

THE LEADERSHIP OF NEHEMIAH

Isaiah 55:1-5

INTRODUCTION

- A. Note in these texts, “under the hand” – leadership. Cf. NU 7:8; 33:1; 2 SA 18:2; PS 109:8 (“office”); PR 11:14 (“counsel”); MC 1:9 (“unto the gate”); Acts 1:20 (“bishoprick”); RO 12:8 (“he that ruleth”); 1 CO 12:28 (“governments”); 1 TI 5:17 (“rule”).
- B. Leaders – 1 CH 13:1; 2 CH 32:21; IS 9:16; 55:4; MT 15:14.
- C. The beginning of leadership is a battle for the hearts and minds of men.

DISCUSSION

- I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEWS.
 - A. 975 BC the OT Kingdom of Israel divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).
 - B. The Northern Kingdom lasted 253 years and the Southern Kingdom lasted 389 years.
 - C. In 722 BC the capital city of the Northern Kingdom fell, Samaria, and the Assyrian Captivity began.
 - D. The Southern Kingdom was first attack by Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon) in 606 BC; second attack occurred in 597 BC; and the final attack 586 BC.
 - E. The Southern Kingdom was a slave people for 70 years (606-536 BC) in Babylon. JE 25:11-12.
 - F. In 536 BC we have the “great Emancipation Proclamation by Cyrus the Great, King of Persia. This decree allowed all the Jews who wanted to, to return to Judah. IS 44:28; 45:1.
 - 1. Zerubbabel – led 50,000 Jews back to their homeland.
 - 2. About 80 years later – 456 BC – Ezra led 7000 more back. EZ 7:10; NE 8:10.
 - 3. About 13 years later – 443 BC – Nehemiah began his great work of reformation and restoration. He completed his work in 432 BC (the end of the OT).
- II. NEHEMIAH IS A STUDY OF REAL LEADERSHIP.
 - A. Nehemiah was a man of deep compassion – 1:4.
 - 1. 1:2 shows his concern. 1:11 shows him to be a responsible person.
 - 2. He was a man of integrity (the king’s cupbearer) – possess uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The king knew that his life was in Nehemiah’s hands.
 - 3. Nehemiah was concern about the honor of God.
 - B. Nehemiah was a man who recognized HIS responsibility to do something – to do what he could. 2:5. Cf. 2 TI 2:15; 2 PE 3:18.
 - C. Nehemiah had the authority to do the job which God wanted him to do – 2:7-9.
 - D. Nehemiah sought no personal gain or glory – rather, he sought the welfare of Israel – 2:10. Cf. EP 3:21. Look at some of the characteristics manifested in Nehemiah’s life.
 - 1. Courtesy – 2:3 “Let the king live forever” – This can open the hearts of people to be receptive to the things which are presented.
 - 2. Honesty – 2:3 – he made no attempt to hide the real problem.
 - 3. Continuing in prayer – 2:4.
 - 4. Counting the cost – 2:6-8.
 - 5. Contributing he success to God – 3:8. Cf. 1 CO 1:31.
 - 6. He “came” – 2:9, 11 – he did not send – he came himself.
 - E. Nehemiah carefully surveyed the situation, gathered facts, studied the facts, and made plans BEFORE he took any action – 2:11-15.

1. Nehemiah was cautious because he did not want someone to ruin the plan which he had in mind and to defeat his purpose in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. False teachers try to destroy the work – GA 2:4 – Paul was cautious – GA 2:2.
 2. Nehemiah worked behind the scenes in order that he might accomplish his purpose.
 3. Nehemiah obtained first-hand information. He viewed the walls (situation).
- F. Nehemiah was a man of prayer. His prayer was based on deeply-felt need – 1:2, 3. His prayer showed his reverence for God. He appreciated the greatness of God. He recognized that God was faithful to His word. He understood that God was a merciful God and they were undeserving of any of His blessings. He knows that in order for God to hear one's prayer there have to be loving obedience. He confessed his sins - 1:6, 7. His prayer was based on the word of God. He was conscious of the barriers. He was confident. He was ready to be used. He had perseverance in prayer – Compare 1:1 with 2:1. He had the proper conception of God – 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20; 9:32.
1. 1:4-11. He asked for God's favor for 4 months – 1:1; 2:1.
 2. When he heard of the condition of Jerusalem he fasted and prayed. 2:4-5.
 3. He prayed when others scorned. 4:1-4.
 4. He prayed when the opposition tried to stop the work. 4:8, 9.
 5. He prayed when Sanballat tried to get him to compromise. 6:9.
 6. After the completion. 12:27.
- G. Nehemiah was careful not to say anything or to do anything which would jeopardize his work – 2:16. Here we find effective communication. "It is here that elders experience their greatest failure." Franklin Camp.
1. Nehemiah asked the rulers to look at the situation. Why? So they would see the need. He had faith in them.
 2. Nehemiah identified himself with them. "I" looked at the wall and "you" should ...etc. No, Nehemiah included himself among those upon whom the reproach fell.
 3. Nehemiah reminded them that God's hand had been upon him for good, that God had prospered him.
 4. The value of Nehemiah's communication is found in 2:18. Note the "they's."
- H. Nehemiah sought the full cooperation of the people in whose behalf he would be working – 2:17, 18.
1. In 2:17, Nehemiah asked the rulers to look at the situation.
 2. In 2:18, we see the results of effective communication. Their response clearly shows the clarity of Nehemiah's communication.
 3. Also in 3:5. Some did not want to cooperate. This circumstance did not hinder Nehemiah; he did not allow a minority to stop the work.
 4. Nehemiah was not inconsiderate of the minority; he just knew that they were wrong, and there was no reason for their not helping in the work.
 5. Chapter 3 is a record of coordinated work of brethren working together. Cf. 1 CO 3:9; 2 CO 6:1.
- I. Nehemiah would not be deterred by the scorn of the enemies or by the force of the opposition – but steadfastly looked to God – 2:19-20.
1. There were the enemies without. This was seen in form of scorn – 4:1-6; force – 6:7:23; and craftiness – 6:1-19. Remember the prophets of old – MT 5:10-12.

2. There were the hindrances from within- the debris – 4:10; fear – 4:11-14; and greed – 5:1-13.
 3. Nehemiah told those from without – 2:20. He told them clearly and emphatically that they had no business being involved in these matters. Cf. Acts 8:14-25.
 4. Why did Nehemiah do this? These people worshiped idols – 2 KI 17:33. To allow them to participate in the work would bring mixed worship into Jerusalem. He knew this would not be acceptable to God.
 5. There was opposition. There were loaded questions – 19. There was no room for compromise. 2:20 was Nehemiah's answer.
- J. Nehemiah carefully systematized the work to be done. There must be cooperation and unity to accomplish the work of God (the church). It takes a combined, coordinated effort.
1. This is stressed repeatedly in chapter 3. Nehemiah coordinated the work so that nothing was left to chance.
 2. Note the word "next" in 3:2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19.
 3. Note the word "after" in 3:16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31.
 4. There is great emphasis upon definite assignments and specific responsibilities. Each man had a definite job to do, and he was held responsible for his job. Cf. MK 13:34. Assignments were based upon their interest. There were people of different backgrounds and different characteristics. They were to be molded together to accomplish the task. Read RO 16 and notice carefully the variety of people who are described.
 5. There will be those who will not want to cooperate – 3:5. We should not allow the minority to defeat a given work or keep the church from engaging in a work.
 6. Nehemiah arranged the work so that various ones could feel they were working where they were needed. There are no "outsiders" or "cliques."
- K. Nehemiah did not stop nor slow down the work because of opposition – 4:3, 4, 16-18.
1. Nehemiah was able to handle criticism from his opposition – 4:10-11. Look at 4:8. Conspiracy causes confusion and disrupts unity.
 2. How did Nehemiah handle this? He prayed; he did not retaliate (RO 12:17, 19; Example of Jesus – 1 PE 2:21-23); he did not quit; and he would not allow them to discourage him – 4:9.
 3. Nehemiah's advice – 4:9. He kept before them the importance of the conflict, which is a unique way to handle complaints. He inspired hope and confidence in the midst of discouragement. Criticism leads to discouragement. Leaders need to know how to face criticism and overcome discouragement.
 4. Because of this he was worthy of his position and he would be successful in accomplishing whatever tasks and opportunities that are placed before them.
 5. Complainers – 4:10-11. Judah should have been the last one to complain but he was the one taking the lead in complaining!
- L. Nehemiah was careful to protect the work and the workers – 4:20.
1. Faced with criticism and discouragement, Nehemiah did not allow the people to lose sight of what their real work was. It was necessary for them to give attention to the enemies but the wall was still to be built. They did not want to play into the hands of the enemies. 4:15-23.
 2. Their concentration led to a greater dedication and commitment. They guarded the wall by night and labored during the day. They had balance!

3. Their concentration and commitment are shown in 4:23.
- M. Nehemiah realized and stressed that he and the people were instruments in the hand of God – 4:20 – “our God shall fight for us.”
1. But, the frailties of faithful followers often create problems and tension. 5:1-13.
 2. They lost sight of their responsibilities. They forgot about what God said. They allowed selfishness to control them. They place their own interests above those of the general good and of their brethren. Materialism is the problem - like with Eve in GE 3:6; Israel’s 2nd battle was lost – Joshua 7; Ananias & Sapphira – Acts 5. Warnings of materialism – 1 TI 6:6-10, 17, 18.
 3. What can one do?
 - a. Listen (5:1-5) – Listening is important when one is confronted with a problem. To thoroughly understand the problem one must take the time to listen.
 - b. Seek the cause of the problem. Don’t deal with “symptoms” – get to the source of the problem!
 - c. Take action that is based on Scripture – DT 23:20; NE 5:10.
 - d. Success comes – the problem is corrected – 5:12, 13
- N. Nehemiah was a man of confident faith, and he was a strong believer in the providence of God – 2:8, 18, 20; 4:20.
1. Nehemiah had the confidence of his followers – 5:14-15.
 2. This confidence rests upon character, and Nehemiah’s kept him from following the practice of those who had preceded him. Out of character comes confidence, and from confidence comes followers.
 3. Nehemiah was sensitive to the needs of the people around him.
 4. Nehemiah lived in the fear of God.
- O. Nehemiah would not stop the work to take time to talk with the enemies – 6:2-4.
1. Nehemiah saw through their tactics. He made a “critical analysis of the problems.” Noted the timing of the enemies. There is a place in life for tests (of one’s faith). Tests faced and overcome makes one stronger. 6:2 – they sent an invitation to compromise – shows they were not going to give up. 6:4 – they were persistent (sent 4 times). They changed their tactics – sent open letter – 6:6, 7. This letter said – 6:6, 19. It was nothing but a “rumor.” Nehemiah deals with the rumor – How?
 - a. He denied it – 6:8.
 - b. He gave a critical analysis of it – the ability to see truth. He knew what they were trying to do. He saw through their charges. He knew they were false. He prays – 6:9. All gossipers and rumor-mongers are the brethren of Sanballat and his kind.
 2. Because of prior dealings with them Nehemiah knew they were not interested in the work which he was doing or the cause for which he was working.
 3. Nehemiah knew them by their fruit. Cf. MT 7:15-20. He saw clearly their purpose and knew it was evil. He looked beyond the surface. The work was too important to stop – 6:3.
- P. Nehemiah would not be intimidated by the lies of the enemies – 6:5-9.
- Q. Nehemiah was able to detect the false prophets, and he refused to be made afraid – 6:10-14.
1. 6:10-13 – The scare tactic.
 - a. Nehemiah refused to allow these to cause him to do wrong.

- b. Nehemiah knew the truth. It would be wrong for him to go into the temple 6:11-12. He faced this problem not in fear but in faith. He was not self-serving, but God-serving.
2. Nehemiah was confronted with internal enemies based upon fleshly ties – 6:17. Cf. MT 12:50.
3. Nehemiah was able to analyze the problem. Now note 6:15. He did not get bogged down trying to deal with problems. The church today does and a world is dying without Christ. The real work of the church is the preaching of the Gospel to a world which is lost.
- R. Nehemiah was a man who knew how to delegate responsibilities – 7:1-3.
 1. The wall is finished NOW we'll set back and the people will come. It should be remembered that the city was not populated – 7:4.
 2. Nehemiah made careful selection of men to help move into the NEXT project – 7:2.
 3. Character was the basis of selection. It is interesting to note that one of these men was a brother to Nehemiah, but he was not selected because of "kindred" but because of character.
 4. Nehemiah delegated work to men and then authorized them to delegate work to others. 7:3. Training, equipping, and mentoring men for the work.
 5. In the repopulation of the city, Nehemiah was careful to see that corrupt people were not allowed to enter. 7:61-64.
 6. Who would contribute to the work? 7:70 – the chief of the fathers took the lead in contributing to this work and this encouraged and influenced the others – 7:72.
 7. Nehemiah contemplated the needs of the future. 7:73. If Nehemiah had folded his hands when the wall was completed this verse would never have been written. There would be no blank pages in their history.
- S. Nehemiah was properly concerned about teaching the people God's Word – 8:1-9.
 1. The wall was built; the city was populated, what now? What did the future hold? Where could they go from here?
 2. 8:5-8 gives the one word that is the KEY that lays the groundwork for continued progress. That word is "understand" – Hebrew – "to understand..... to cause to understand, give understanding, teach." 8:2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12. What was the basis of their understanding? 8:1 – "the book."
 3. Who takes the lead? Not Nehemiah, Ezra! See Ezra 7:10. He had prepared his heart. He was a student.
 4. Ezra's students were not pressured to come. They were willing, voluntary students. They were hungry to know truth. They were attentive – 8:3. They were not in a hurry – 8:3 Rushing through the Bible does not bring "learned behavior" or much knowledge. They were reverent – 8:6.
 5. The effects of Ezra's "class" are seen. It produced contrition of heart – 8:9. Their conviction of sin did not leave them with a sense of guilt – 8:10. They obeyed – 8:15-16. This teaching brought about unity – 8:1, 17.
 6. Just something "extra" – Nothing is said of Ezra's personality or his being a "good mixer." He was a teacher. Here is where understanding begins and ends.
- T. Nehemiah would not tolerate fellowshiping the sinner – 13:4-11, 28.
 1. Wouldn't you like to hear Nehemiah preach a sermon of "fellowship?"
 2. Nehemiah did not hold to the doctrine of "unity in diversity."

3. Nehemiah did not hold to the doctrine that “there should be no disfellowship for any cause.”
4. Nehemiah did not subscribe to the theory that “If I can’t fellowship him in the sense of “fellowship” with a little “f” I can still fellowship him in the sense of “fellowship” with a capital “F.”
5. Nehemiah did not hold to the theory that “I cannot disfellowship him because he is in error – since all my brothers are brothers in error.”
6. Confession of sins takes place in 9:1ff. They confessed their refusing to hear the Word. The prayer uttered not only shows God’s faithfulness but also His mercy.
7. 10:28 – “separated” – Consecration means separation from the world for the service of God. Consecration is based upon understanding.
 - a. Their homes were consecrated. Their homes were places of spiritual growth.
 - b. Consecrated lives place spiritual things above material things. 10:31. They honored the Sabbath.
 - c. Consecration means unselfishness – 10:32 – they supported the House of God.
 - d. Consecration means putting “first things first.” 10:35-37 “firsts”.
 - e. Consecration produces willing workers. 11:2.
8. Effective leadership produces consecrated people who are willing to serve.
9. 12:30 – This verse deal with Judaism but there is a principle which is vital to all leadership and those who are under them. “It takes clean lives of leaders to lead a congregation of clean people.”
- U. Nehemiah was deeply grieved when people disobeyed God’s law – 13:8, 29, 30.
- V. Nehemiah was careful to point out the sins of the people – his preaching was plain, pointed, and powerful, both to the Israelites and the non-Israelites – 13:15-21.

CONCLUSION

- A. In our pondering these thoughts about Nehemiah and his work, may God help us to learn the many scriptural principles and characteristic involved in real leadership.
- B. “When all is said and done, more will be said than done!”
 1. It takes planning, prayer, study, selection, and work to have real leadership.
 2. It is time for us to realize that and start acting as though leadership is ordained of God.
- C. RO 15:4.
- D. A leader, whose dedication to the task at hand is balanced by his concern for others, will be able to view the whole project – the work and the workers – with proper discernment.
- E. Leaders need to probe Nehemiah’s life, emulate his integrity, learn from his conviction, develop the sense of loyalty, understand the dynamics of leadership, and exercise the same tactfulness.
- F. Elders and those who want to be elders should learn these lessons as well.