

Nehemiah 4.1-14: "A Jealousy for Integrity" : 27/09/09

Why did Nehemiah have such a heart for the walls to be rebuilt?

- Not a desire to see his "home-town" win the prettiest village award, nor about beautifying the City, but a heart to see the identity of God's people protected & secured.
- "***pleasing God is more important than pleasing people***"
- This required jealousy for integrity needs to be long-term and not incidental: Spurgeon called his monthly magazine "The Sword and the Trowel" because he knew we must be prepared to build and to fight simultaneously.

MAINTENANCE:

- The walls in Jerusalem were not just for protection from physical threat, but also from corrupting spiritual integrity (Ch 13):
- The walls we build here at Beacon **will** be tested
- What are they?
 - Walls = "Securing identity and community"
 - Community/cell life; Relationships/Accountability; iron sharpens iron
 - Service - protects our identity ("Love one another") - are you serving?
 - Our leaders - Nehemiah spoke to the nobles & officials & people in that order, not just "everyone": the vision dissipates from leadership down, protection too. This is why we are being more deliberate about Cell leadership, etc
- How we submit our thought lives to Him is another wall (personal integrity): IF WE ARE SAVED INTO A BODY, THEN YOUR SIN/SPIRITUAL CONDITION AFFECTS THE REST OF US TOO.

So, "we" build our walls, and what happens? Attack! v1-3 = **taunts**, 7,8,11 = **death threats**

- Why? Jerusalem was herself a threat (economic: on the E-W trade rte)
- The church is also a threat itself in the spiritual realm; we will face opposition

VIGILANCE:

- We need to remain continually vigilant for our family, our marriages, our church life, our personal integrity..
- Opp comes from inside AND outside the church
 - OUTSIDE: The Jews were literally surrounded: see v7 = N, S, E & W!
 - We are surrounded too:
 - Accusations of fundamentalism/dogmatism
 - Taunts on the subjects of Evolution/abortion/sexuality, etc
- HOWEVER, unfortunately, also from within the church [v10 & 12]
 - = cynicism & unbelief - ***don't be one of those people***
 - apathy - if you don't want opposition, don't do anything!
 - those who don't grasp vision or trust God or the leaders (v10&12)
 - [elders look out for ungodly agendas: Tobiah 13 yrs on in temple!]
- 1st RESPONSE = v4 & v9: PRAYER! THEN practical arrangements (v9)
- **1ST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB... "PRAY"**
- God is 100% committed to His people; This jealousy for integrity on God's behalf ensured HIS promises were fulfilled: that His Son Messiah came at the right time through the right blood-line (including Zerubbabel!!!)
 - He will fulfil his purposes today too. So pray with that in mind!
- Prayer helps us see this. Here's a nuclear fusion of truth:
 - take Isa 43.10b : "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me"
 - and Psa 119.68a: "You are good and do good"
 - Two amazing atoms of truth, **now combine them, & pray again!**
- **V 14-15**: Nehemiah follows the same: remind, then pray...
- PRAYER ALWAYS REMINDS US OF THE TRUE PERSPECTIVE

- THEN came the action, “setting the guard”, where the weaknesses were, stationed...
SWORD AND TROWEL IN HAND
- While there's still weak spots in our defences, we have a responsibility to deal with them, to repair our breaches: Peter 5.8: "*Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*"
- - as we grow, as we repair cracks, as we close our breaches, opposition & attack is inevitable - BE PREPARED!!!
 - In order to repair them, we need to know where they are:
 - Resisting temptation can be helped by general rules of thumb/look for the patterns (when/where/who/how do I feel before etc?)
- Rick Warren: "***Sin always has a temporary payoff. You wouldn't do it if it didn't. If sin had the pain of a root canal, it wouldn't be a problem. There's pleasure in sin. The Bible says it's fun. But the pleasure is short-term. When you sin, you're trading short-term pleasure for long-term damage and destruction. It's not a good deal.***"
- Corporately, our breaches can be:
 - Disunity; cynicism & unbelief; gossip; pride; apathy
- KNOW YOUR/OUR BREACHES!!! DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT...

PERSISTENCE:

- It is easy to run hard for a period and then run out of steam
 - REMEMBER: 13 yrs: intermarrying again, Tobiah in temple!
- Apathy is a big enemy to the church; we must remember we are in this for the long haul... The people of Judah began to think the job was too much: "The builders' strength is failing; there's too much rubble; we can't do it by ourselves" (v10)
- BUT: they were simply losing sight of what resources they had and Who was on their side! **When you lose sight of Who: read Book of Revelation (chapter 19!).....**
- All it took was a man of vision like Nehemiah to show them not only the preferable future, but also that they COULD do it
 - And then, despite overt opposition & threats
 - AND with a reduced workforce (½ holding the armour or carrying spears)
 - AND the builders working with swords strapped to their sides
 - THEY DID IT IN 52 DAYS! A WHOLE CITY'S WALLS! About 4.5 miles
(Josephus)
- But thru seeing God's dream - WHICH HE WILL FULFIL - of His Son Messiah being glorified amongst us and our community, and setting our hearts on unfolding His purposes IN THE LONG TERM - with **VIGILANCE** and **PERSISTENCE**, then ***we - like Ezra and Neh - will see the church here in Herne Bay no longer running with a limp, but making great strides for the kingdom, FOR HIS GLORY***
 - Having a heart of jealousy for the integrity of God's people is not arrogance, or lack of humility, it is only reflecting God's own heart:
 - Zech 1.14: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am **exceedingly jealous** for Jerusalem and for Zion"
 - If we don't have that heart, we have some serious talking with God to do...
 - A JEALOUSY 4 INTEGRITY of God's people reflects our God's hrt, and is reflected in how we build the walls that protect our identity and community - SWORD AND TROWEL IN HAND

Remember the 1st rule of Fight Club!!!

Cell Q's:

1. Look at Nehemiah's prayer in 4.4-5: How do we reconcile this kind of prayer with what we've been led to believe is the “appropriate” heart to pray with?
2. How can cell enable a long-term perspective amongst us?
3. Discuss the difference between genuine tiredness - and the need to take some “Sabbath” time out - and a need to persist in God’s strength. How many of us feel tired and what do we usually do about it?

