

I. An Update on the Wall

A. What's happened?

1. Nehemiah's burden for God's glory
2. Nehemiah gathers the people and builds the wall
3. Nehemiah faces opposition and silences critics

B. Where are we now?

1. Nehemiah has a wall and a city
 - a. **Nehemiah 7:1-3 (ESV)** ¹ *Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed,* ² *I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.* ³ *And I said to them, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes."*
 - b. It would appear the mission was completed
 - c. But there is still something missing
2. Nehemiah needs a population in the city
 - a. **Nehemiah 7:4 (ESV)** ⁴ *The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.*
 - b. Many live on farms outside the city
 - c. There is room for many more people in the city
3. The people need some encouragement to move from their homes and livelihoods into Jerusalem
4. In other words, they need a reason to make the glory of God the point of their lives.
 - a. They have done the present work and solved the immediate problem
 - b. But now there is a need for those who will commit their lives to the ongoing mission of spreading the knowledge of the glory of the Lord by living in and sustaining the city.
 - (1) Like **short term missionaries**, they have made the trip, experienced the joy of some success
 - (2) But now, there is a need for some who went and returned to go and stay for the sake of the gospel of God among the lost.

II. Nehemiah and the Promise Keeping God

A. Nehemiah reminds the people God keeps His promises

1. Nehemiah finds the 100 year old census of the first returnees
 - a. Nehemiah reads the census account to the gathered people

- b. Nehemiah reads their names, their numbers, and their financial sacrifices to the glory of God
- 2. Why bother?
 - a. The people to whom Nehemiah is speaking are direct descendants of those about whom he is speaking
 - b. The people to whom Nehemiah is speaking are the direct beneficiaries of the previous generation's commitment and generosity
 - c. The people to whom Nehemiah is speaking stand in the same place others have stood and need to be reminded of one very important fact: God keeps His promises to those who put Him first and are faithful to Him.

B. The exile and the return promised

- 1. God sent Israel into exile as a result of sin
- 2. God sent Israel into exile with a promise
 - a. **Jeremiah 29:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *"For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place."*
- 3. God kept His promise
 - a. As Nehemiah reads the list of names and the account of their financial support for the ministry of rebuilding, Nehemiah reminds the people in a very concrete way that God keeps His promises
 - b. **Isaiah 48:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ *Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"*
 - c. **Ezra 1:1-4 (ESV)** ¹ *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ² "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."*

C. The promises God makes to us

- 1. God sent salvation through Jesus Christ
 - a. All have sinned and need a Savior
 - b. Jesus Christ is that Savior
 - (1) He lived for God
 - (2) He died for us

2. God sends purpose through Great Commission
 - a. Salvation is personal
 - b. Salvation is purposeful: “Go and make disciples”
3. God sends power through the Holy Spirit
 - a. **Acts 1:8 (ESV) *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.***
 - b. Jesus gives to us the same scope of ministry God gave Nehemiah
 - c. Jesus adds the power of the present Holy Spirit to the promises of God

III. The Point of Chapter 7:

A. From Gary Smith

1. “Every generation of believers has a challenge to carry on the tradition of striving to do great things in the name of” and for the glory of God.
2. Nehemiah’s challenge was restoring the wall and rebuilding God’s reputation among His people and the surrounding nations.
3. “Opposition will always be present, the move will always require faith, but God will always guide and bless His people as they give themselves and their money to the work of God in this hostile world.” (Gary Smith quotes)

B. From Pastor Dale and the Holy Spirit

1. Cornerstone, we too, who believe, have both the challenge and the opportunity to strive for the glory of God in a hostile setting.
2. The hostility, at the moment is subtle, but insidious.
 - a. Your love for Jesus and commitment to faith and holiness is generally neither welcomed, nor appreciated, nor accepted as a basis for social relationship or conduct.
 - (1) You are no hero because you do the right thing.
 - (2) You are no model because you choose the godly path.
 - (3) You are no leader because you rely on God’s word and God’s Spirit to direct your paths.
 - b. More and more the people among whom we live demonstrate how greatly the world needs the love God embodies in Jesus.
 - c. More and more you can see the stifling, deceitful work of the evil one.
 - (1) I remember in the early 1980 the rise of the “religious right” in the political arena and the impact religious conservatives had on the political and social scene.
 - (a) Everyone knew something about Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority.
 - (b) Today we begin to read about the “religious left.”
 - (2) The rise of religious liberalism has its own name in print these days, but the summary statements do not reveal a power to be reckoned with.
 - (a) Many who call themselves Christians have become so like the world in their thinking and the

application of faith in the real world that even the world dismisses them as powerless, irrelevant, and no force for social change.

- (b) Essentially, their presence adds nothing to the debate.
- (c) They are simply fans in the stands waving the colors of their team.
- d. More and more the world in which we live finds reasons to dismiss faith and the people who hold it, and as they do, they also dismiss God in His glory, Christ in His love, the Spirit in His power, and the word in its wisdom.
 - (1) More and more the world demands silence and stillness from those truly committed to the glory of God in every aspect of life.
 - (2) More and more the world laughs and sneers at the ruined walls of a broken down church and a defeated people.
- C. More and more, then, this is a time for God's people, redeemed through the blood of the cross and standing in faith on the promises of God, to live boldly and confidently a holy, faithful life under the direct empowerment of the Spirit of God.
 - 1. More and more, then, this is a time to love the gospel, live the gospel, proclaim the gospel, and invite others to the gospel. More and more, then, this is a time to step up to the commitment we made at baptism, to arise to walk in newness of life.
 - 2. More and more, then, this is the time to put away self-seeking endeavors, to resist what John calls the love of the world, the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.
 - 3. You want to know what to do with yourselves? You want me to make this all practical? Then here it is:
 - a. "Be ye therefore holy as I am the Lord your God am holy."
 - b. "Love one another earnestly.
 - c. "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
 - d. "⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.**"
 - e. "Live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human

passions but for the will of God.”

4. Simply put:
 - a. make everything you are and everything you do, in public and in private, serve the glory of God.
 - b. Everything Nehemiah has done has served one single purpose, to restore among God’s people and among the nations, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.
 - (1) This is now your mission.
 - (2) Make it your life.