

"The Faithfulness of God"

Nehemiah 1-6

Introduction: Today as we gather together, we are here to celebrate the payoff of the \$250,000 loan which we had taken out for our new edition. The loan was for 15 years and the Lord allowed us to pay it off in 4 years.

So today I thought it would be quite appropriate to consider a message on the Faithfulness of God. You see, it is because of His faithfulness that we have been able to pay off the loan and ALL GLORY GOES TO OUR GOD.

I want to take you back to one of my favorite books of the Old Testament and it is the book of Nehemiah. We can see the faithfulness in what is recorded in this letter.

➤ **Background**

This letter is set against a background of despair. The setting at the beginning of the letter is in Babylon and the despair exists in Jerusalem.

In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came into Jerusalem and this started the 70 years of captivity. When the Babylonians came into Jerusalem, they destroyed the city as well as the walls that surrounded it.

2 Kings 25:8-12

⁸ And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

⁹ And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

¹¹ Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.

¹² But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

God had promised that He would restore His people after the captivity.

Jeremiah 33:7

⁷ And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.

Seventy years later God showed He was faithful to His Word. He moved a man by the name of Cyrus to give an order that the Temple which was destroyed in the captivity was to be rebuilt.

Ezra 1:1-3

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

² Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

³ Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

In 515 BC the temple was completed but there was more to be done. The rebuilding not only included the temple but the entire city as well. The walls around the city needed to be rebuilt for protection against their enemies.

Now as we come to the book of Nehemiah it is now 71 years after the temple has been completed, the year is 444 BC, and the Holy Spirit will now focus upon one individual and that is Nehemiah. He is the Cup Bearer for the King which means he was a well trusted man. He tasted the food before the King to be sure it was not poisoned.

➤ **Nehemiah's Burden**

Notice Nehemiah 1:1-4

In verse 3 we see that the Jews were in great affliction and reproach. The walls of the city were broken down and the gates burned. Now we need to know that the people had started to rebuild the walls, but they encountered opposition. Their enemy was doing everything possible to stop the building of the walls.

Ezra 4:8, 11-13

⁸ Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

¹¹ This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

¹² Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

¹³ Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

When the king received this letter, he set back a command to stop the building.

Ezra 4:21, 23

²¹ Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.

²³ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

Here in Nehemiah 1 when the news reaches Nehemiah of what is happening it breaks the heart of Nehemiah and God gives him a heavy burden for the Jews.

➤ **Nehemiah's Prayer**

Notice Nehemiah 1:5-11

Nehemiah said several things in his prayer:

1. He confessed the sins of the nation. It was sin that brought about the captivity.
2. He prayed for God to use him. Nehemiah not only prayed for a solution, but he prayed that God would allow him to be part of the solution.
3. He based his prayer upon the promises of God. He referred to God as the God that keepeth covenant and mercy to them who keep His commandments.

Application:

This is a reminder to us. When we pray, we often pray for solutions to certain problems, but I wonder how many times we pray that God would use us to be part of the solution. I wonder how many times God has desired to use us, but we are too busy with other things

and therefore the opportunity has passed us by. Let us learn to make ourselves available to be used by God for when we miss the opportunities, we miss great blessings.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

➤ **Nehemiah's Faith**

Notice Nehemiah 2:1-2

This date is here for several reasons. The reason I want us to see today is that it has been 4 months since Nehemiah had heard of the conditions in Jerusalem. Here we see that 4 months later Nehemiah still carried the burden. The burden was so heavy it caused a sadness in his life that could not be covered up. The king was aware of the sadness and inquired and this terrified Nehemiah. The people in the presence of the king were not permitted to be sad for the king wanted to be surrounded by happy and cheerful servants. To be sad put Nehemiah in the place of facing possible execution.

Notice Nehemiah 2:3-5

When the king heard the conditions of Jerusalem, he asked Nehemiah what he wanted to do. Nehemiah prayed and then asked if the king would send him to lead a wall building project.

This was the open door for Nehemiah, and it took great faith to step through the door and make the request.

Application:

Let us learn from this situation that the answers to our prayers often come through a time of great testing of our faith. God allows us to be placed in a situation where we **MUST** exercise our faith in order to see the problem resolved.

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Listen to the words of Spurgeon on this thought:

"Indeed, it is the honor of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, 'I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties'? Who knows whether thou hast any faith? Shall a man say, 'I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it'? Is this to the honor and praise of thy faith? Dost thou think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to thee any great reward? If so, thou art mightily mistaken."

Too often we look for the easy path, or the path of least resistance. When we are faced with a path that requires faith, we avoid that way but here we see that our answers and the solutions are often found in the uncomfortable situations of life.

➤ **God's Provisions**

Notice Nehemiah 2:6-12

Nehemiah exercised his faith and God not only opened the door, but He also provided the supplies and the protection for Nehemiah.

We also see that before this ever came about God had placed within the heart of Nehemiah the desire to lead a team to rebuild the walls of the city.

Application:

There is something here that you need to see. People often ask the question, "How can I know the will of God?" With Nehemiah we see several points:

1. It started with a burden.
2. The burden turned into a desire.
3. Nehemiah prayed and god opened the door.
4. God provided what was needed.

God not only made the building materials available but also the workers.

Notice Nehemiah 2:16-18

The people strengthen their hands to work on the wall after they had heard of how God worked in Nehemiah's life.

Application:

Walking by faith encourages others to do the same. In Nehemiah's case, his faith was contagious.

Nehemiah 4:6

⁶ So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

Now we must also understand that this building of the wall was not without resistance.

Notice Nehemiah 2:19-20

Sanballat and Tobiah were persistent in trying to discourage the Jews who were building the wall.

Nehemiah 4:1-3

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

² And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

⁴ Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

Application:

Let us understand that when we are walking in the will of God and serving Him there will be opposition. These builders stayed the course and continued to build.

➤ **God's Faithfulness**

Nehemiah 6:15

¹⁵ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

Conclusion:

Today we acknowledge the faithfulness of God in providing what was needed to pay off the loan for our building. God provided through the giving of the people here and we praise God for this.