Nehemiah 4-5

Review…

- Rebuilding the Wall…
  - Nehemiah lived in the city of Shushan - he was a cupbearer to the King of Persia…
    - In the month of Kislev he was walking around the city – and was given news about Jerusalem…
    - It had been over 90 years since Zerubbabel first returned – but the city was still in ruins!
    - Nehemiah fasted and prayed to God – and he realized God wanted to use him!
  - In the 20th year of Artaxerxes - in the month of Nisan – Nehemiah stood before the King…
    - He gave wine to Artaxerxes – but had a sad look on his face – the King asked what was wrong…
    - Nehemiah was broken hearted for his people – so the King asked what he wanted…
    - Nehemiah asked to be sent back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem – and the King agreed!
  - 3 days after arriving in Jerusalem – Nehemiah snuck out at night to look at the damage…
    - When he returned he gathered the leaders of Judah – and told them his purpose…
    - They rallied behind Nehemiah – and agreed to start rebuilding the wall!
    - Nehemiah did extensive organizing – breaking the wall down into manageable chunks…
    - And he was not alone in the work – he had multitudes that helped finish the task…
    - But the work started and ended at the Sheep Gate – a picture of Jesus Christ!

Overcoming danger… (*2 things*)

- **1st – Danger from without… vs. 1-23**
  - 1st – Mocking the work of God… vs. 1-5
    - Sanballat heard Jews were rebuilding the wall – made him furious (*burned with great anger*)…
      - Sanballat was a leader in Samaria – and they were not happy with the Jews…
      - The Samaritans wanted to help rebuild the Temple - **Ezra 4:1-5** - but were not allowed…
      - They were a mixed faith – a combination of paganism and Judaism…
      - And Zerubbabel had wisely refused to let them have any part in the Temple!
      - **Ezra 4:4** - "Then the people of [Samaria] tried to discourage... [the Jews] in building..."
      - The Samaritans failed to keep the Temple from being rebuilt…
      - But at least they had been able to keep the Jews from going any further for 70 years!
      - So Sanballat was furious that the Jews were again stepping out in faith / trusting the Lord!
      - The world/satan would love nothing more than to get us to reject Jesus Christ…
      - But if they cannot get us to reject the Lord – then they at least do not want us to grow…
      - We can believe in Jesus – but think an education / money / job are more important…
      - Or we can go to a Bible study – just not every week – maybe once a month…
      - Anything to keep us from living a sold out life for Jesus Christ - compromise our walk…
      - So if we dare to step out in faith – make no mistake – it makes our enemy furious!
    - Sanballat and Tobiah mocked the Jews…
      - What are these 'weak Jews' trying to do – build a wall (*fortify*) / in a day…
        - Rebuilding a city from ruins – stones that had been burned (*making them fragile*)!
        - The term Jews is one that came into use only after the Babylonian captivity…
        - The idea was to remind the 'Jews' they were a conquered weak nation…
        - And the work they were trying to accomplish was impossible!
        - Satan loves to remind us of our past – the accuser of the brethren - **Revelation 12:10**
        - He has all the 'evidence' he needs - all our sins / our immoral past...
        - He wants us to think we will never be a Godly man/woman – it is impossible!

- But we to not get frustrated in our walk - good fruit takes time and patience to grow...
  - **Psalm 1:1-3** - "Blessed is the man... delight is in he Law of the Lord... he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth fruit in its season."
  - As we attend church / read our Bibles / pray – changes do happen - slowly…
  - Rather than looking for the fruit - we just need to keep busy serving Jesus...
  - As we are faithful to abide in Jesus – spending time in His Word...
  - in God's time we will bear great fruit - so keep doing good – **Galatians 6:9**
- Tobiah added that if a fox walked on their new wall – it would collapse…
  - The idea being they were working with sub-par material – useless ruined stones!
  - Our enemy would love to try and make us think we are worthless – ruined…
  - But nothing the devil says is true - everything that comes from him is a lie – **John 8:44**
  - He lies and tells you sin is fun - just give it a try - get you hooked like a drug dealer...
  - He lies and tells you once you have sinned - you cannot go back to God...
  - But the truth is we are precious stones – which God will use to build an eternal home!
  - **I Peter 2:5** - "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house..."

▪ Nehemiah prayed to God against the Samaritans…
- It is a rather harsh prayer – let them be conquered / do not let their sins be forgiven…
- It was said in the heat of the moment – spoken in anger – and it was wrong!
- **Luke 6:27** – "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you…"
- We are not to curse those who come against us – we are to love them…
- Because they are not our real enemies – they are the ones we need to reach!
- They are just puppets - being told what to say and do by the God of this world...
- If we get upset / argue with what they do or say – we are arguing with a puppet!
- The key is to go at the one who is in control - attack the root problem!
- Rather than get upset with the people – pray for them to believe in Jesus Christ!

o 2nd – Threatening the workers of God… vs. 6-15

▪ Sanballat and crew grew furious when they heard the wall was ½ finished… vs. 6-10
- They made plans to attack Jerusalem and create confusion - to stop the work on the wall…
- At the same time the work took a toll – men of Judah complained they were exhausted!
- Times are often the most difficult in life – just before God does the most amazing work
- I fear too often we give up – wear out – just before God does something incredible…
- It is good to remember - it is always the darkest – just before the dawn!

▪ Then the enemy started spreading rumors… vs. 11-12
- The Jews would never see them coming – surprise and kill them – to stop the work…
- The Jews who lived near Samaria reported (10x) they were coming from all directions!
- You may have noticed that if you tell someone 'good news' – it stops there…
- But a good piece of 'bad news' quickly becomes juicy gossip and spreads!
- We are not to be a part of telling others rumors – do not spread gossip!
- **James 3:5** – "The tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do…"

▪ Nehemiah did not ignore the threats… vs. 13-15
- He posted armed guards at low points in the wall / and at the uncovered gates…
- But he encouraged the people not to be afraid – because the Lord is great and awesome!
- A title God gave in **Deuteronomy 7:21** – talking about his power to fight for Israel!
- God reminded Israel of what He did to Egypt - the superpower of the day...
- 10 increasingly devastating plagues - topped off by parting an ocean!
- God would use the same mighty power against the nations in the Land...
- Stop the sun in the sky for a day - rain down hail from heaven - **Joshua 10:12-13**
- With God on our side - 1 can defeat 1,000 / 2 can defeat 10,000 - **Deuteronomy 32:30**

- If God is the one fighting for us - who can possibly stand against us - **Romans 8:31**
- As we learn to depend on the Lord - we are absolutely assured of our victory...
- Sin / satan / the flesh do not stand a chance - God will overcome them all!
- He will complete the work of salvation He began in our lives - **Philippians 1:6**

o 3rd – Ready for the battle… vs. 16-23

- Be prepared: From that time on – Nehemiah divided the labor force… vs. 16-17
  - ½ worked on the wall – while the other ½ was armed ready to defend the city…
  - Even those who worked on the wall – had a shovel in one hand / and a sword in the other!
  - No matter what we are called to do in life – we need to carry a sword – **Hebrews 4:12**
  - Because we at war – and never know when we might get an change to use it…
  - If we are unsure of ourselves about the Word of God - the hope of Jesus...
  - We are not going to be very effective – we are going to be embarrassed when asked...
  - So get we need to know our Bible - know how to find important verses - be prepared!
  - **I Peter 3:15** - "If you are asked about your hope, always be ready to explain it."
- Be united: The workers were spread out all over the city… vs. 18-20
  - Nehemiah kept a trumpeter near him - so he could sound the alarm at any moment…
  - If they heard the trumpet – they were to rush together – and God would fight for them!
  - When we face challenges and hardships in life – we are not alone…
  - In Christ - we are not called to be an Island – we are called to be part of a family…
  - So that we are able to stand for God – reminding each other that the Lord fights for us!
- Be diligent: They assigned spearmen to guard the city from sunrise to sunset… vs. 21-23
  - Then they all who worked during the way – also stayed to guard the city at night…
  - They did not even take off their clothes – except to take the occasional bath!
  - The simple point being - they worked hard – it was not easy to serve the Lord...
  - In the same way we as believers need to train - work hard...
  - Living for Jesus is a daily choice - and it takes work and commitment on our part...
  - We choose to take the time to get into God's Word - set-aside time to pray...
  - We make the time to attend Bible studies - grow in our faith...
  - We need to avoid those temptations in life that would distract us!

- **2ND – DANGER FORM WITHIN… VS. 1-19**

o 1st – The complaints of the people… vs. 1-5

- The people came to Nehemiah complaining there was not enough food because of a famine…
  - They had large families – and although there was food to buy – they could not afford it!
  - Some complained they had mortgaged their land to buy food / pay their taxes…
  - Others complained they had to go so far as to sell their children into slavery!
- As if being in constant fear of an attack from without were not enough…
  - Nehemiah had to also deal with attacks that came from within – from his own people!
  - Because satan will not limit himself to just one strategy – he will come on multiple fronts!
  - **I Peter 5:8** - "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour."
  - Satan is smart - he knows at direct attack against the people of God is often useless...
  - He can make noise - but he is like a lion without teeth - bark worse than bite!
  - A much better strategy is to try to stir up trouble - he will attack us from within…
  - He will try to cause problems – try and get the church to turn on itself!
  - **Luke 13:18-19** – Parable of the Mustard Seed – if you cannot beat them / join them!

o 2nd - Set my people free… vs. 6-13

- Furious – Nehemiah called a meeting of the guilty nobles and rulers… vs. 6-7

- He accused them of charging interest to their Jewish brothers…
- God commanded the Jews to never charge interest to their brothers - **Exodus 22:25-26**…
- They were not to take advantage of those in need – if they wanted to help – just give!
- **Romans 13:8 –** "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."
- It is a good idea not to lend to others – people are thrilled when you give to them…
- Then avoid you like the plague when it comes time to be paid back…
- Better to simple give it if you have it – if you do not then you cannot!

▪ Nehemiah accused them of selling the people of God into slavery… vs. 8-9
- God had redeemed the people of Israel from the bondage of – Egypt / Babylon…
- But now the rulers were selling their own brothers back into that same slavery!
- They were not walking in the fear of God – thinking about the result of their actions…
- The pagan nations around them were watching their terrible witness!
- We are called take care of our own – provide for the needs of others in the church…
- And how we react sends a message to the world – tells them what God is like!
- When we do not help – we force those who are lacking to turn to the world for answers…
- It sends a terrible message to unbelievers – God does not even care about His own kids…
- It becomes no surprise people are not that interested in getting to know Jesus!

▪ Nehemiah called on the guilty to restore what they had taken… vs. 10-13
- They were to give back that very day - the land / crops / houses / food / even interest…
- The nobles did not argue - they agreed to the terms unconditionally…
- Nehemiah had them take an oath before the priests – promising to comply…
- He then warned them with a curse – if they broke their word…
- God would 'shake' them out of their home and property if they disobeyed!
- **Proverbs 28:8** – "A person who makes money by charging interest will lose it. It will end up in the hands of someone who is kind to the poor."
- Taking advantage of others may gain momentary wealth - but then God opposes you...
- So many people try and rip off others just to make a few extra dollars...
- Missing the blessings of God - that would bring eternal riches!

o 3rd – The example of Nehemiah… vs. 14-19

▪ In the 12 years Nehemiah served as governor of Judah – he never collected a personal tax…
- Those who had come before him demanded – bread / wine / and 40 shekels of silver…
- Even the servants of those men lorded their power / position over the people!
- But Nehemiah did not – even though he fed 150 rulers at his table daily…
- He never bought land (*settled in*) - and he and his servants worked on the wall!
- He did this because of the fear of God – and the heavy burden of the people!
- Too many pastors today abuse they authority they are given in the church...
- They use the pulpit as a means for personal gain - taking advantage of the people of God...
- The result is people are wary of the church - the Gospel message becomes tainted!

▪ Nehemiah asked that God remember what he had done for the people
- He was not looking for a reward from men – he knew his reward came from the Lord!
- If you asked me to set up a computer for you - I would expect you pay me for the work...
- But if someone else asked me to set it up for you - they would be the one to pay!
- If a pastor is truly called by God – does not look to the people to provide for him…
- He understands He works for God – and trust in the Lord to provide for all his needs!