

GOD'S MAN, GOD'S PLAN, GOD'S HAND: GOD'S PEOPLE MOTIVATED TO WORK Nehemiah 2

In chapter 2 of Nehemiah we have the transition from a burden God has given one man to a well-planned vision of the work to be done. The key to remember is that Nehemiah's motive was to make God's name great. If our motive is to lift up Jesus, make His name great . . . Almighty God will work!

If God is going to work in our midst:

I. OUR MOTIVE MUST BE TO GO WORK, BUILD, REPAIR— NOT JUST STAND BACK AND CRITICIZE!

Nehemiah's spirit was that of a builder. Don't lament the current condition; do something about it. In order to do that, we must be in touch with the true "Builder." Remember what Jesus said to Peter: "upon this confession of my Lordship . . . I will build my church."

II. GOD CAN MAKE A WAY WHEN THE WAY SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE

- Nehemiah – cupbearer
- Artaxerxes – satisfied – no reason to do what he did
- Nehemiah – prayed 4 months – waited for God to work, open a door

The king noticed Nehemiah's countenance; he inquired "what's wrong," etc. When Nehemiah had his opening, he submitted to authority and he asked specifically for several things.

As we move forward, we need to be specific with what God has put on our hearts (in line with God's Word). This takes prayer and visionary thinking.

Note that Artaxerxes granted everything that Nehemiah asked for! Nehemiah said it this way: "For the good hand of my God was upon me"!

This is a sign that Nehemiah was submissive to God in his personal life. There was no "churchianity" here. He was the real deal, honest with God, and he loved the Lord with all his heart.

I believe God wants to do a work here! But we must desire Jesus daily. We must let Him prune us. And we must want what He wants! . . . changed lives, a community and valley touched for His glory—His name. Then God's hand will be upon us. That is when He will open doors—i.e. when His burden becomes our burden then His hand will be on us.

III. MANY TIMES FOLLOWING GOD'S SPIRIT MEANS FOLLOWING HIS DETAILED PLAN

Nehemiah had thought this through under the power of God's Spirit. He had a plan.

IV. GOD'S PLANS ALWAYS REQUIRE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Nehemiah inspected the walls—how is it? where are the deep breaks? what will be needed to start? how much work will it take? what will be the cost?

As Riverdale enters into this next chapter, we will need the Lord to assess our hearts, the condition of our lives, the witness of this congregation, the spiritual togetherness of the congregation . . . all of that. But there is good news here; we know the Scripture says: "If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in due time He will lift you up." Jesus wants His disciples to be continually transformed. (Read Rom. 12:1-2; John 8:30-31)

There are assessment tools available for local churches. We must understand our condition before we know what to do. But I can tell you this: if we are honest with God, honest with ourselves, and if we go to Jesus in surrender, I am telling you HE WILL DO A WORK THROUGH US! He will make His name great.

V. IN ORDER FOR RIVERDALE TO MOVE FORWARD WE MUST BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A WAY FORWARD

Nehemiah went to the people and shared his plans. Note he used the word "WE" – "you see the trouble we are in," "come let us build the walls." Nehemiah shared how the hand of God had been with him. And some of the people understood the challenge from Nehemiah; once they "got it" they said, "Let us

rise up and build.” They believed that God’s hand was on Nehemiah, that he understood that there was a way forward. And they believed that Jerusalem could indeed be God’s city again.

VI. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOME THAT SNEER AT GOD—THOSE WHO BELIEVE NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE

- Sanballat – the Honorite – a city of Moab.
- Tobiah – the Ammonite; “the Moabite and the Ammonite shall not come into the congregation of God forever.” Deuteronomy. Why” – because they did not help the Hebrews when they came through going to the promised land!
- Gesham – an Arab – an Ishmaelite – a type of the natural man opposed to the Seed of promise – a half-breed not interested in the genuine things of God.

VII. IF ANY CHURCH SEEKS TO FOLLOW JESUS AND LIFT HIM UP BEFORE MEN—HE WILL WORK IN AND THROUGH THAT CHURCH

FIRST OF ALL:

This is personal. Each of us must decide: am I willing to follow Jesus with all of my life? What steps of obedience do I need to take? How will my life look different to God, to others?

SECONDLY:

This is for the local body known as Riverdale Baptist Church. How is this church going to follow Jesus in how it functions? God’s pruning applies to the church—our motives, our hearts,

our joy. Can God sanctify His church? YES. But we must yield our preferences to Him and His mission of making genuine disciples.

THIRDLY:

This is for the Roanoke Valley and beyond; it is for all those that the Lord wants to bless through the ministry of Riverdale Baptist Church! There was a reason for the burden that the Lord gave Nehemiah: He wanted His name to be lifted up among the nations. And of course they are, historically speaking, only about 400 years ahead of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. This is preparation for the King of Kings to be on our planet. This is a precursor to the religious and political scene that was present in Jesus' day! So there is a larger view present here. And we need to realize that we are responsible, in part, to the Lord God for His witness through this body. The lives of some of the people in this valley AND in this world depend on us yielding to Jesus now and crying out to Him for His direction and grace.

This is also a picture of what the Lord is going to do when the end of time comes. He is going to restore, renew; He is coming to reign in the New Jerusalem. This is a figure or type of the new city in which Jesus will reign. I tell you friends, we can be participants in a DISPLAY OF HIS GLORY HERE IN THESE DAYS if we yield to Him and desire His name to be GREAT in this valley.

We have a promise here in the Word: THE GOD OF HEAVEN WILL MAKE US PROSPER! Friends, I believe that today. But I also know that He works where He is followed seriously and

people let Him have access to everything in their lives. In these next few months this church has some serious work to do. The Lord specializes in taking that which is seemingly small and doing a great work. Now hear me: that great work is not buildings and budgets, it is CHANGED LIVES. People coming to Jesus in sweet surrender and having their lives radically changed. That goes for those that already know Him as well as those who need Christ! Change us, oh Lord.

Jesus died on the Cross as our sinbearer and substitute, our representative. He took the wrath meant for each of us. I am sure that there are some here this morning that have never truly repented of their sins and yielded their lives to Jesus. If you come to Christ I can assure of one thing, He will forgive you and change you. Won't you come this morning? As we sing this hymn if you will come as we sing and let me or another know that you would like to trust Jesus, we will take whatever time you need to clearly understand and yield your life to Him.

Friends, Nehemiah is a picture of Jesus here. He is calling this church to follow Him and REBUILD THE WALLS. He is calling us to live in daily surrender and fellowship with Him. He is calling us to work to SEND THE LIGHT to this valley and our nation and the world! Do you believe that the Lord God can indeed use you? Now that is the greatest miracle of all! HA. The Lord God, the Creator of the universe, wants to use each of us for His glory! He wants to use us to touch people and share His Gospel. The good news that Nehemiah and Jesus bring us today is that WE CAN REBUILD, WE CAN BE USED BY ALMIGHTY GOD. Let's call upon Him today as we sing.