

God's Work done in God's Way

Text: Nehemiah 2:1-10

Introduction:

1. Nehemiah is the last of the O.T. books along with Malachi.
2. Malachi was a contemporary of Nehemiah and his book details the spiritual condition of the people of that time (e.g. robbing God of tithes and offerings)
3. Hudson Taylor: "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply"
4. Outline of Chapter 2
 - I. The Providential Opening of the Work (1-4)
 - II. The Provisions for the Work (5-8)
 - III. The Provokers of the Work (9-10)
 - IV. The Planning of the Work (11-16)
 - V. The Promoting of the Work (17-18)
 - VI. The Provoking of the Work (19-20)

I. The Providential Opening of the Work (Vs. 1-4)

A. The Waiting of Nehemiah (Vs. 1)

1. The account began in the month 'Chisleu' (1:1)
2. It is now the month 'Nisan' which would equate to our April. Nisan marked the beginning of the Jewish and Persian year and would have been a time of celebration.
3. Four months had elapsed since Nehemiah was first stirred about the mission in Jerusalem.
4. "It is in this way God both tries and strengthens the faith of His people. He waits while they wait. But if He wait, it is only to shut His people up to more entire dependence upon Himself, and thus to prepare their hearts more fully for the blessing He is about to bestow. And when He steps in, it is oftentimes, as in this case, in such a quiet and unseen way – unseen by all but the eye of faith – that it needs the exercise of faith to detect His presence." (E. Dennett)

B. The Moving of God (Vs. 2-4)

1. God worked in the heart of the king (2-4a)
 - a. A true miracle since this same king had previously halted the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4)
 - b. This day a significant day in God's calendar for His people as it marked the commencement of Daniel's 70 week prophecy. It was 483 years from this date (69 weeks) that Messiah was "cut off" (Dan. 9:26)
 - c. Note: In seeking to accomplish the call of God in our lives, we need to remember that God works in and through our

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authorities. Nehemiah's tone is respectful, humble and one of entreaty; not one of demand and assumption. He took the position of a loyal subject.

- d. We do not step around the authorities God has placed in our lives to get the work of God done. We trust God to work in the heart of that authority to bring about His will. Note: Limits to all authority (Acts 5:29)
2. Nehemiah prayed before answering the king's offer (4b)
 - a. Nehemiah's prayer has been described as "the arrow prayer" or "the emergency prayer"
 - b. This was the pattern of Nehemiah's life. He lived out the truth of Proverbs 3:5-6 – *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*
 - c. The principle we learn is that the believer has constant access to the throne room of heaven in any time, place or circumstance. We need to get in the habit of walking closely with God each hour of each day.
 - d. We also learn the principle that short, powerful prayers, are an outflow of a strong devotional life. Short prayers like this in the public, day to day challenges are linked to the more lengthy prayers in our private devotional lives.

II. The Provisions for the Work (Vs. 5-8)

Nehemiah requested 3 provisions from the king:

A. To be Sent (Vs. 5-6)

1. The principle of commission is in view
2. It is important that before embarking on a mission for the Lord that we know that He has sent us. If we know we are sent, then that will help us to stay there when the going gets tough.

B. To be Safe (Vs. 7)

1. Artaxerxes also provided an entourage of soldiers (Vs. 9)
2. God will provide safety for His servants until it is His time for them to be taken.

C. To be Supplied (Vs. 8)

1. God will provide the resources needed to accomplish the work He has called us to. In this case, the Lord used a pagan king to supply his servants.
2. Normally in Scripture we see that God normally supplies for His work through the freewill offerings of God's people.
3. Heaven's resources are available for those who are doing God's work! John 14:14

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4. Nehemiah acknowledges that it was the hand of God that had worked on his behalf with the king

III. The Provokers of the Work (Vs. 9-10)

A. Their Identity (10a)

1. Sanballat the Horonite
 - a. A prominent official in Samaria (4:2)
 - b. Samaritans were a mixed multitude who populated the Northern Kingdom after its destruction by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:24)
 - c. Sanballat is called a Horonite is generally supposed to mean a native of Horonaim, a city of Moab (Ironsides)
2. Tobiah the Ammonite
 - a. Descendent of Lot (Gen. 19:30-38)
 - b. The Ammonites and Moabites were relatives of the children of Israel.
 - c. Note: Beware of the opposition that can come from family!
 - d. Tobiah had connections in Jerusalem that caused Nehemiah untold grief.
 - e. "If Sanballat was in charge of the army, then Tobiah was director of the intelligence division of their operation...Nehemiah would soon discover that his biggest problem was not the enemy on the outside but the compromisers on the inside, a problem the church still faces today." (Wiersbe)
3. Keil: "These two individuals were undoubtedly influential chiefs of the neighboring hostile nations of Samaritans and Ammonites, and sought by alliances with the Jewish nobles (cp. 6:17; 13:4,28) to frustrate, whether by force or stratagem, the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah for the internal and external security of Judah."

B. Their Indignation (10b)

1. It was in their interest to see the people of God continue in a state of defeat.
2. They understood that Nehemiah's aim to rebuild the walls came from his motivation to help the people.
3. Principle: A defeated, compromised people are not a threat to Satan and his kingdom. But let the people of God embark on a quest for revival and restoration, and opposition erupts very quickly.
4. The world is quite comfortable with a compromised believer. But let a believer draw some clear lines of separation in his life, and he will find the world a ready enemy.

Conclusion: Are we waiting upon God to bring about the fulfilment of His calling? Do we have faith in God to supply? Are we being vigilant in the work of God, recognizing the spiritual battle that exists?