

**Sermon, May 8, 2011**  
***“The Church at Work”, Nehemiah 2:17-18***  
**Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy**

**Review of the Books of History so far:**

From Joshua through Ezra there are 5 important themes

- Only King God can lead you into the “promised land”
- Trust and belief in the King will redeem you, bring you salvation
- Obedience will allow you to dwell in His Kingdom at peace,
- There are consequences to disobedience
- Repentance will restore you to see God’s presence

**Overview of Nehemiah:**

- Ezra and Nehemiah were originally written as one book in the Hebrew Bible.
- Nehemiah encompasses the 3<sup>rd</sup> return from exile in Persia from 446BC (ch. 1-12) to 424BC (ch. 13).
- Author Ezra.
- The 11<sup>th</sup> book of history, 16<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible.
- **Overall Outline Nehemiah:**

- I. Nehemiah’s First Term as Governor (1:1–12:47)
  - A. Nehemiah’s Return and Reconstruction (1:1–7:73a)
    1. Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem (1:1–2:20)
    2. Nehemiah and the people rebuild the walls (3:1–7:3)
    3. Nehemiah recalls first return under Zerubbabel (7:4–73a)
  - B. Ezra’s Revival and Renewal (7:73b–10:39)
    1. Ezra expounds the law (7:73b–8:12)
    2. The people worship and repent (8:13–9:37)
    3. Ezra and the priests renew the covenant (9:38–10:39)
  - C. Nehemiah’s Resettlement and Rejoicing (11:1–12:47)
    1. Jerusalem is resettled (11:1–12:26)
    2. The people dedicate the walls (12:27–47)
- II. Nehemiah’s Second Term as Governor (13:1–31)

**Major Themes of Nehemiah:**

- Reading and hearing God’s word and responding to it are recurring themes.
- God worked through the obedience of Nehemiah to accomplish His will.
- Together, Nehemiah and the church responded to God and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah acknowledged the true motive of his strategy to repopulate Jerusalem: “my God put it into my heart” (7:5). It was God who accomplished it.<sup>1</sup>
- In spite of opposition from without and heartbreaking corruption and dissension from within, Judah completed the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days (6:15), experienced revival after the reading of the law by Ezra (8: 1ff.), and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (8:14ff.; ca. 445 BC).<sup>1</sup>
- God who orchestrated the reconstruction of the walls in spite of much opposition and many setbacks; the “good hand of God” theme carries through the book of Nehemiah (1:10; 2:8, 18).<sup>1</sup>

Again, there are many lessons in Nehemiah. One is that Nehemiah had a God-centered mission that moved into action to accomplish the purpose of God.

**The rebuilding of the church starts with God-centered thoughts which lead to God-centered action.**

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**Quick History behind the rebuilding**

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Ne 1:1). Nashville: Word Pub.

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**1. First, Nehemiah was aware of a problem.**

**Nehemiah 1:3** <sup>3</sup> *They replied, "The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire."*

- Typically God's call in your life is preceded by circumstances that God calls to your attention so you can go and serve where God is at work.
- In Nehemiah's case, he was made aware of the trouble and shame of those who left Persia
- In our case we are well aware of the need to rebuild the church here at Third.

**2. Second, Nehemiah fasted and prayed to God.**

**Nehemiah 1:4** <sup>4</sup> *When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

- Nehemiah prayed for God to intercede
- Integral to becoming involved in God's work is to seek His face, pray to Him and trust Him to guide you.
- Nehemiah trusted God, sought God for help and responded in faith
- We have prayed to God, now we must trust God.

**3. Nehemiah's spiritual antennae was up and was looking for God's answer to him and God delivered.**

In chapter 2 of Nehemiah there is a short conversation with the king Artaxerxes (the step-son of Queen Esther) of Persia whom he served which gave Nehemiah the opportunity to ask...

**Nehemiah 2:2-5** <sup>2</sup> *So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. <sup>3</sup> I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" <sup>4</sup> Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."*

- Nehemiah was aware of God's sovereignty, aware of where God might work next, and sought to go where God was working.
- Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah's request and Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem.
- We know that we must rebuild the church, we have sought the face of God in prayer and some of us in fasting, and we must seek, look for, search out, ways to serve God

**4. Nehemiah listens for God's direction as he is moving around doing something...**

**Nehemiah 2:11-12** <sup>11</sup> *So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup> And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem.*

- Nehemiah was not static in his response to God.
- Are you static in your response to God.
- When Scripture says we are to "wait on the Lord" it does not mean we do nothing.

**5. The Godly leadership called to the people, the people heard the call of God and responded.**

**Nehemiah 2:17-18** <sup>7</sup> *Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace." <sup>18</sup> I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, "**Let us start building!**" So they committed themselves to the common good.*

- The circumstances were laid out to the people,
- The call was made to the people,
- The people heard in Nehemiah's call the call of God,
- The people responded (see Chapter 3) and in 52 days the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt

**Conclusion:**

- The call of God is put before you, the call to rebuild His church at Third. Rebuilding is hard work
- It will take desire, commitment, dedication
- Do you have the desire, commitment, and dedication to respond to God and accept His will for our church?

**The rebuilding of the church starts with God-centered thoughts which lead to God-centered action.**