

Surveying the Damage (Part 2 of #4)

Nehemiah 2: 11-20

Last week we began to consider the realities Nehemiah faced as he began to survey the damage to the city of Jerusalem. He had made the long trip home and I am sure that his thoughts were consumed with what he would find as he came to Jerusalem. We must keep in mind that Nehemiah had never seen Jerusalem. It had been over 150 years since the Jews were led away in bondage to Babylon. He is going to a land he's never seen, facing an enormous task that he really has no details of, and yet he is determined to rebuild the city wall and restore the devastation of Jerusalem.

Surely we would agree that Nehemiah was not the average Jew. He held a position of prominence in Sushan and could've very likely lived out his days there with a life of relative ease. Nehemiah sought to serve the Lord and he knew the significance of Jerusalem and the need for God's people to inhabit the land and worship there.

We need some Nehemiahs in our day. We live a much different life than he lived, but we need those who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices for the good of the church and the glory of God. We need those who will lay aside personal preference and gain to restore that which has been lost in our generation.

Tonight I want to pick up where we left of last week concerning the [challenges](#) Nehemiah faced as we think on: [Surveying the Damage](#). Quickly let's review what we studied last week. We dealt with:

I. The Inspection of the City (11-16) – These verses reveal how Nehemiah inspected the task at hand and the realities he discovered. We discussed:

A. The Secrecy (12a, 16)

B. The Sovereignty (12)

C. The Survey (13-15)

1. The Necessity

2. The Accuracy

II. The Instruction of Nehemiah (17-18) – Let's take a moment to consider the instruction that Nehemiah gave the inhabitants concerning what he discovered. We find that:

A. It was Precise (17a) – *Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire:* Nehemiah never sought to be deceptive or manipulative. He had surveyed the city and discovered the enormity of the damage. This was not going to be an easy task. There was much work to be done and it would require a committed effort. He revealed a precise portrait of what he had discovered. Nehemiah was upfront and honest about the need at hand.

- As I have stressed before, we too need to be honest with the current conditions we face. We can pretend that all is well and the needs are minimal, but in doing so we deceive ourselves and those around us. We need to be honest about the needs of our day and present those needs as they are. We will never overcome until we accept reality!

B. It was Passionate (17b) – *come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.* The task at hand was monumental, but Nehemiah wasted no time and did not lack passion for the work. He immediately encouraged the people to rise up and get busy. The city lay in ruin; God's people had suffered reproach, and Nehemiah sought to put an end to that reproach. He wanted to restore the city to its former glory.

- The task we face is difficult as well. Years of neglect and complacency have created an array of problems and challenges. We have been quiet and inactive far too long. It is time for the redeemed of the Lord to rise and face these challenges. Much of the adversity we face can be attributed to our own complacency and refusal to stand for truth. We serve the King of glory and have nothing to be ashamed of or apologize about. We need to get back on track, seeking the Lord to restore the church to her former influence for His glory!

C. It was Promising (18a) – *Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me.* Those who heard Nehemiah speak knew the devastation of Jerusalem. They were well aware of all that needed to be done and may have been a bit skeptical and pessimistic. Many likely thought the task was too great to overcome.

- Nehemiah sought to reassure them in the Lord. He revealed that God had called him to this task and that His mighty hand was upon Nehemiah and the work. He also revealed that the king had given his blessing as well as the promise to supply the necessary materials. There was absolutely no reason to stand idly by. God had ordained the work and through the king of Persia, He had provided what they needed to be successful. It would have been foolish not to have engaged in the work of reconstruction.

- As we survey the task ahead it seems overwhelming as well. Years of neglect and devastation are before us. The church has lost her influence and many simply have no heart

for the task at hand. Could I remind us that we serve the same God Nehemiah did? He provided for them and He will provide for us. We have been commissioned of the Lord to carry out His work. As long as we stand with Him and by His power, with the anointing of His Spirit, we cannot fail. God has called us to serve Him, not to look at the opposition or the difficulties associated with the work. We can accomplish what the Lord desires of us!

D. It was Persuasive (18b) – *And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.* Keep in mind that things had not changed in Jerusalem. The devastation that Nehemiah surveyed was still there. The work would be challenging; there would be opposition to face and obstacles of overcome. However, the people were not pointing out the difficulties; they chose to rise to the occasion and engage in the work of the Lord.

- I can't offer us the promise of a road of ease. We know the difficulties ahead. We are well aware of the obstacles that we must overcome. We know that when we seek to serve the Lord and advance for His glory the enemy will seek to defeat us. However, we cannot focus on the difficulties or the opposition. God has called us to a work for Him. There is a great deal of work that needs to be done. We need the same attitude and commitment that the people of Jerusalem developed. We need to rise up and stand in the strength of the Lord, facing the challenges ahead with full assurance and commitment!

I. The Inspection of the City (11-16)

II. The Instruction of Nehemiah (17-18)

III. The Inquisition of the Adversary (19-20) – Nehemiah had stirred the people to action, but it didn't take long for the opposition to show up. The same will be true in our case as well. The characteristics of the opposition are virtually the same in every generation. Notice:

A. Their Mockery (19a) – *But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?* Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem immediately began to mock and laugh at the people. To them this was a foolish endeavor. The Jews were perceived as weak and feeble. These men saw their work as hopeless and undoable. They literally laughed at them for even considering such a task.

- Things have not changed much. The opposition we face may not be Sanballat and Tobiah, but they have the same attitude and seek to discourage our faith. Those around us are

aware of the intolerance in our society for Christianity. They know how far our nation is removed from the godly principles she was founded upon. The world sees us as foolish for seeking to bring about profitable change. We are deemed ignorant and weak to believe in One we have never seen. They feel as if nothing could prevent their liberal agenda and we are foolish to try.

- We must keep in mind that we are not the first generation to face mockery and ridicule and we won't be the last. Times are tough, but they can't be any more difficult than they were in Nehemiah's day. We need to stand strong in the face of opposition and determine to press on even if the world says we will never achieve our goals.

B. Their Motive (19b) – [What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?](#) The opposition sought to create fear in the hearts of the people and discourage them. They thought if they could make them afraid of a reprisal from the king, it would discourage their efforts. They sought to point out the enormity of the task at hand. They wanted the people to believe their efforts were futile and in vain.

- These same tactics are being used abundantly today. The world says that everyone is living that way. “Do you really expect to change and conform all of society? Do you really expect to be able to overcome the policies and lifestyles that have been prevalent for years? Do you really expect to reach those who do not know Christ?” We have been sold a bill of goods that the church must remain silent in the political realm. We are afraid to speak our minds and stand upon biblical principles because we have heard for years the propaganda of “separation of church and state.”
- Nowhere in Scripture do we find that we are to remain silent and not confront sin. Our Lord never encouraged “going along to get along.” It is time for the church to rise to the task at hand, confront sin, stand for truth, and bring about godly change in America!

C. Their Mistake (20) – The opposition thought they had a good argument. They really thought they would discourage the work and accomplish their goal. There was, however, one important factor they hadn't figured into the equation: the power and guidance of God.

1. The Source (20a) – [Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.](#) Nehemiah knew God had called and He would provide!

- We too need to be reminded of the source of our strength. We face all of the opposition this world can mount, but God has called us to a life of service and He will equip us and provide for us as we serve Him. The world may think it futile and ridiculous, but through our God we can prevail.

2. The Solidarity (20b) – Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. They faced the opposition of the adversary and heard their arguments. They endured the ridicule and mockery, but they were undeterred. The people stood together and committed to complete the task.

- I would like to remind us that there is strength in numbers. It is often hard to stand alone, but together it is much easier. An individual may be tempted to cave in to the pressure, but when he is surrounded by those of like faith who offer encouragement and help, it is much easier to stand. We need to be committed to the cause and to each other. As we stand together and work together, we can accomplish great things!

3. The Seclusion (20c) – Nehemiah pointed out that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem really had no right to even question their work. They were the people of God, called of God to work within the city of God. This was not a work that included those of the world. They had no claim to it or part in it.

- I find great encouragement in this verse. I do not relish the fact that the lost are apart from God, but I do find comfort knowing that I belong to Him. We are engaged in a task that is within this world, but it is not of this world. Who are they to question our authority or ability? We have been commissioned of the King! We don't need the world's acceptance or approval. The world may resist us; they may seek to hinder and defeat us, but they have no part in what we are doing. They have no right to stand in our way and we need not fear them!

This is probably one of the most challenging and encouraging passages that I have ever studied. We do face a difficult task, but it is one that we can accomplish. Failure is not an option, nor is inactivity. God has called us to serve Him in this sinful and ungodly world and we must heed the call. We can accomplish what we have been called to do by His help.

I am glad to have a part in the kingdom work. It is an honor and a privilege, not a burden or dread. I pray that each of us can say that. Only those who have been born again have part in this glorious work. Are you counted among those who have that right? If so, are you willing to do what the Lord has called us to do?