beyond me. Please quit asking me. Send somebody else. I’m not up to the task.”
 1). Look at God’s response – important
Ex 4:14 (ESV) *Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses* and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? *I know that he can speak well.* (little sarcasm there)
 2). When God calls you to do something He expects you to do it
 a). I know you’re an American and love democracy – love having a vote
 Sorry – but the government of God’s kingdom is a theocracy – you get NO vote
 1a). If He calls you – you go!
 b). If you don’t ask Jonah if He can change your mind
 1a). But when you do go – He will use you
- Question:** Is God calling you to get involved somewhere? You can expect resistance
- A. Last week – doubt about the call itself

This week – doubt about your ability to fulfill that call

- 1). He exaggerates your inability and magnifies the tasks difficulty
- B. You have got to choose what you're going to focus on – you or God
 - 1). Get your eyes off yourself - you don't matter – He does
 - 2). Success doesn't matter – as far as man considers success
 - a). Success is simply being obedient to God – say YES - let Him worry about everything else
- C. Like I said last week – I promise when you do that – you'll experience God

Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and *I will love him and manifest myself to him.*"

Jn 14:23 (ESV) Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*

 - 1). The obedient will experience God – He hides his face from the disobedient – Is 59:1-2
- D. Check this out – Paul ministering in very dangerous situations – but he obeyed – now watch

Ac 18:9–10 (ESV) And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent,⁽¹⁰⁾ for I am with you..."

2 Ti 4:17–18 (ESV) But the Lord *stood by me and strengthened me*, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

 - 1). I love that – we don't serve alone – when we step out in obedience He steps out with us
When we stand for Him, He stands with us
 - 2). We experience Him – He manifests Himself to us

THE EXAMPLE OF GIDEON

- A. God calls him to deliver Israel – he tries that "I'm not good enough stuff"
 - 1). Judges 6 Miserable: He was living in constant fear because of the Midianites
 - 2). He was indifferent – apathetic – hadn't seen God move in his life for who knows how long
- B. But the angel of God approaches him and addresses him as "Mighty warrior"
 - 1). At that point he was anything but a mighty warrior = afraid – timid – petrified
 - 2). Gives his excuses to push away the call – I'm weak from smallest clan – blah blah
- C. But even though he was afraid – he did obey – and as he did – God started to change him
 - 1). Through a process of obedience – overcoming fear – being stretched – one step at a time
God transformed him from a mouse into a mighty warrior
 - 2). From a man who had not known the touch of God – spiritually indifferent and apathetic
To a worshipper of God – who led revival in Israel
 - 3). He just stepped out in obedience – and God manifested Himself to him big time
 - a). Enabling him to do what he never could have done
- D. God wants to use you – show Himself to you – become so real in your life – set your heart on fire
 - 1). But you MUST get your eyes off yourself and fix them on Him – and you MUST trust Him
 - 2). You must stop thinking you can't answer the call because you're not gifted enough
 - a). But I feel so weak – let me clear this up for you so you can stop thinking about it
 - b). You are weak – you are not strong enough – gifted enough – **so YOU QUALIFY**

1 Co 1:26–29 (ESV) For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.⁽²⁷⁾ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;⁽²⁸⁾ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,⁽²⁹⁾ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Point: You try all those rubbish excuses on God – and He just says “Yes. That’s why I chose you”

- A. You’re the perfect person for me to use to display my glory
 - B. Stop excusing the call of God away – stop listening to the lies of the devil
 - 1). You have one responsibility – Trust God
 - a). If He has called you He will enable you
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III. THE RESPONSE

Again simple: Ne 4:4-6 (ESV) Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. ⁽⁵⁾ Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders. ⁽⁶⁾ So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

1. Very calm and collected – a quick prayer

“Lord you see what is happening – you take care of them”

- A. Then they returned to the work – Nehemiah didn’t waste any time arguing with them
 - 1). He understood they were just a distraction from what was important – the work

2. Here we see another characteristic of godly leadership – they are focused

- A. He would not allow these men to distract him from what God called him to do
 - B. I think to many give the devil more credit than he should get – spend too much time with him
 - 1). He’s a nuisance – a pain – but don’t give him the time of day – arguing with him
God take care of that – he’s nothing to you – then get back to the work
 - C. I’m not going to concentrate on the devil when I can be thinking about Christ
 - 1). That would be like concentrating on a cesspool – when you’re up on the cliffs overlooking the ocean at Laguna Beach! No thanks!
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CONCLUSION

1. Is God stretching you this morning – calling you to greater service?

- A. Do you even want Him to use you – are you willing to pray – whatever you want
 - 1). Your job as an obedient believer is to offer your bodies to Him as a living sacrifice

2. But be aware

- A. The devil will cause doubt about the call – last week
- B. Then he will cause you to doubt your ability to answer the call – this week
 - 1). He’s a liar – it’s not about your ability – just say YES and watch God enable you
God will never call you to a work you can’t do – His calling is His enabling
 - 2). Say YES – choose obedience and watch how He manifests Himself to you
 - a). This is Nehemiah isn’t it – focused on the work God had for Him

3. We added another characteristic to our study on godly leadership

- A. They are people of the Word – people of prayer who deal with personal sins
 - 1). Out of this confidence that is a fruit of intimacy with God – they are calm when calamity hits
 - 2). Now we could add they are focused on the work
 - a). Nehemiah didn’t let the attacks side track him – make him concentrate on the wrong things
 - b). He gave the situation to God and got back to work