



## "Follow The Leader" (Nehemiah 1&2)

Danny Hodges - OT2337

Intro: Nehemiah was the third great leader in the restoration after the 70 year Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel led the first group of exiles back to Jerusalem in 538-537 B.C. (Ezra chapter two). It was Zerubbabel who supervised the rebuilding of the altar & the temple. Because of opposition, the work was stopped for some sixteen years and the temple was not completed. Then God sent Haggai and Zechariah to rebuke and exhort the people to get back to work. This time the temple was completed in record time. Sixty more years go by, and Ezra shows up with a second group of exiles, & through his ministry of teaching God's Word, there were sweeping spiritual reforms among the people. Despite those reforms, the work was still not complete. The walls and gates around the city had not been rebuilt. Those walls were walls of defense and protection against attacks of the enemy. The gates were gates that allowed you to determine who to let in and who to keep out, making sure that during the hours of darkness, the gates were always shut. So even though worship had been restored, and the Word had been taught faithfully and accurately, they were still in need of one final work. The walls they rebuilt represent for us walls that we must build as a church so that, after the initial work is done (Worship and the Word), walls of defense are built to keep the enemy from being able to come in and destroy again. Another twelve years go by and still no walls, no gates enter Nehemiah. God calls Nehemiah to complete this much needed work

Jerusalem is the place where God told David to build the temple. He said it was the place where he would dwell among His people. Of course, we understand that God desires to dwell in us, and with us. So the story before us is more than the building of physical walls for physical protection. It is about restoring a people from the ruin and despair caused by sin, then building walls of defense and protection so that the enemy is not able to repeat his wicked work.

Jerusalem in ruins is a picture of a life that has lost its defenses against the attacks of the enemy and lies open to repeated hurt and misery. Nehemiah leads us beyond recovery from ruin to a place of safety and stability.

### I. THE TEXT

#### *Nehemiah 1*

v.4 It is always good to pray before making a move to do something for God.

\* Prov. 19: 2 It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

v.11b This would be king Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, which is modern day Iran. So Artaxerxes is an ancient predecessor of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and of the current ruler of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Nehemiah 2

v.1 This is four months later (see 1:1)

v.4b Ever prayed just before you open your mouth to speak? I do all the time. I'm praying between almost every breath right now!

\* "Eastern monarchs being in daily dread of poison, any appearance of agitation in the cup-bearer would be regarded as especially suspicious."

v.6b We are not told what time he set, but we know from Nehemiah 5:14 that he was away for twelve years! (Note 2:8b).

vv.7-8 When the door is open, ask for all you can get!

v.10 Whenever you set out to do a work for the Lord, the enemy will always be aroused.

\* A Horonite was one who worshipped Horon, a local deity; An Ammonite was from Ammon, which is present day Jordan. The Ammonites are historically bitter enemies of Israel. They are descendants of Lot through an incestual relationship with his daughters.

\* Gen. 19: 36 So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father.  
37 The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab ; he is the father of the Moabites of today.  
38 The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi ; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

vv.11-12 He gets his core team together, and they set out to survey the damage/assess the need.

\* I have done this in ministry as a pastor time and time again. Before I share the vision of what we are looking to accomplish, I get together with a core team and we assess the situation.

v.14 This tells us how bad the conditions were

v.16b I do very little of the actual work in the ministries here at CCSP. I am a facilitator, and a visionary. Some of the vision for this ministry has come through people in the body. And the work is done by a host of people who are willing to get their hands dirty and make a difference for the kingdom of God.

v.17a Nehemiah begins by telling them what they already knew.

\* Right here where we live, there are multitudes of ruined lives, homes, families

v.17b Now Nehemiah invites them to get to work in rebuilding what is presently in ruins.

\* God loves restoring what sin has left in ruins!

v.18a He shared his testimony of God's calling and God's provision through king Artaxerxes. He was in essence saying, God has provided for us to be able to do this work.

v.18b The people respond positively to the invitation.

v.19 When we take a step to do something for the Lord, the enemy will certainly come against us?

v.20 Nehemiah stands strong against them.

## II. LESSONS FROM THE TEXT

### A. Nehemiah's Willingness To Get Involved

\* Left a prestigious position

- Some people will not follow God's call because they simply are not willing to leave their position in life. They are comfortable; the rich young ruler.

- There is always something to sacrifice when one gets involved in kingdom business.

- Abraham; Moses (Heb.11:24-27); Elisha; The apostles;

\* Aroused the enemy

- The enemy was not aroused as long as Nehemiah remained in his position as cupbearer to the king. I'm not sure the enemy was aroused even when he mourned, fasted and prayed. But when he actually got involved doing something, that is when the enemy took notice!

\* When is the last time you made a move for God that aroused the attention of the enemy?

\* Some people never get hell's attention, because they are caught up in their own little world. Nehemiah had it good as cupbearer to the king. He was like the king's chief of staff. But when he hears of the situation in Jerusalem, he does more than pray. He gets involved

### B. Nehemiah's Leadership Qualities

1. A man who understood authority
2. A man of prayer
3. Realized his own sinful heart
4. Not hasty (Prov.19:2)
5. Willing to sacrifice for the call of God
6. Assembled a core group

7. Assessed the needs
8. Invited all to be involved
9. Stood strong against the enemy
10. Delegator (Ch.3)

### C. The People's Willingness To Follow Nehemiah

\* There must be a leader who provides vision, gives direction, assigns tasks, etc. And of course there must be people willing to follow

- \* Good followers are future leaders (Ch.3)
  - Has God called you to be a leader? In order to be a leader, you must become a good follower.

### D. The Strength In Unity

\* Eccl.4: 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

- \* Psalm 133

## CONCLUSION

\* I invite you, get involved It is amazing to me that the gracious hand of God is upon my life, and upon this ministry. He called me at age 19 surrendering completely to His will at a Sunday evening church service following His call to Va, then here to St. Pete the vision He has given me the resources he has provided (Where God leads He feeds, where he guides, He provides) those that have come along with me and are doing the work of seeing God restore broken lives, homes, marriages The walls of defense/protection being built

- \* Go over various ministries thanks to the leaders

\* Are you a part of what God is doing among us? Are you helping in some practical way to build something that will help restore the ruin caused by sin? If not, come on, let's build something together for God's glory!