

Nehemiah Overview

Time stamp: 445 – 420 BC (just before 400 years of silence preceding John the Baptist)
9 years after the close of the Book of Ezra

Scenario:

- a rebuilt Temple stands in post-captivity Jerusalem
- the city and its protective walls are still in ruin
- Nehemiah (“comfort of Yahweh”) is a cupbearer of the king in Babylon
- God calls him to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls...and starts the clock on the 70th Week of Daniel
(this is the 3rd exodus of Jews from Babylon after the captivity)
- Nehemiah gladly leaves behind a life of luxury and influence to do God’s work
- Nehemiah is met with resistance by the enemies of God, enemies that are both without and within the nation

Tactics of the enemy, all of them overcome by Nehemiah, include

Ridicule
Wrath
Contempt
Conspiracy
Discouragement
Greed
False accusations

- Yet God working thru a zealous, faithful, prayer man accomplishes “the impossible” in 52 days...a real life picture of Matt 10:28

Note: there are seven 52-day periods in a year

- Once the walls are up, Nehemiah turns to housecleaning in the lives of the people

Author: unknown but Jewish tradition is Ezra, who also wrote

1 Chron
2 Chron
Ezra
Ps 119

Ch 1-7 Physical reconstruction of the walls
Ch 8-13 Spiritual reformation of the people

The Book is a study in:

- Prayer
- Persecution
- Persistence
- Power of the Word of God

A quick tour thru the Book...

Ch1

- Neh gets a status report from home and it breaks his heart
- He immediately prays and confesses the sins of the nation, all the while clinging to God's promises of mercy and reconciliation

Ch 2

- Neh gets "busted" for being bummed out
- He immediately prays and asks to go rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
- The king says, "Go" and gives him travelling papers to clear the way
- Once in Jerusalem, Neh surveys the task at hand and rallies the people to get to work
- Enemy resistance begins

Ch 3

- A division of labor is organized

Ch 4

- Enemy resistance heats up
- Neh remembers the Lord

Ch 5

- Self-centeredness reigns in Jerusalem so Neh rebukes the people
- Neh walks his talk, living as a role model for the people

Ch 6

- The enemy gets sneaky but...
- The walls are finished!

Ch 7

- Neh commissions and counts the people

Ch 8

- Ezra reads the Word of God
- Israel celebrates the Feast of Tabernacles

Ch 9

- Cleansing confession by the people

Ch 10

- A covenant is made, signed, and sealed

Ch 11

- A division of dwellings to inhabit Jerusalem

Ch 12

- A division of priests
- Dedication of the walls
- Duties assigned in the Temple

Ch 13

- housecleaning

Nehemiah Chapter 1

v1 Nehemiah = “comfort of Yahweh”
Hachaliah = “darkness of Yahweh”

It came to pass: in the “normal” course of events
God works supernaturally quite naturally...even today in our lives

Chisleu is the 9th month of the Jewish year
November-December, 446 BC
Shushan was the capital of the Persian Empire
Babylon was the winter palace

v2 14 years after Ezra returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon, Neh’s brother goes
to check things out

Upon his return to Babylon, Neh asks about the well-being of the Jews in Jerusalem that
had returned in the previous exodus’ from captivity in Babylon

v3 “The people are in a terrible condition – demoralized...afflicted...and disgraced.
And the city is totally vulnerable to all dangers because they have no defenses – the
walls are in ruin and the gates do not exist.
The whole effort is very tenuous and in great peril.”

v4 wept: a deep, mournful lamentation...extreme grief and heartbreak
fast: “to cover over the mouth”

Note: easy to identify with Neh...for Jerusalem is a special city!
Neh “jumps” (sits/falls) into action...via intercessory prayer
Eph 6:12

Nehemiah was a man of prayer.
Like Paul, his first reaction in every situation is prayer

We are distributor’s of Strength, not the manufacturer...the vessel of Light, not the
Source

when Jesus fed the 5000 with 2 fish and 5 loaves, He manufactured the food...
the disciples merely distributed it

God will allow a crisis to prompt us to pray and to swing into action He can direct
according to His purposes

Neh is a great role model for us – to march forward on our knees

sometimes prayer is quick (ala Ch 2:4)...many times it is

- disciplined
- committed
- arduous – he prayed for days!
- ALWAYS resisted by our flesh

requirements for a vibrant prayer life:

- humility
- submission
- brokenness
- denial of self

a man of prayer, Neh was also a man of

- faith – faith puts God between us and circumstances...
works put circumstances between us and God
- action – faith has feet!
- Courage – Fear not!
- perseverance

but he did the hardest thing first instead of last – pray, denial of self

Applications: spiritual walk, tasks at work (Luther quote)

v5-11 Neh's prayer

- Address (v5)
- Confession and Intercession (v6-7)
- The Word...the will...of God (v8-9)
- Petition (v10-11)

v5 great: “mighty”

terrible: “awesome, to morally revere”

Address: notice how Neh starts his prayer – by identifying and honoring the God he is addressing

- God of heaven...not a local god that proliferate the pagan world
- The all mighty God to be revered
- The faithful and merciful God to those that DO what he says

John 15:14

James 1:22

at the start of each prayer, make sure you get it straight to Whom you are speaking...it will help you put things in perspective

James 5:16b is founded upon

- a proper address...
- and is relational, not ambiguous
- a broken heart

v6-7 Confession:

Is 59:1-4

All the problems...are of our doing

All the solutions...are of God

Before we make our petitions to God, we must “clear the deck”

Prov 28:13

Nehemiah confesses his sins and those of his people as did Daniel and Ezra

When was the last time, in your brokenness, did you confess the sins of USA to our awesome God?

- Abortion – 20M+ babies (Molech)
- Evolution – corrupting the mind of children
Is 45:9
- Homosexuality – an abomination to the Creator
Gen 19
- The sex and violence on TV and in the movies –
whose morality is that?
- The attacks on USA’s foundation e.g Pledge of Alliance and “one nation under God”
Montessori’s Pledge to the Earth

Have you, like Neh and Daniel and Ezra, accepted any responsibility for the sins of this nation?

Intercession:

Do you intercede for those in bondage to those sins that they might be saved?

About 150 years earlier, the Lord thru the prophet Ezekiel detailed the sins of Israel that would result in their being led captive.

Before passing judgment, the faithful and merciful God of heaven looked for a man to stand in the gap on behalf of His people...but He found not even one

Ezk 22:30

Do you go before God as the intercessor standing in the gap on behalf of others?

Sinned against thee:

all sin is against God for it is His Word and His holiness we violate when we do it
our way

As David had written centuries before in Ps 51:1-4

A regrettable truth: what ever God gives to man, man corrupts it and renders it useless

v8-9 “The Word of God:

Neh recites the promises of God given to them thru Moses

Deut 28 is the blessing of obedience and the curses of disobedience

He specifically mentions Deut 28:64 because that is specifically “where they are”
– scattered in captivity

Deut 4:29-31, Deut 30:2-5, Lev 26:27-45

With Daniel providing the inspirational leadership during the captivity, the Jews repent...
and God is faithful – Jews once again are living in Jerusalem, God’s city

Things are starting to come into focus for the distressed Neh.

As we pray, our circumstances come into proper perspective as we talk with our
awesome God

v10-11 Petition:

don't rush to the Petition in your prayer...there is very important ground to cover before getting there...holy ground!

after recognizing God's faithfulness, Neh is appealing to the faithfulness of God and His unchanging nature, Neh makes a national and a personal prayer request

national: Hear our cry, restore us, protect us, lead us...for you are our God and we desire to follow You

personal: Grant me favor and mercy in the sight of my master, the King of Persia...for I am intent on going to Jerusalem

God gave Neh that desire, prompted him to pray according to His will, and will answer "his" prayer
Ps 19:14

2 kinds of prayer

1. Comfortable: "Lord, meet this need."
2. Committed: "Lord, use me to meet this need."

God faithfully answers Committed prayers

Pray like Nehemiah! Especially in this day in which we have been appointed to live!

In the chapters ahead, we will watch this cupbearer...become a builder...
and a governor of God's people

Nehemiah Chapter 2

v1 it came to pass:
after the passage of some time i.e. not immediately following the prior verse

Timestamp:

Nisan is 1st month of Jewish calendar

Date is...March 14, 445 BC

How do we know that?

Because the universe

- is so well organized
- moves with such precision

Astronomers can determine an exact date on our calendar...March 14, 445 BC

per history, the king is Artaxerxes I Longimanus

sad: “distressed, displeased, grieved”

what is up with Neh?

For three months now (Ch 1:1) he has been

- Mourning
- Weeping
- Fasting (Ch 1:4)

v2 why was Neh. “sore afraid”?

It was a capital offense to be bummed out in front of the king!

After all...

- where else could one possibly want to be?
- who wouldn't be delighted to serve the king?
- how could life get any better than in his royal presence?

Neh was probably thinking, “Oh no! I'm busted! I didn't think my feelings showed...”

Are you kidding? Given his last three months, he must look like a wreck!

Most of us are open books...even audio books...when it comes to our feelings.

Not only on our sleeves, we wear our feelings all over our faces

So be aware of people's faces...they speak volumes.

If a brother/sister is stressed or upset, don't pretend you don't notice.

Reach out...ask...and pray

How does the king react to this capital offense?

He is concerned for his servant...he discerns the depth of Neh's sorrow...
and has favor on Neh
Ch 1:11b

God answered Neh's prayer...in His timing
Probably not in Neh's timing!

v3 Let the king live forever:
a common salutation to a king...who had the power life and death in his kingdom

Neh gives a patriotic reason: "My city is in ruins (I am a stranger here in your city)."
Quite a statement from a servant to a king, from the conquered to the conqueror!
Gotta love his boldness!

v4 "What do you want to do about it?"
instead of lopping off Neh's head for being

- bummed out
- patriotic

the king opens the door to what Neh wants to do about the situation

Neh to himself: "PTL! An open door! Lord help me!"
He prayed to the God of heaven – the One, the Only, the Almighty
Ch 1:5

Neh's prayer is

- immediate
- brief and to the point at hand
- silent...

A real man takes his problems...and opportunities...directly to God to ask Him to do His
will

A real man is quick to pray...

A real man is a man of faith

v5 “If you are pleased with your servant, let me go home and rebuild my city.”

What the king of Persia could have heard in that was,

“If I have been a faithful servant, let me return to Judah, a conquered territory,
and rebuild Jerusalem, the very heart of the Jewish nation and culture and
faith...

the rebellious city Nebuchadnezzar destroyed because of its unending rebellion.

I will also build the walls so we can defend ourselves against attackers...

like the Persian Empire.”

Gotta admire Neh’s boldness!

v6 Why the parenthetical comment about the queen?

Queen Esther’s influence can be seen in the king’s favor of the Jews

God used Esther to preserve His people in Babylon, and then to protect them back
home

[Bible students takes notes!]

Background impacting the king’s thinking:

- Babylonian Captivity of Judah
- End of captivity
Jer 29:10 and Jer 25:11 (after 70 years)
Is 44:28 – 45:6 (who, how about the Persians)
about 175 years before Dan 5...
Cyrus was the military leader, later becoming King

Cyrus in Is 44-45 is the only Gentile to be called “anointed” by God

- Later...Ezra 1:1-4, 7-8 (“Go home!”)

The king says, “OK. When will you be back?”

the simple answer: in 12 years (Ch 13:6)

the awesome answer: Dan 9:25 and the starting of the 70 Weeks of Daniel...

a prophesy given some 90 years earlier

a monumental command given almost nonchalantly!

Dan 9:25

notice "city" in v3, 5 of Neh 2

also notice in Dan 9:25 that the walls shall be built in troublous times"...
which we will be studying here in Neh

483 years * 360 days = 173,880 days

March 14, 445 BC + 173,880 days = April 6, 32 AD
(Julian conversion)

Luke 19:28-44...fulfilling

Ps 118:24-25

Zech 9:9

God Means What He Says and Says What He Means

v7-8 Neh asks for more than permission to go...he also asks for

- protection for his goings (letters of safe passage)
- provision for his goal (wood for gates, walls, guardhouse)

everything this good and faithful servant wanted was given to him by the king

Nehemiah went boldly to the throne (Heb 4:16)

Jesus said Matt 7:7-11

Having received all he asked for, Neh leaves immediately

When the Lord opens a door for you, walk thru it immediately...don't hesitate

How many times do we ask for an open door, get it...only to ask for confirmation
upon confirmation...only to lose the blessing the Lord had for us because
it went to someone more responsive to the will of the Lord?

We must stop and consider how prayer works

It is not something that begins with me and sometimes God answers our request

Prayer always starts in the heart of God, He impresses it upon our heart, we offer
it back to Him, and He acts...according to His will not ours

Prayer is not getting our will done in heaven, it is getting God's will done on earth

So when we pray for an open door, we do so because God put it on our heart.

Therefore, it is only reasonable to walk thru it immediately when God opens it.

Walk by faith...

v9 Neh got a valid Passport and an armed escort! Stylin'!
sounds like Eph 3:20

v10 resistance by the enemy starts immediately when we walk with the Lord by faith
who is bummed out now? They are grieved about...one man

they know God only needs one man...of faith

- Abraham – believed the humanly impossible
- Jonathan – Let's see what the Lord will do
- Gideon – a mighty warrior
- Elijah – fire from heaven vs 450 false prophets
- Josiah – revival
- Only one needed to stand in the gap (Ezk 22:30)

Neh was not just any man, he was a man of faith and action and courage...
but most importantly a man of prayer

The enemy knew God only needed one man to believe that God says what He means and
means what He says.

v11 after an arduous journey of about 1000 miles along the Fertile
Crescent from Shushan to Jerusalem, Neh takes 3 days
to recuperate

v12 Neh wants to assess the situation free of biases and paralysis of the locals.
“We can't do that!”
“We've don't do that...we've always done it that way.”

So he

- keeps his mission secret
- goes at night
- with a small scouting party of “infantry”
- with only one “ride”...his

Neh will be silent until he has seen the situation for himself...
before passing judgment on what needs to be done

v13-15 Neh's clandestine assessment started at "9 o'clock" at the Hinnom Valley (GeHenna), went counterclockwise (W, SE, E, NE, N) to "3 o'clock" and back.

But half-way around the city there was so much rubble he had to turn back

What did he see? Broken down walls and burnt down gates...just as his brother had reported

if the broken down walls of Jerusalem represent the broken relationship with God caused by sin in your life...

1. acknowledge the damage
2. inspect the damage personally
3. determine to repair the damage
4. give all the glory to God
5. get to work

v16 rulers: Persian Empire appointees to govern this city

Jews...priests...nobles...rulers...rest that did the work: the Jewish population and authorities in Jerusalem

Neh got a passport and an armed escort...the enemy is bummed out that he is in town... but nobody else seems to know who he is or why he is here.

The work is God's work, Neh is God's servant...the servant of God is "invisible", never self-promoting

v17-18 Neh calls a pep rally of the local Jews to reveal his burden and his mission.

He has seen first-hand the job that must to be done...he is unconcerned about enemy resistance.

Why? Clearly it was God Who brought him here so clearly determined obedience were his orders.

Neh is greatly bothered that God's city would be

- In distress
- Lying waste
- A disgrace

And His "fire" is contagious!

“Let us rise up and build!

Our enemies got a decree from the king to stop the work years ago, now the Lord has given us another king’s decree to complete the work!”

God’s hand is all over this! He wants to rebuild His city!

Let’s go with Him!

Neh’s testimony inspired faith...and excitement and action

A lesson for us...so often we will want to do a work and ask God to bless it.

But God may not be in it. Instead, catch the “Fire”!

We should see where God is working...come alongside Him...and get involved!

v19-20 “Ho Ho Ho! You gotta be kidding! Do you losers honestly think this disgusting little motley crew can build the walls and rebel against the Persian Empire!
What a joke!”

Tactic of the enemy: Ridicule

scorn: “derision, mocking, laughing at”

despised: “to think contemptible”

so frequently used...because so effective

everyone wants to be

- liked
- respected
- approved by others

no one likes to

- be ridiculed
- be embarrassed
- look stupid
- laughed at

to avoid that, we will

- change our behavior
- “blend in”
- conform
- go with the flow

this is why

- peer pressure is so intense...and effective
- we do not witness of Jesus Christ, Whose name and Cross offends
- the Church is so quiet in these last days!

Ridicule is one of the greatest inhibitors of Christians witnessing to
family...friends...loved ones...strangers

Paralyzed by misplaced fear...which is the opposite of faith

Matt 10:28

but Christianity is not a popularity contest...it is a life going against the flow

Neh's response: "We don't care what you think, we only care what God thinks.

We are not discouraged by your words, we are greatly encouraged by the Word of
God.

Rom 8:31-39."

Note: Neh's God is, again, "the God of heaven", greater than any god or circumstance or
problem

While the walls are in ruin and the gates are burnt, Neh speaks from the point of victory.
Victory is not the goal of the Christian, it is the vantage point from which we walk
yet it is so easy for the enemy to rip us off! Why?

We are self-centered, not God-centered like Neh

"Listen you guys, the rebuilding of Jerusalem is a done-deal because God said He was
rebuilding.

We are only His servants.

If you have an issue with this project, take it up with Him.

But I know you won't so let me say right now...before we even get started...
that your days are up.

You will have no part in the rebuilding, you will have no part in the completed
city, your stay here will be forgotten in the glorious days that lie ahead
for God's city.

You don't belong here!"

Prov 8:13

Prov 14:2, 26-27

Neh is an "against the flow" guy because he walks

- confidently
- faithfully,
- obediently

with the Lord.

He does not care what man thinks about him, he cares only what his Lord thinks about
him.

He has God's perspective.

Jesus knew all our temptations...and our weaknesses

Heb 4:15

He knew ridicule!

Every step of His Passion...and before

Even His friends! (Luke 8:49-53)

Yet He overcame the world

John 16:33

Respond to ridicule: Neh is a great model for us

- Be an Overcomer...put out the world...put your confidence in the Lord
Prov 30:4-5
1 John 4:4
1 John 5:4-5
Heb 2:18
Heb 11:32 – 12:3
- Let the Lord get a hold of you...He has purchased you...and you cannot help but speak!
Rom 12:1-2 vs James 4:4
Jer 20:7-11
Elijah and his Mt Carmel challenge

John 9

Ridiculed by Responded by increasing faith

Disciples

v1-2 v7

Pharisees

v17-18

v24 v25-27

v28-29 v30-33

v34 v35-38

- Take an active stand with the Lord...like Neh did
Does your home/work speak of Jesus?
Bible at work
Doug Gorham and Is 40:30-31
Walking with God is cool!
Rather go back to “the way we were?”

Ridicule is very effective when we are self-centered...
completely ineffective when we are God-centered

we need the power of the Holy Spirit to resist the power of ridicule
with our eyes fixed on the Lord, the scorn of the enemy is only background noise

Yassar Arafat and the PLO are the modern-day Sanballat and Tobiah.
Nehemiah did not negotiate with Sanballat, why is Israel?
Israel needs a Nehemiah today!

Rather than tip-toe around their boisterous enemies regarding Jerusalem and the
Temple Mount, they should reclaim that which the Lord has given them and trust
in Him for His protection, as did Nehemiah.

Nehemiah Chapter 3

Nehemiah assigns the building of the walls by sections to families.

The assignments/sections go all the way around the city so that the walls will all go up at the same time and go up quickly
(horizontal and simultaneous vs. “reverse domino”).

The project will move quickly and efficiently because the work is well planned!

the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem

1. God’s inspired work via a prayerful, faithful, courageous man of action
2. A team effort
3. Directed by a leader who:
 - assesses
 - The job to be done
 - The talents of the people
 - The heart of the people
 - plugs the right people into the right job of the work God is doing

the work of the ministry

- broken down lives need to be rebuilt
- walls need to be reconstructed and gates repaired to provide safety in a hostile environment
- towers need to be erected to warn of approaching enemy
- directed and empowered by one with
 1. an ear for God
 2. a heart for God
 3. a heart for God’s people

The description of the reconstruction starts and ends at the sheep gate

All “reconstruction (2 Cor 5:17) starts and ends with the Lamb
of God...the First and the Last...the Alpha and Omega

my sheep gate is my heart...into which comes the Lamb of God (John 1:29)
to dwell (Eph 1:13-14) in the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20)

the sheep gate is built by the priests and the adjoining walls by goldsmiths and merchants

Gates:

1. Sheep (v1)
2. Fish (v3)
3. Old (v6)
4. Valley (v13)
5. Dung (v14)
6. Of the Fountain (v15)
7. Water (v26)
8. Horse (v28)
9. East (v29)
10. Miphkad (v31)

“next unto him” appears 15 times (following the first mentioned)

“after him” appears 16 times

$1 + 15 + 16 + 10 = 42$ work crews/”subcontractors” managed by the “General Contractor”

Nehemiah Chapter 4

v1-2 the people begin building the wall and immediately the enemy gets upset and opposes the work

Tactic of the enemy: wrath...red-hot blazing rage
ranting and raving...intimidation...lots of noise
with the purpose of instilling fear resulting in retreat and paralysis
e.g. when people are “busted” but covering up (Hayley) their volume goes up for the same reason

took great indignation: increased, multiplying anger
Sanballat is going off like a Roman candle...he has gone ballistic

whenever we take a stand for God, 3 forces will oppose us:

1. the world
2. our flesh
3. Satan

will they sacrifice:

“They mean to offer an animal sacrifice i.e. “get religious on us all of a sudden”

make an end in a day:

“Do they think they can rebuild the walls and the gates in a day?”

revive the stones:

“Do they think they can turn this burned and crumbled limestone into useful building materials?”

Luke 19:40 (at the 1st Coming, the clock for which was started in Ch 2:6)

1 Peter 2:5

Ezk 37 (vision of dry bones)

the enraged enemy mocks the work of God and the workers of God...

The work of God is rebuilding our destroyed lives...the workers are those God uses to accomplish His work

ridicule demonstrates

- contempt for God
- “anti-work” (1st soil in Matt 13 with the birds)
 why discipleship is so crucial
- underestimating the people because the Spirit of God is discounted
- the lack of a good argument (resorting to name calling)
- pride
 the proud mock the humble.
 Fear not, Gal 6:7-8 someday

The unbeliever does not take into account the finger of God on the situation...
and many times the believer forgets...

v3 the ever-present sidekick chimes in with his remarks to please the boss
“Duh, yeah, boss! Even if they, uh, do build the wall it would fall over if a little fox
jumped up on it.”

ridicule and contempt always accents wrath...

it is used with great regularity by the enemy...
because ridicule and mocking and contempt are very debilitating for our flesh,
making it a very effective attack strategy for the enemy

v4-5 Response of the Overcomer: Prayer and dedication...a God-enabled determination

not, “What should I do...?”
but, “What do You want me to do?”

as a 1st resort, not a last resort

do not let Satan get under your skin with his cruel words
and do not be drawn into the flesh by a spiritual attack
there Satan has the overwhelming advantage
fight in the spirit...pray
in the spiritual realm we have the overwhelming
advantage and Satan is already defeated

a “prayerful” commentary by the Governor of Judea, appointed by the king, who prays to his King:

“Lord, they think we are contemptible.
But this is our land and our city.
May they be the ones disgraced, may they be hauled back to Persia and Babylon.
Don’t cover their perversion, don’t erase their sins.
They are opposed to you and your servants.
They are trying to discourage your people.
Lord, take care of them”

If I want to defend myself, the Lord will let me...
But how much better a Defender is the Lord of lords and King of kings!?
Let Jesus defend you

I cannot choose to be strong but I can choose to be joyful.
And when I am willing to do that, strength will follow.

v6 the people were focused on the task at hand
(e.g. getting The Word out)
and thus were not distracted or discouraged by the enemy

and in so doing they quickly repaired the wall to half its height

the work continues by God’s strength

Where is God? When does God work?
At the end of myself

e.g. Tandem Computers/LASD project miracle

Ps 31:15-18

Ps 58:6

v7-9 while the work of God continues, the enemy gets reinforcements
then, unable to stop the work of God thru ridicule, the enemy raises the stakes and tries a
direct assault

Tactic of the enemy: Conspiracy...a show of force...to create confusion

Response of the Overcomer: Prayer and action

Pray to bind the Strongman...but that's not all
Prayer precedes activity, it does not preclude activity.

Prayer is never an excuse for laziness or foolishness

- Pray...and sit waiting for the phone to ring when the Lord gets you a job
- Pray...and wait for the Lord to pick you up and move you to where He wants you
- Pray...and set out for the World Series with an empty tank of gas, knowing the Lord will give you gasoline

Know anybody like this?

Where is the common sense?

Prayer without action is presumptuous...

Prayer with action is prudence

Take practical steps to thwart the attacks of the enemy

Pray for wisdom, then act as you are led by the Spirit.

But act! Don't lie down and let them run over you!

God is a God of order and not confusion

It is always the camp of the enemy that ends in confusion

v10-12 Tactic of the enemy: Discouragement and Fear

A more dangerous attack...it comes from within

the people are

- discouraged
- tired

sound like any of your days?

Then the enemy aggravates the “downer” by making threats...

causing the people to become

- anxious
- fearful (unfounded)

And a paralyzing sense of doom settles in

Fear takes hold of the imagination of the people...and must be arrested if the work is to continue

“The enemy is plotting a surprise attack when we are vulnerable...

- in a way we will not consider
- at a time when we let our guard down”

God’s people start to look over their shoulder, on edge about an attack is by an enemy who is

studying them...

watching them...

waiting for the perfect time to...

strike

1 Peter 5:8

satan uses taunting and psychological warfare to prepare the battlefield to his advantage

CCA must be constantly on the look out for Discouragement

1. We are early in the life of the work
2. It is HARD work for a LONG time
 - The soil is very hard and rocky
 - The brush and trash must be cleared
 - Sow the Seed
 - Water the Seed
 - The increase belongs to God...in His time
3. The results are not always perceptible...there is no such thing as an instant harvest
4. We are meeting where most people don't want to meet

BUT do not despise the small things!

Zech 4:10a

AND consider the growth we have seen!

- In the hearts of men and women
- In their walks with the Lord

v13-14 Response of the Overcomer:

- take prudent measures against the attacks
set up defenses that can be seen by the enemy (higher places) and that can ambush the enemy if he breeches the wall (lower places)
- Trust in the Lord our Defense
Fear is a tool of Satan

The cause of fear is getting our eyes in the enemy...
The cure for fear is getting our eyes in the Lord
Don't forget!

1 Cor 10:13	the way of escape
Phil 4:6-7, 9, 13	can do all things
2 Tim 1:7	not given a spirit of fear
Rom 8:31	God is for us
Prov 18:10	run into the strong tower
Ps 61:3	a shelter for me
1 John 4:4	greater is He in us
Luke 22:31-32	sift like wheat, but...

- Go out and fight! It's a matter of life and death!

keep a spiritual perspective in all circumstances.
God is with me, the battle is His.
He is on the throne!
He is the source of strength and courage.

So I have nothing to fear...take comfort in Jesus
John 14:16-18
John 16:7-14

Once we consider the Truth, we realize fear is irrational
And the only rational course of action is faith

v15 Neh's faith is well-placed...
the enemy has yet to beat God, even in a single, solitary skirmish or chess game.
God always foils the schemes of the devil and always uses them to further His plan.

the enemy believes he conspires in secret...
when God Almighty know everything and exposes the conspiracy in the Light
"Surprise! We know about your surprise because our God gave us a word of wisdom.."
Num 32:23

God is actively at work in the history of man, He is not kicked back waiting to see how it
all turns out

With the cloak of darkness removed, the enemy retreats...and the work of God resumes
Yet the devil persists...so must we!

Walk around this dark world carrying your "Light Sword"
Be the light (Matt 5) of the world and the darkness flees

v16-18 all the workers are equipped.
Half are constantly on guard...
the other half is working with "one eye on the job and one eye on the lookout"

Spiritual warfare never ceases so I must always be ready with every task I do to fight at a
moment's notice
Eph 6:10-18

you cannot build a wall unless you have a Sword in your hand

v19-20 "We are spread out. The enemy could pinpoint an attack to breach the wall.
Whenever you hear the trumpet, drop your building tools and come running with your
swords."

the pastor is to sound the trumpet when he sees the enemy attacking or when he sees
weaknesses in the defenses.

The trumpet is a call to pray.
Trumpet call: Halloween

a good leader is not a one-man band.
He shares a vision with others and they rally alongside to help
DL Moody: "I would rather get 100 men to do the work than to do the work of
100 men."

I look for how God has gifted you...and I seek God as to how He wants to use you in this ministry

So listen for the rallying cry and the trumpet.

Remember who fights the battle

1 Sam 17:45-47	David & Goliath
2 Chron 20:5-29	Jehoshaphat's eyes upon Him
Ps 24:8	King of glory is mighty in battle
Is 63:1-6	coming from Bozrah, bloody

v21 12 hour work days...God's work requires dedication in the face of continual enemy attack

John 9:4 no man works at night
John 11:9 do not stumble in the Light of day

v22 "Everybody stay within the wall at night. No one go back to their home in the suburbs."
the "buddy system" so we can watch each other's backs

v23 Always ready for action
the armor of God was never taken off
our enemy never takes time off...neither can we!

Nehemiah Chapter 5

v1-5 great cry: “loud shriek”
context: an extended food shortage

complaints:

- “So many of us, so little food. Yet the few have much food.”
- “We have sold all of our possessions to buy food from those who have it.”
- “We have borrowed money to pay our taxes.”
- “We have sold our children as servants to our brethren in order to get by... without hope of ever redeeming them back because those brethren also have our homes and fields and vineyards.”
- “We are trapped and losing ground...at the hands of our brothers!”

A great social injustice is at work in the struggling nation...
greed was threatening the existence of the nation

The poor...who have large families...were being taken advantage of by the rich...
the few who had most of the food and property in their greedy clutches

The abuse of economic power ala the rash of Corporate/CEO crimes of the past year...
fueled by greed over the past decade

Tactic of the enemy: Greed...to corrupt the heart (1 Tim 6:10)

- Why Linda Wallace has her job
- Why drug and porno industries so big
- Why Corporate America in such turmoil

Response of the Overcomer: Rebuke and denial of self

Matt 16:24-26 gain whole world if lose soul?

Luke 12:16-21 rich man and his barns...a fool

v6 Neh is outraged because a few are breaking the Law of Moses and oppressing and endangering the whole nation
this is an example of righteous anger...very similar to Jesus' cleansing of the Temple of the moneychangers
John 2:13-16 Father's house a house of merchandise

it is a spiritual issue...with an economic face

Matt 6:24 cannot serve both God and money

v7 consulted with himself:
you can “consult yourself” i.e. seek wisdom alone...in the Word of God written
on the table of your heart

2 Tim 3:16-17 doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness
Ps 119:105 a Lamp unto my feet, light unto path
Ps 119:9 how a man cleanse his way? Heed

The leadership is taking ruthless advantage of the common people to gather all the wealth
unto themselves...

Eccl 1:9-11 there is nothing new under the sun
the Word of God reveals sin and corrects man

Neh is a man of action...he is going to right the wrongs he sees and hears
He brings the oppressors before the oppressed to face them

v8 “We have recently been released from our captivity by the Persians and allowed to come
back here to rebuild our city and our nation.
Now you become their oppressive captors...in their own homes?!
Just where do you get off turning your brethren into slaves?
How are you any different than Pharoah? Or the Babylonians?”

silence – the sound of

- Guilt exposed
- man standing before a just and holy God based on his own works at the Great
White Throne judgment in Rev 20

v9 “You are dead wrong to act this way.
Here we are out on the ragged edge, constantly vulnerable to the attacks the enemy who
desires our extinction...
We continue to survive only by the protection of the Lord...
and you are tempting the just and holy God with your abominable greed?”

v10 “I could have them pay my way...a workman is worth his wages...
but I don’t ask them for even a dime.
Follow my example.
Do not charge interest.
Use your God-given resources to feed God’s flock, not to fleece them.”

CCA has no payroll expenses because

- the Lord has blessed with a job to provide for my family
- the fellowship could not bear the financial burden, out here on the ragged edge of a pioneering work.

v11 “Return all the collateral as well as the interest you have charged on the money and food you have lent to them.”

Matt 5:42 give to him who asks, him who would borrow
Lend...but do not charge interest

v12 “You are right. We will do as you say.”

Neh rightly “consulted himself”
2 Tim 2:15

When we are convicted by the Holy Spirit, 1 John 1:9

Notice the most attractive characteristic of their obedience: it was immediate

Took an oath: Neh had a “contract” drawn up and signed.
He is trusting but not foolish.
The track record of the nobles and rulers suggests documentation is prudent

Notice that the priests were involved in this wickedness!
Note: be “eyes open” regarding Christian workers and suppliers.
Sadly, the collective track record suggests documentation is prudent.
Many abuse the leniency and forgiveness of their brethren...
and perform very poorly for the house of faith

v13 providing a visual aid to lock in the lesson, Neh shakes the dust out of his garment to demonstrate what will happen to those who do not live up to their oath.
God expects us to keep our word

A wrong is made right and the people rejoice...freed and strengthened
Trust is restored and the people are healed.

God used a faithful servant who rightly “consulted himself” in the Word of God

v14-15 the True and Good Shepherd does not burden the flock.
Rather, He provides for them and lives the example of how they are to love each other

Neh led by example, not commanding the people to do that which he was not willing to do.

In fact, he did it to a far greater degree than he asked them to.

The entire time Neh was in Jerusalem as the governor, he never lived off the people...
they lived off him

Why? Neh had a healthy fear/respect/awe of God, our Provider, the Giver of every good and perfect gift

he was called to love and feed the flock of God, not use and abuse them for his own enrichment

“I did not want you thinking I came here...from the throne room of the king...
to make merchandise of you for my own personal gain.”

James 3:1 the greater judgment
Deut 24:7 evil worthy of death
2 Peter 2:1-3 false teachers engage in this practice

The ministry is not an “get rich” occupation...
and where God guides, God provides

None of us...coming from the Throne room of the King
(Heb 4:16)...should seek personal gain as we walk with the King

v16 nor did Neh seek to become a land lord...he was only interested in serving the Lord of this land

v17 Every day, this self-less governor fed 150 Jews plus an untold number of Gentiles.
He walked his talk.

The Christian walk is about people...ALWAYS about people, NEVER about things

So...when you are re-building a wall (a broken down life)...
remember Noah's Ark...

1. Don't miss the boat
2. We are all on the same boat
3. Plan ahead – it wasn't raining when Noah started building
4. Be ready – when you are 600 years old the Lord might ask you to do something really big
5. Don't listen to the critics
6. Build on high ground
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs
8. Speed is not always an advantage – the Ark had cheetahs and snails
9. When stressed, float for a while
10. There is a rainbow waiting!

v18 Neh cared more about the well-being of the people more than for his own well-being...
as did Paul...as does every faithful shepherd

Luke 22:24-27 serve...don't lord over as do the Gentiles

Matt 23:11-12 proud will be humbled, humble will be exalted

not so of hirelings

John 10:11-14

thief doesn't care, comes to steal
shepherd gives his life

v19 Neh laid up treasure in heaven...preferring eternal rewards to temporary rewards

the BEST investment advise!

Nehemiah Chapter 6

A “tie-in” to the “Famine” Mid-Week Thought

Neh has been busy about the work of strengthening the defenses of Jerusalem

When you

- read the Word daily
- consistently, faithfully attend a Bible study
- go to church every Sunday (regardless of circumstances!)

you are engaged in a work of strengthening your defenses against the enemy

Since the enemy wants to keep us in a position of weakness, he will resist your efforts to do those things...because he KNOWS there is the strength of God in them!

And he WILL attack you like he has the Jews in this book

1. discouragement from without – ridicule
2. sneak attacks
3. discouragement from within
4. greed
5. now...fear
6. deceit and conspiracy

Throughout this chapter we see the persistence of the enemy’s attack...
and the consistency of his tactics

Tactic of the enemy: False accusations and fear

Response of the Overcomer: Rebuke, discernment, no compromise,

v1 enemy resistance has failed by the prayer and determined leadership of Neh

The wall is built, it has no breaks in it!

But the gates aren’t yet hung.

Nevertheless, when it comes to defending their homes, this is a major milestone in daily life in Jerusalem

this is a statement of the effectiveness of Neh’s leadership, leading the people to do a difficult job under oppressive circumstances

v2 Tactic of the enemy: Deceit and conspiracy

Response: Discernment

Spiritual gift...just what we need when we need it!

1 Cor 12:10, 31

“Say, Mr. Governor, let’s have a summit meeting...outside the city walls...
in the open territory we control...”

a very thinly veiled offer of friendship and cooperation...an Oslo Accords of the era...
that Muslim mailer to the East Valley
but the clear motive is malicious – murder
John 8:44

the enemy will shamelessly try to befriend me, beguile me to infiltrate and destroy from
within via persistent subtlety vs direct frontal assaults

Kirk’s daughter’s 13 yr old friend...fiery leader, upbeat...
Committed suicide last week
Deceived by Hinduism...believed coming back as something even better!

v3 messenger = “angel”

I pray to be an angel Thursday night, Sunday morning, Mid-Week Thought

Come down:

the plain of Ono is S, E, or W of Jerusalem...all being a descent in elevation from
Jerusalem

“Thanks, but no thanks, buddy!
I am doing very important and urgent work here.
The work is more important than any conversation we could have.
So I’ll pass.”

Be constantly aware of

- Distractions of the enemy
- Lies of the enemy (deceit is usually very subtle)
- Priorities in your life (God’s priorities)
- The benevolent face of Compromise
- The inviting voices of Sin and self

v4 be not deceived – the enemy is not stupid, the enemy is fiercely persistent
so you gotta stand your ground continually, never letting up
don't let the enemy wear you down...like our kids wear us down
don't ever get tired of saying, "No!"

v5-7 the fifth "invitation" is more a blatant threat
and insulting – an open letter ala full page ad in *Arizona Republic*

Tactic of the enemy: False accusations and fear

Response of the Overcomer: Rebuke, discernment, no compromise,

Gashmu = Geshem the Arabian (v1)

"Word on the street is that you are planning a rebellion against King Artaxerxes and that you are scheming to set yourself up as king.

Why else would you come here and build that wall?

Now, we are good citizens of the Persian Empire so we just can't sit here and do nothing.

We have an obligation to report you to Shushan.

Are we wrong?

Come on, let's get together and talk about it."

i.e. "Do as we say or you are totally busted!"

the motive is again clear - intimidation

The man of God with the Word of God written on his heart "consults himself" and acts according to the will of God.

The world seeks a consensus, the will of man, by "taking counsel together."

v8 Neh simply denies the accusation and keeps moving

"Sorry. Nice try. Nothing could be further from the truth than your accusation. It is all a figment of your overactive imagination."

He doesn't waste any time or energy fighting a shadow or playing any games

Again, Neh has discernment because he sees all things thru the lens of the Word of God
James 4:7

v9 the true motive: fear, debilitating and paralyzing fear

answer: the strength of God...via prayer!

2 Cor 12:9-10

2 Tim 1:7

Is 41:10-13

Is 43:5a

v10 Shemaiah = "Jehovah has heard"
Delaiah = "Jehovah has delivered"

Shemaiah's "spiritual" advice: "Save yourself! Let's retreat to the Temple and lock ourselves in so the enemy won't kill you."

A spirit of fear so advice of the flesh, NOT Godly advice, and should be rejected outright

v11 "What?

How can you be serious?

What would the people think if I, the Governor, promised to protect them but then went running into the Temple with my tail between my legs?

I may as well be dead because my effectiveness as a leader would die right there.

Not going to happen.

The Lord is my strength, some building made of man's hands is not."

the enemy has his people inside the Church so test everything against the Word of God
Satan has infiltrated his workers into the Church and their aim is to discredit and destroy the ministry.

Keep your "eyes" (2 Cor 5:7) peeled!

v12 Shemaiah was hired to do a job to deceive thru spiritual sounding words
satan is able to use Christians against other Christians by wooing them onto the battlefield of the flesh

Neh is blessed with the gift of discerning spirits.

And he has a very sharp sword! (Heb 4:12)

"I discerned that my own countryman was just trying to frighten me, to get me to walk by sight and not by faith.

He is trying to get me onto the battleground of the flesh and off the battleground of the Spirit!

He sold out to the enemy!

He is an enemy agent!"

How did Nehemiah realize that God had not sent Shemaiah?

Because he asked Nehemiah to do something against the Law - only the priests could go inside the Temple....

Neh was not a Levite!

- v13 Tactic of the enemy: fear
 fear is a tool of Satan
 fear puts us in a position of disadvantage

Response: Discernment, the Spirit of God, the Word of God

Shemaiah was hired to instill Neh with fear...of man...for the purpose of defaming him before the people, of ruining his reputation and the effectiveness of his leadership
Not an effective strategy or purchase by the enemy because Neh feared God, not man

In fear there is not faith and victory, in fear there is only sin and pain and defeat
Neh is a man of faith, not a man of fear

- v14 Response to fear: prayer

“Lord, the enemy without and the enemy within seek my destruction and the ruin of Your work for Your people.
Deal with them according to Your desire.
Remember their wickedness.”

Know “friends” and enemies that seek your demise?
Just hand them over to the Lord...He will deal with them righteously.

- v15 The gates are now hung and the city completely secured

What could not get done in many years gets done in 52 days under the inspired leadership of Neh

- prayerful
- courageous
- uncompromising
- fear-less
- by example
- discerning
- faithful

What walls could the Lord re-build if you were a leader like Neh?

- v16 when Israel's enemies heard and saw that the wall was finished, they were totally bummed out because they knew God had
- protected them
 - empowered them
 - strengthened them.

People in those parts still remembered the awesome works the God of AI&J did on behalf of His people...and they were no match for God!

That truth led them to repentance and accepting Him as their God, too, right?!

No. They continued to work against God

2 Cor 4:3-4

- v17-18 Tactic of the enemy: If you can't lick 'em, join 'em
the enemy marries into the nation and cultivates relationships and IOUs to bring his wicked influence to bear on God's people
Another example: Satan could not wipe out the Church thru persecution...
it only got stronger...so he joined the church and corrupted it from within

Response: No compromise with evil

- v19 lacking
- courage
 - faith
 - discernment
 - prayer

the people are duped by a persistent, subtle enemy who continues to work for their destruction...right under their noses and even using them in the process!

The threats of the enemy never end

Nehemiah Chapter 7

- v1 now the gates are hung and the doorkeepers appointed
- v2 with the construction project complete, the Governor turns operational control over to his brother
brother
same brother who came to Neh in Shushan in Ch 1

key qualities of effective leaders:

- faithful and fearful...
- integrity with great fear of the Lord

- v3 common sense defense:
- the gates are to be open only during designated daytime hours.
 - During the night the gates will be closed, locked, guarded
 - And everyone takes a turn being on watch

- v4 the next issue: fill up the large, empty city.
Jerusalem itself must become a Jewish settlement

The “numbers game” needed attention to erode the enemy advantage.
Still true today... why Israel goes to USA and Europe with the
“Come home, we need you” message

- v5 God laid a plan on Neh’s heart: count heads and gather by family

- v6-69 Neh. found
- Ezra’s records from the first return migration
Ezra 2
 - the Travel Manifest from the first wave (ripple) of Jews to return to the land
after the end of the Babylonian captivity

a roll call of those carried into captivity by Neb but have returned to Jerusalem.
70+ years ago they were children, they have known nothing but Babylon, yet they return!

the Lord knows all of His children by name

Catagories

- general people (v6-38)
- priests (v39-42)
- Levites (v43-45)
- Nethinims (servants of Solomon's Temple (v46-56)
- Children of Nethinims (v57-62)
- Priests again (v63-64)
Must "Prove It!" in genealogical record

v66-67 There is always a faithful remnant

$$42,360 + 7,337 + 245 = 49,942$$

out of several million living at the time in Babylon...in
creature comfort

v73 in time for Rosh haShannah and Yom Kippur

Nehemiah Chapter 8

- v1 all the people are thirsty for the Word of God and gather by
- in the SE corner of the city by the Pool of Siloam
 - the...water gate
- John 7:37-38

- v1-2 the beginning of revival
- Outside the Temple (tradition)
 - In the street among the people
 - The Word of God is requested by the people
- Ps 19

finding the Word of God is always the key to revival, be it national or personal

- Josiah's revival in 2 K 22 and 2 Chron 34
- Martin Luther and the Reformation
- 1 John 2:14
- Rev 1:3

The greatest need in the Body of Christ today – finding the Word of God
Is why CCA teach verse-by-verse

- v2 Rosh haShannah... "New Years Day"

this was not a spontaneous event
diligently spend time in His Word

hear with understanding: all those old enough to understand what they were hearing
Note: had a Nursery Ministry then too!

starting the New Year off with the Word of God

v3 Look at the “formula” for using “The Ingredient of Revival”
A messenger reads the Word...plus...the people receive the Word

Messenger: Ezra read for 6 hours from the Word of God
Ezra did not deliver a sermonette – it was a feast!

I do not deliver sermonettes...I prepare a healthy meal by which God’s people
will grow

the meal consists of the Word of God, vs-by-vs, not

- a topic
- a shallow teaser

PLUS

the People: and the people paid attention the entire time...and people today can barely sit
still for 45 minutes!

we have way too many distractions and pursuits to “be still and know that I AM
God.”

Who needs to change: man or God?

v4 so everyone could hear the Word preached

v5 not only did they listen attentively for six hours while the Word was read...
they stood out of respect

treat the Word of God with respect
why we stand when we read Psalms on Sunday morning

v6 lifting of your hands in a worship service:

Pros: a sign of surrender
the act of a suppliant
Ps 28:1-2
Ps 141:1-2
1 Tim 2:8

Cons: draws attention to the individual and away from the Lord

nonetheless...this is a worship service.

Reading the Word is an act of worship...read it with that attitude in your heart

- v7-8 the Word was taught so the people could
- understand it
 - use it
 - surrender their will to it

expository, verse-by-verse teaching
sense: interpretation and application
good teaching makes God's Word understandable

the Holy Spirit is the Teacher...

1 John 2:27

John 14:26

...yet God appointed pastors and teachers to the Body of Christ

Eph 4:11-12

The gift of teaching is two-edged

1. The Observer/Interpreter/Applicator
 - speaking what the Lord gave him to speak...
 - even while he is speaking...
 - without knowing who if anybody will "get it"
2. The individual listener
 - the Word revealed...
 - according to the need...
 - "How did he know?"

my calling: simply teach...simply
make The Word of God clear and relevant...
let God work thru His Word

teach believers, preach to unbelievers

Acts 5:42

Rom 10:17

- v9 The Word goes forth and men receive it...and it supernaturally, radically changes us

James 1:21-25

Luke 24:32

v9 Ch 1-7 Physical reconstruction of the walls
Ch 8-13 Spiritual reformation of the people

Weeping

- an uncontrollable reaction to the work of the Holy Spirit in our heart
- spontaneous and a clear sign that our heart is being touched by God

it happens

- in worship – e.g. driving to work in the morning prayer.
worship CD
- in joy – as He floods your heart with His love and grace
- in conviction and brokenness – when our failures, our sins, cause us to mourn

regardless, do not be embarrassed or ashamed...

God is working! Changes are going to be made!

So exciting! It's a beautiful thing!

And a time to rejoice

In this case, the Word of God pierced their hearts and clearly showed the people how much God loves them and how far they had fallen short of His glory

Heb 4:12

Matt 5:3-4

These people are

- energized by the Word of God
- eager for God to work in their lives

Oh but the Church would be this way!

There is a terrible malaise in the Church today because:

- left her 1st love
Jesus is not the Head
Martha vs Mary (Luke 10:38-42)
- trying to finish in the flesh that which was started in the Spirit (Gal 3:3)
- compromise with the philosophies of men
humanism (psychiatry)
relativism

- the traditions of men have replaced the Word of God (Mark 7:1-13)
focus on ritual vs relationship
- seduction of the ways of the world
sexual sin: homosexuality, pedophilia
wealth
- lukewarm – indifferent to the Word of God
how intimate can a relationship be when one party is indifferent toward the other?
- asleep
Lazy
Complacent
Inconsistent...only when it is convenient
Pew potatoes filled with excuses

This malaise should break our hearts...
individually and corporately

v10 “This is a special day! The Lord is working in our midst!
Changes are going to be made! Rejoice! ”
“Prepare a feast and make sure the poor have plenty!”

celebrate the goodness of the Lord...and continue in it
Rom 11:22

rejoice in the Lord’s

- grace
- mercy
- longsuffering
- forgiveness
- kindness
- love (1 Cor 13)

Matt 5:6, 9
2 Cor 12:9-10

v11 stilled: “hushed”...calmed them down
“Shhhh. It’s OK. Don’t worry, everything is just fine. Shhh.”

The comforting arms of a loving shepherd

Ps 23:1-3

v12 mirth: great gladness, joy
the Word may cut, but It alone heals

understanding God’s Word produces joy...and revival

Ingredients of revival

- The Word of God found
- The Word of God received
- Confession and repentance
- Obedience

Areas of revival in our lives

1. relationship with God

- hear and obey His instruction/correction – the Word
- intimate, one-on-one communion – prayer
- walk by faith, trusting His faithfulness

2. relationship with your spouse

- Do you love your wife as Christ loves the Church?
- Do you hold your husband first in all things as the Church does Jesus?
- Are you both submitting one to the other?
- ask the Lord to examine your heart...don’t focus on your spouses performance

3. relationship with you children

- cold, harsh justice...
- provoke them to anger...
- warm, loving instruction with grace
- more clearly defined boundaries
- longsuffering nurturing

4. relationships within the Family of God

- forgiveness
- restoration
- edification
- encouragement

the ultimate result of the work of God in our lives is great joy!
How can we not rejoice when we realize

- our sins are forgiven
- God loves us...personally
- God loves us enough to make changes in our lives
- the fruit from God's work in and thru our lives

v13 "Staff Meeting", leadership development session

Ezra is teaching, the leaders are understanding....the Holy Spirit is moving!

Feast of Tabernacles...

v14 God's Word is the source of truth (John 14:6)

they discovered that they were to do move their families into "lean-to"s to remember how miraculously God preserved His people during 40 years of wilderness wandering...

they would not be alive had He not done that!

And in so doing they would have the opportunity to teach their children about the power and majesty and love of God

"Daddy, why are we sleeping outside?"

"Sweetie, let me tell you a true story..."

"Daddy, I'm cold!"

"Come here, honey. I'll keep you warm."

v16-17 this group of Jews, recently freed from captivity by the Lord, can really identify with the Jews led out of Egypt

this remembrance, this obedience, this celebration was a long time coming!

hear the word, obey the Word...and obey immediately

joy is the result of obedience to the Word of God

James 1:22

v18 the Feast of Tabernacles was seven days long...and the 8th day was a Sabbath Day
on this day the priests would pour water out onto the Temple pavement to remind the
people of the water God miraculously provided for them out of the rock in the
wilderness

That is the setting of John 7:37-38

Nehemiah Chapter 9

Reformation requires

- A show of heart
- A change of heart

in the history of Israel, we see

- man's heart
- God's heart
- A need for change

In this chapter we see the Israelites gather and publicly:

- fast
- mourn
- become separate/holy
- confess their sin
- read God's Word
- worship God

v1 time to break out the burlap wardrobe and dirt clod accessories!

Sackcloth was

- Itchy
- Miserable
- A form of self-affliction

Fasting was

- Denial of the flesh

The earth upon them was

- A sign of mourning

v2 the Word separates a people for the Lord...makes us holy when we surrender to it

v3 the Word reveals man's heart
Heb 4:12

And the Lord's heart
Matt 10:32-39

And cleansing of man's heart
1 John 1:9
Ps 119:9

the 4 Quarters of the Day
1. 6 am to 12 noon
2. 12 noon to 6 pm
3. 6 pm to 12 midnight
4. 12 midnight to 6 am

they read the Word for 6 hours and the confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord for
another 6 hours
2 more 6-hour church services!

v4-5 8 priests + 8 more priests
to encourage the people to PTL

a scene like Rev 5:8-14

v6-31 a history of Israel during which God reveals Himself to man

God is

- v6 Creator, Sustainer
- v7 sovereign, created a nation for Himself
gives His children (born again by faith in His promises) new names
"ha" = breath of God
- v8 righteous and faithful
- v9 all knowing, all-seeing
- v10 all-powerful
- v11 Protector, Giver of Light
- v12 Good Shepherd
- v13-14 King, Master, loving Father, Holy Law Giver
- v15 Provider
- v17 Forgiving, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, kind, faithful,
never leaving/forsaking
- v20 Teacher, Faithful, steady

- v21 longsuffering, Provider
- v22 King of kings, Warrior
- v23 Giver of life
- v24-25 Defender, Conqueror, Giver of every good and perfect gift
- v27 Deliverer, Savior
- v29 Just, Compassionate Father
- v30-31 longsuffering, forgiving, tender-hearted, loving, gracious, merciful

yet all the while man is

- v16 proud, stubborn, defiant, self-willed, “deaf”
- v17 rebellious, raging, crazy
- v18 idolatrous
- v24-25 did nothing but receive the fruits of God’s work
- v26 disobedient, rebellious continually, ungrateful, self-willed, hostile, irrational, enemies
- v28 devoid of memory and evil continually
- v29 proud, rebellious, stubborn, spoiled brats!

v7 John 15:14-16
Abram + the Spirit of God = 2 Cor 5:17

v8 Gen 15:6

v17 “the Lord is slow to anger” appears 7 times in Scripture

1. Num 14:18
2. Nahum 1:2-3
3. Jonah 4:2
4. Joel 2:13
5. Neh 9:17
6. Ps 103:8
7. Ps 145:8

That means...my Lord is:

- ready to forgive!
- gracious!
- merciful!
- slow to anger!
- has great kindness!
- Faithful...when I am not!

Therefore...love and obedience are inseparable

v21-23 supernatural protection and provision:

- 2.5 M in the desert for 40 years
- given strength just not to survive but to conquer as well
- not to be exterminated but to be multiplied
(the history of the Church in Acts)

v28 it is easier being a Christian (Jesus is Lord) when things are tough and rugged than when things are easy and smooth
the growth in the valleys is to mature us in keeping our eyes on Christ at all times

v29 spiritual suicide
James 1:22

v32-37 confession comes before repentance...which comes before forgiveness.
Repentance and forgiveness are gifts from a loving and gracious God.

a repentant people appeals to the God they have hated, a God who is

- great
- mighty – powerful
- terrible – to be feared and revered
- faithful
- loving beyond comprehension

they see

- their hearts
- God's heart
- A need to change

They cry out to Abba Father

- Be merciful to us wretched sinners
- See our plight and consider it worthy of Your intervention...
even though we deserve everything we are getting plus some
- Even though we have never served you whole-heartedly, we need you!
- We see the wonder of Your ways and the horror of our ways
- So we give up. We surrender our will to Yours.
- We are your servants...not the servants of wicked men
- We promise to serve you!

Can you remember the times God revealed His nature to you?

Can you remember thumbing your nose at Him?

Can you remember the wheels coming off in your life?

Can you remember being broken?

Can you remember surrendering?

Can you see His great goodness?

Can you see your great wickedness apart from Him?

Can you see clearly now?

Are you grateful?

Are you a faithful servant?

Confess...repent...receive forgiveness...be ye transformed!

Nehemiah Chapter 10

Ch 9 review

History of Israel...

- Their unfaithfulness
- God's faithfulness

And a commitment to renew God's covenant

v1-27 signers of the Declaration

governor	1	
priests	22	
Levites	17	
leaders	<u>44</u>	
	84	7 x 12 = complete government

v28-29 they and the rest of the remnant, with full knowledge of the curses that came with failure:

- swear to keep the Law of God
- agree to perform up to God's standards
- vow to be perfect.

They should have cried out for mercy and the Messiah!

This is like me vowing to walk to the moon

Like all vows, a foolish vow

Deut 23:21-22

Eccl 5:2-7

Judges 11:30-40

James 2:10

Rom 7:14-19

Gal 3:10-11, 24

Jesus said Matt 5:33-37

v30-39 promises in the agreement

1. to be holy (not intermarry with pagans) v30

No leaven! Even just a pinch corrupts the entire lump
stand uncompromisingly against attacks on the holiness of God's people
1 Peter 2:9
you say you are a Christian, act/talk like it

2. to keep the Sabbath (day and year) v31

every day is "spiritual" day as is every year
Rom 14:5

3. to keep the offerings and support the House of God
v32-34, 39

No compromise with the world due to financial pressure or temptation
stand firm against attacks thru the lure of money and worldly wealth

No skimping on the offerings to God and His priests
Give God the first and the best, not the leftovers as so many do

Stand firm against attacks against the faithfulness of God to provide for
His people

Stand firm against attacks thru the lure of creature comfort leading to
complacency and lukewarm-ness

Note: some people in financial distress get mad at God!
before we dare get mad at God, know that He is just and faithful,
and we are wicked and unfaithful.

So who is the problem?

Who needs to accept responsibility?

Let's get our attitude right before we approach the Almighty God

4. to consecrate the firstborn v36

Is Jesus Christ Lord of all

- You are
- You have
- You hope to be

Are you uncompromising in your faith and in your walk?

promises, promises.

Can any man keep any vow?

Let your Yes be Yes and your No be No

Don't say what you are going to do...just do it

Have you made public dedication of your life to the Lord

- I'll do whatever You want me to do
- I'll go wherever You want me to go
- I'll be whatever You want me to be

Nehemiah Chapter 11

v1 now that the walls are built, it is time to re-populate the city...and other cities as well...
as the Jews rebuild their nation

Jerusalem was secure...but not comfortable
Houses and lifestyles were much nicer in the country

v2 not a draft, a volunteer program...ala salvation
we see the responsibility of man to respond to God's gift

being in Jerusalem, the city God chose for Himself, is such a blessing!

v4 as we learn in Joshua and the chapters detailing the division of the inheritance of the land
by tribe, Jerusalem is a "border town"

v4-9 468 men from Judah + 928 men from Benjamin

v10-24 listed by

- the priests (v10-14)
- the Levites (v15-18)
- the gatekeepers (v19)
- the rest (v20-24)

v25-30 17 other cities of Judah

v31-36 15 other cities of Benjamin

Nehemiah Chapter 12

v1-7 22 priests

v8-9 the Levites are listed

v10-26 the genealogies
the presence and the history of God's people is recorded and preserved by
name...even while in captivity

v27 a national celebration to dedicate the completed walls

v30 that which is dedicated to the Lord is to be pure
that includes you and me!
Only the Lord can purify that which is to be dedicated unto Him

v31 2 large thanksgiving choirs go up on the walls to lead the celebration

here we see the importance of worshipping in song to celebrate what the Lord has done
for us

Service starts t 7 pm...or 10 am...not 10-15 minutes later
Show some respect to the Lord and be on time

Prepare your attitude of thanksgiving in this coming week...

v31b-37 the 1st choir is led by Ezra

v38-39 the 2nd choir is led by Neh

v42 aspects of worshipping with song

- there is a leader anointed by the Lord
- ALL sing LOUDLY!
- There is a great ENERGY!

v43 a God-given joy is expressed loudly and passionately in song
this was a “big sound”

v44-47 more very important Temple responsibilities

- store house managers
- singers
- gatekeepers

worshipping in song is a critical part of a worship service – don’t miss it!
Hope I’m not preaching to the choir!

Don’t vow to be on time for worship...just be there!

And...Joe is a real blessing from the Lord!
I thank the Lord for bringing Joe to us!

Nehemiah Chapter 13

v1-3 they were reading Deut 23:3-5

God's call to be holy...because of mistreatment and antagonism as Israel was coming out of Egypt...the descendents of Abraham (faith) are to be separate from the descendents of Lot (flesh)

the spirit and the flesh contend against each other.

They are not compatriots and there can be no compromise

Rom 8:1-5

Gal 5:17

But God...turns curses into blessings

Because He loves us...

- Eph 2:1-5
- APS: laid off...18th floor
Hours, compensation, skill
- 3 miracle babies

Because "not my will but Yours be done"

- healed relationship
- Fiery furnace
- Lion's den

What about you?

How has the Lord turned a curse into a blessing?

It happens so often!

v4-6 while Neh was away, honoring his commitment to the king to return to Shushan (12 years later), corruption creeps into the camp of Israel

- the Word of God was neglected
- the enemy is given a foothold

while he is back in Shushan, Tobiah, his long time enemy, works his way into a place of influence thru marriage

The enemy of God has keys to the storehouse in the house of God

If life's circumstances

- take your eyes off of Jesus
- lead you to seek your own will (pride, unbelief)

If the world

- looks and sounds very appealing
- Feels very comfortable

If you are being

- Self-centered
- Selfish
- Stubborn
- Self-willed

the enemy

- has a foothold
- WILL move in to sow corruption

Keep your eyes on Jesus...stay in the Word always

v7-9 understood the evil:

Num 32:23

Pray for discernment

Look thru the lens of God's Word

grieved me sore:

“upset me immediately and completely”

Neh was appalled...thunderstruck by the irrationality

Remember the vows spoken in Ch 10?

Broken very quickly...empty words

James 1:22

the housecleaning is immediate and complete

I cast forth:

Neh thru the bum out...literally.

A gentle and polite invitation was not given to come collect your things, hands

were laid on the polluted stuff and it was sent flying

and then the chamber was sanitized of “coodies”, scrubbed and bleached

and then God's holy things are put back where they belong, in the Temple

storeroom

Does sin grieve you sore?

what sin is in your heart that needs to be sent flying so the Lord can scrub and bleach that aspect of your life and replace it with something far better?

Ask the Lord to reveal your heart

Give Him what He wants to take...receive what He wants to give in its place
surrender...submit...obey

Once cleansed of the filth, things are restored to their original purpose

v10-11 our walk with the Lord is a relationship that needs our diligent attention every day.

Man and woman, married for 50 years, are driving down the road.

She suddenly blurts out that the romance is out of their marriage.

“You never hold my hand, we don’t even sit beside each other (bench seat) in the car any more.”

The man looks at his wife, the bench seat, the steering wheel, and says,

“I haven’t moved.”

If you do not feel close to the Lord, it is because you have moved, you have neglected the relationship

Heb 13:5b, 8

“house of God” includes the priests, not just the facility and the furnishings

my mother’s reaction to “I’m going into the ministry.”

“Great! Poverty here we come!”

since the people’s offerings were stolen by the corrupt leadership, the priests had to leave their Temple duties in order to provide for their families, leaving no one to serve in the Temple

neglect like this does not need much time to result in widespread devastation

e.g. Judges 17-18

the Levite bought by a pagan worshipping man to be his priest, then

“appropriated” by the tribe of Dan

all started with neglect of the house of God

Neh rebukes the leaders and sets things right to the same degree as he is grieved – immediately and completely

v12-13 the house of God has been neglected...

with determined swiftness, Neh. uncompromisingly takes corrective action to cause the people to repent
the nations falls in line as it follows the spiritual leadership of Neh

The storeroom is re-stocked by the faithful provision of God thru obedient people

our families...is Jesus given the leadership thru an obedient, uncompromising husband/father?

Col 3:18-20

our ministries...honor the Lord thru obedient, uncompromising servants

God uses faithful men

Joseph

Daniel

Stephan (Acts 6:1-4)

Paul

The job of a servant is to be faithful

v14 the first of Neh's repeated pleas for help and remembrance
"Count me a faithful steward, Lord."

v15-16 in Neh's absence the priesthood got corrupted, which led to the backsliding and corruption of the people
the Sabbath had become just another day of business, no longer a day of rest to be spent meditating on God and His blessings
and the heathen business partners further defiled the Sabbath

How important is strong, uncompromising leadership?

- Moses \ vs times of the Judges

- Joshua /

- Samuel vs Saul

- David , Good kings of Judah

vs

The evil kings of Israel

- Jesus as the Head of the Church

vs

The popes as head of the church (Dark Ages)

v17-18 “Have you lost your minds? Don’t you remember that this whole captivity thing and the destruction of this city was caused by our neglecting to keep the Sabbath?”

Neh did not tolerate sin in the camp, he uncompromisingly rebuked it

“Tolerance” has no place when it comes to

- absolute truth vs relative truth
- sin vs “illness”, “disease”, “victimization”

God is patient and longsuffering and merciful and gracious and forgiving...

He is NOT tolerant

DO NOT give advise...give the Word of God!!!!

v19 God’s order is restored under strong, holy leadership and faithful men put in place to keep it

v20-22a Neh rebukes the greedy and the materialistic...the self-centered idol worshippers

“This is not Hotel 6! We will not keep the light on for you!

This is holy ground so take your filthy lucre and hearts outta here...

or I will give you flying lessons!”

“Either by your own will or by mine, you will obey.”

the priests are commanded...not asked...to cleanse themselves and to resume their duties of keeping the Sabbath and protecting the gates

keep holy that which is called to be holy

v22b Neh’s 2nd cry: “Count me as yours, Lord. Have compassion upon me according to your great mercy.”

v23-24 the nation has been polluted by “strange” wives, pagan in their worship...

just as Balaam had coached the descendents of Lot in Num 22

Israel was to be holy to remain pure and distinct.

Now, they are defiled and at risk of losing their culture...

of being assimilated into the world

Neh sees the sin because his heart is right with God.

His eyes are clear and his ears open
Sin blinds...deafens...deadens (de-sensitizes)

This is THE problem facing the Church today

Rev 2-3

Phil 3:20

John 17:15-18

v25-27 a severe rebuke for a severe transgression

- cursed - vilified
- smote – physically beat
- plucked off their hair – the crudest form of barbering
- exacted an oath – “Have you lost your mind...” again

When facing a backslider, what do you do?

At the bare minimum:

1. Minister to the hurting person before you.
Gal 6:1-2
2 Tim 2:24-26
2. Pray. Ask the Lord, “What do You want to do?
What do You want me to do?”
3. Obey the Lord
4. Pursue righteousness
Matt 18:15-17
Ps 34:14
Ps 94:15
1 Tim 6:11

What do you not do?

1. Give advice; instead, give the Word of God.
Ezk 3:1-21
2. Gossip or slander
Ps 34:13
3. Cover up the sin
Prov 28:13, Is 30:1
Don't agree to keep the revelation “in confidence”

v28 The “weakest link” is expelled forcibly
this marriage was contrary to Lev 21:14

a “personal” cleansing

the person thru whom the enemy gets a foothold...gets keys to the storeroom of
the house of God

what person in your life is the Lord calling you to cleanse/separate?

- Friend
- Business associate
- Family member
- NOT YOUR SPOUSE !!!!
- Could it be a child ???

v29-31a Housecleaning is all about obedience...for obedience is better than sacrifice

v31b 3rd cry: Remember
the Book concludes with a plea for mercy

Neh ALWAYS tried to please the Lord
Who in their right mind would not want to?

So remember,

Rom 7:18 no good thing in my flesh
Heb 11:6 impossible to please apart from faith
1 Sam 15:22-23 obey is better than sacrifice
rebellion is as witchcraft
Ps 51:16-17 sacrifices:
broken spirit,
broken & contrite heart

Hear...and...do
Surrender...submit...obey

Nehemiah...a model for every child of God

A man of

- Faith
- Prayer
- Action
- Integrity

Nehemiah...a book of guidance to help us

- Rebuild the walls of our heart
- Reform and cleanse our lives