

Nehemiah: Arise & Build - Key verse: 2:18, “Let us arise and build.” (11/4/2018)

Did you ever have a plan to repair or build something and procrastinated? Maybe you procrastinate for years. Then you see something that motivates you and you get it done in one day or a week. (I procrastinated building a deck at the back of my house.)

This year 2018 I've served a Baptist church plant named Renew Church and I am serving as a part-time interim pastor at another Baptist church that wants to rebuild after a flood and loss of members. So I read Nehemiah. Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, 586 BC. Temple rebuild 70 years later, 516 BC. 70 years after that Nehemiah gets a burden and vision to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, 445 BC, and the work is completed in 52 days. What didn't get rebuild for 70 years was done in 52 days! How did that happen? There are truths from Nehemiah that can be applied to church planting or rebuilding a church. I want to share those truths this morning.

Arise & Build: Burden and Vision

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4. Nehemiah saw something that needed to be rebuilt for the glory of God. He saw a need to be met. He saw people in despair. He saw people who had given up because the work seemed overwhelming. Nehemiah accepted the burden, felt the weight of it, and made himself available to God. When he shared his burden and vision with the people they responded “Let us arise and build.”

Nehemiah 2:17-18: Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

NT connection with burden and vision: Paul had a calling from Jesus to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, but he also had a burden for his ethnic group, the Jews (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-2, 12-15). We have a burden for our ethnic group as Paul did, but we also have a burden for all people. Romans 9:1-3: *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* 10:13: *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Christ's Great Commission must be our ultimate burden and vision. We plant and build churches as part of “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Our burden and vision is share the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Do we have a burden for spiritually lost people? Do we have a burden for unreached people groups at the ends of the earth who need the Gospel?

(Serving as a chaplain, I've watched people die in the hospital and wondered where his/her spirit went – heaven or hell. The person may have been religious but that doesn't save anyone. I was paged to visit a mother whose son died of cardiac arrest at age 27. When I came she said, “Get out! God killed my son!” Later other family members arrived. They were Roman Catholics from New Orleans and they wanted a

Catholic prayer over the body. I called the Catholic priest but he wouldn't come to do last rites because the patient was already dead. The family asked me to do it. So I performed a Catholic-Baptist ritual with a rosary over a dead man because the family wanted it, but I knew it was too late to save him if he had never received Christ as Savior and Lord by faith.)

I am reading *Tell Someone* by evangelist Greg Laurie. When my burden for people without Christ needs revived, I listen to Ray Comfort. His passion motivates me. He shares the Gospel on California's famous boardwalks. He has shared the Gospel with many famous atheists because of a banana. Watch *The Fool* - www.livingwaters.com.

Arise & Build: Teamwork on the Wall

I have skipped over Nehemiah chapter 3 many times. Chapter 3 has a lot of difficult names, but I noticed the phrase "Next to them... Next to them... Next to them." And the other repeated phrase, "They built it... They rebuilt it... They repaired it." They all worked next to each other to rebuild the walls and hang the gates. There were 42 sections with families working together. Was the rebuilding organized or organic? It may have happened organically. One family of priests picked a section of the wall and started repairing, and then another joined next to them, and then another next to them, until they encompassed the whole city wall. Everyone worked together. It takes teamwork to rebuild.

Read Nehemiah 4:14-21. Teamwork means that we support each other in times of crisis, trial, or test of faith. Nehemiah 4:20: *In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.* We stand next to each other. Rally at the trumpet blast and fight for each other and God will fight for us. If you have a need or a crisis blow a trumpet, and then we will rally to your side. We fight with and for each other. Blow a trumpet today means send a message via *WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger*, or just call.

NT teamwork connection: every "one another" verse.

- Galatians 6:2: *Bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ, which is to love one another.* (I do this as a member of Samaritan Ministries.)
- Romans 12:10: *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* R15:7: *Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*
- 2 Corinthians 13:11: *Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*
- Galatians 5:13: *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
- The Bible commands 3 times: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." A hand shake or hug is good enough for me!

1 Corinthians 12 describes teamwork in the body of Christ; it's a teamwork created by the Holy Spirit to build the church. We are all have a natural talent or spiritual gift to build up the church.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... God has placed the parts in the body just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

We rebuild next to each other. Who are you working next to in the body of Christ? How well do you know that person? What would you sacrifice to help that brother or sister in Christ?

Arise & Build: Spiritual Warfare

Read Nehemiah 2:19-20 & 4:1-9.

The spiritual warfare Nehemiah faced while rebuilding included: ridicule (2:9, 4:1-3), anger (4:1, 6-9), discouragement (4:10), fear (4:11-23), internal strife (5:1-5), satanic trickery (6:1-8), apathetic officials (3:5), overburdened faithful members (4:10), and lying prophets who wanted to make him afraid (6:10-14).

Tobiah & Sanballat & Geshem the Arab formed an evil trinity. They were the enemies of arise and build. T, S & G jeered and taunted the rebuilding. "You are rebelling against the king! If a fox runs along the wall it will fall down!" When their jeering and taunted didn't work they planned to fight. When the plan to fight was stopped they hired assassins to kill Nehemiah, even a lying Jewish prophetess was paid to lure him out from behind the walls to an ambush.

NT connection: Read Ephesians 6:10-20. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood." Wrestling is a close contact sport. I hated it in high school. Constant observation of your opponent is necessary. Our battle is often more mental. We wrestle against discouragement and despair. When Jesus Christ calls you to do something for His kingdom and church, Satan will send people to taunt you. Satan will create distractions to drain your energy and lose your focus. You will hear persistent negative voices in your own mind saying "You can't do that. You'll fail like you did before. You're too old. You don't have enough experience. You cannot renew this church." Satan's goal is to spread confusion and division and stop the work of God. Any time you step out in faith to obey the burden and vision Christ gives you, you will hear discouraging voices. You may have a lack of resources. You may face physical opposition. But the real struggle isn't against flesh and blood.

A church obedient to the word of God and preaching the gospel will face spiritual warfare. Churches that have abandoned the inspired and infallible word of God do not face spiritual warfare. They have signed a treaty with the enemy. Spiritual warfare can be internal (false teachers) or external (government persecution). Churches in China face government opposition. Churches in Muslim and Hindu dominant countries face daily spiritual warfare.

The main point of Ephesians 6 is the force behind any opposition is spiritual, satanic, and the only way to defeat it is with spiritual weapons.

Arise & Build: Spiritual Weapons

They carried weapons while they worked. Nehemiah 4:15-18.

NT connection: 2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:17-18.

We need everyone carrying a sword or a spear. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*

Ephesians 6:17-18: *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*

I am not advocating conceal and carry a handgun in church. We fight a spiritual battle with spiritual weapons. Three spiritual weapons of Nehemiah are prayer and fasting, obedience to the Word (Book of the Law), and JOY. Ephesians 6:17-18 mentions the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

Weapon 1 - Prayer & Fasting: Nehemiah records 14 prayers: 1:4-11, 2:4, 4:4-5.

First, Nehemiah prayed a prayer of confession of sins (N1:4-7). Confession is always a part of prayer. There is always some sin involved in division even if it isn't our sin we must still repent for ourselves and the others involved.

Second, Nehemiah prayed the promises of God. He reminded God of his promises to Moses to regather the scattered Jews (1:8-9). "Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses..." When we remind God of his promises we are really reminding ourselves. God doesn't forget his promises. When we pray, we pray the promises of God in the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ. All God's promises are Yes and Amen in Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:20: *For all the promises of God find their Yes in Christ. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*

Nehemiah prayed a 1-second prayer when he shared his burden with King Artaxerxes. N2:4 *Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king...*

Adding fasting to prayer doesn't manipulate God. God doesn't say, "Wow, you're fasting! I'm impressed. Now I must answer." It adds spiritual sensitivity to our praying.

Nehemiah prayed imprecatory prayers like David in the Psalms (N4:4-5). Nehemiah prayed for God *not* to forgive their sin and then judge them. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:42-48).

Weapon 2 – Word of God (Read 8:1-8 – skip the list of names): Ezra and Levites stood on a wooden podium and explained the word of God. 8:4-5: *And Ezra the scribe*

stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. The focus of the priests reading the Book of the Law was for the people to understand it. 8:8: *The Levites read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.* This is what we are doing right now!

The sword the Spirit uses is the word of God, so obey it, pray it, and speak it. Jesus Christ used the sword of Deuteronomy to resist the devil's temptations.

We have two commands in the Word to obey and I preached on this the last time I was here: *Love one another* and *Go and make disciples of all nations*. If we obey these commands then we will glorify God and grow.

Weapon 3 - JOY of the LORD (8:10). I conclude with this verses (because it's almost lunch time), N8:9-10: *And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

After the worship service and preaching of the Word the people ate and drank wine on a holy day. Chinese churches do this. Anglo churches don't do this. Chinese churches obey the word of God by having lunch after worship. We do not drink wine, but we do "eat the fat" often... deep fried dishes, oily lo mein, char siu... "ho seg – hao chi!"

The joy of the LORD is your strength. The people were living in shame and despair (1:3). JOY is a powerful weapon against discouragement and despair! If you have the joy of the Lord and worship and laugh in the devil's face, then you win! When I need some joy, I listen to worship songs on my iPhone. No trial or test will destroy or diminish your faith when the JOY of the LORD is your strength. Romans 15:13: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

Invitation to receive Christ. You may want to rebuild some part of your life, your marriage, a broken relationship. Let Christ have control of your life. Christ is a loving builder of broken lives.