

NEHEMIAH :: a CHURCH for the CITY, the NATIONS, the GENERATIONS

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Introduction

Nehemiah is the central human figure in this great book who was in exile from his homeland of Jerusalem. This city was supposed to be a place where God could be known and His greatness put on display as a city set on a hill. However, Nehemiah receives an update that Jerusalem is in ruins and he is completely broken by the state of the city. **And so Nehemiah responds.**

We will learn a lot from Nehemiah's response - his leadership, his planning, his building a wall to protect the people, his call to repentance and trust in God, his boldness in the face of opposition, his role in building a people who worship God. But ultimately what we need to learn from Nehemiah is that he knew it wasn't about him - he was fully aware it was about God. It was God's mercy, God's power, God's patience, God's sovereignty over all situations, God working in the everyday things of life to accomplish his plans and his purposes.

'Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.' And I told them of the hand of God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' So they strengthened their hands for the good work.'
- Nehemiah 2:17-18

Nehemiah sees the brokenness of God's people and begs God to redeem and restore things to the way God intended them to be. God answers Nehemiah's prayer and gives him the plan and power to accomplish the mission of rebuilding the wall and establishing God's people in Jerusalem. Through the power of God, the mission is accomplished and the people celebrate God.

'And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.' - Nehemiah 12:27

As we journey through the book of Nehemiah, there will be the tendency to view Nehemiah as the hero of the story. However, the entire book of Nehemiah is about God, and it ultimately points us to the God-Man Jesus - the true hero of the entire Bible. Nehemiah points us to Jesus who saw not just a broken city but a broken world. Jesus enters that brokenness and redeems and restores it. He does this by living the perfect life for us, by dying the death our brokenness deserves, by rising on the third day to conquer Satan, sin and death, and sitting on His throne to reign and rule over all things. As God called Nehemiah to bring restoration to God's place and God's people, Jesus does the same as He calls His people, the church, to bring the good news of restoration and redemption to the context He has placed us - to our city, to the nations, and ultimately to the generations.

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As we journey through Nehemiah, we must ask :: Do I know this God? Do I love this God? Do I worship this God? What is He calling us to 'rise up and build' through his grace? The desire of CrossPointe is to not just build a great church, but as we see in Nehemiah, to build a great city which worships and orients their lives around Jesus. Will you join us in regularly and intentionally praying for the following objectives this year? These are not just numbers, they represent real people and opportunities for more people to worship Jesus, connect in His community, and be about His mission of making all things new.

Objectives

- **Replanting** CrossPointe Winter Park September 2012 with core group of 150
- **NEHEMIAH :: a Church for the City, the Nations, the Generations**
- Consistently 200 people gathering on Sunday mornings for our Celebration Service
- Occasionally 250 people gathering on Sunday mornings for our Celebration Service
- 350 at Easter Service (251 last Easter)
- 20 baptisms
- Adding worship through music for CrossPointe KIDS
- 10 participants in Pre-Service Prayer
- Ordain Ethan Pitsch as Elder
- Send out Jamey and Brooks Vizzini to plant
- Identify next church planting apprentice and worship leader intern
- NEHEMIAH Study in book form
- 2 new community groups in September
- 2 new community groups in January
- Missional Community Group Leader Training this fall
- Launching of Student Ministry group(s)
- Building on emphasis of **FOR THE COMMUNITY**
- Groups engaged in serving a specific area (i.e. Dover Shores, Beta Center, etc.)
- Redemption Groups this fall - 1 for men and 1 for women.
- Who are 3 people with whom you can **INTERCEDE. INVEST. INVITE.?**

Resources

- ESV Study Bible (Crossway)
- CPWP Sermons on Nehemiah :: crosspointewinterpark.com/sermons
- Mars Hill Church media on Nehemiah :: marshill.com/media/nehemiah¹
- A Passion for Faithfulness :: Wisdom from the Book of Nehemiah by JI Packer
- The Message of Nehemiah (Bible Speaks Today Series) by Raymond Brown

¹ The content from Mars Hill Church's series on Nehemiah was beneficial for this study. We are thankful for their generosity.

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Week I Gathering



Introduce yourself to the group :: Where are you from? About your family? How was your summer? How did you connect at CrossPointe? What is your spiritual background?



In what ways do you hope to grow this year in regards to ::

Celebration :: Living out the gospel in such a way that you sing of the grace, goodness and glory of God in everyday life.

Connection :: Living out the gospel in such a way that we understand our story only in light of God's great story. How does who God is shape everything we do.

Community :: Living out the gospel in the context of deep, authentic relationships.

Contribution :: Living out the gospel in a way that furthers the mission of God.

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Study I :: Nehemiah 1:1-11

Read :: Nehemiah 1:1-11

Passage Overview

The book begins with one of God's people, Nehemiah, in exile as a servant of a foreign king being deeply saddened after getting word of the brokenness of his homeland Jerusalem (God's place and people). He responds in repentance, prayer and seeking God for a plan to help restore what is broken. Ultimately Nehemiah points us to Jesus who was truly broken over the state of God's people and place to the point of coming into this world to live a life and die and death that would restore God's people and place. As we look to Nehemiah and ultimately Jesus' work on our behalf, we can begin to live lives of restoration on mission with God in the world we live in.

Luke 19:41-48 ::

'And when he (Jesus) drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers." And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.'

John 3:16-17 ::

'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'

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5. What is Nehemiah's prayer to God for his community (vs. 4-11) (What does it reveal about God? Nehemiah? God's people? The world?)?

6. What is your prayer for your community? What steps can you take to work towards making God's vision a reality in your community?

7. What was Nehemiah's motivation and calling? What is God calling you to be about (see Romans 11:36-12:2)?

8. Read Luke 19:41-48 and John 3:16-18. How does the Nehemiah passage ultimately point to and get fulfilled in Jesus?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

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Study 2 :: Nehemiah 1:1 1b-2:8

Read :: Nehemiah 1:1 1b-2:8

Passage Overview

After months of praying and planning we see Nehemiah use his circumstances to put his faith in to action with boldly asking the king for the opportunity to go rebuild God's place and support God's people. It is who God is, the object of Nehemiah's faith, that gives him the boldness and courage to be about God's mission and purposes. Nehemiah points us to Jesus who fully trusted in the Father's plan and purposes to accomplish his mission and purpose to bring eternal life to those who trust in him. As we look to Nehemiah who points us to Jesus, we can use the circumstances we find ourselves in, no matter what they are, to glorify God and point others to Jesus.

John 17:1-5 ::

'When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, 'Father the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.'

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 ::

'So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of man, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.'

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5. How does (can) your personal time with God affect and influence your public (everyday) actions and choices?

6. In what ways does Nehemiah use his position and resources to help build/benefit God's community/mission? What could it cost him?

7. In what ways can you use your 'positions' (vocation, neighbor, parent, friend, etc.) and resources (time, talent, treasure) to build God's community/further his mission? What could it cost you?

8. Read John 17:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1. How does this passage point to Jesus and his trust in God and fulfilling God's purpose through his circumstances? How does that affect us?

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Study 3 :: Nehemiah 2:9-20

Read :: Nehemiah 2:9-20

Passage Overview

In this passage, we see Nehemiah act upon the calling he received from God. He takes time to pray, plan, seek counsel and then clearly articulates God's plan for the people of Jerusalem with a call to action. Although he is met with some resistance, God provides the plan, people and resources to 'rise up and build' the wall that will provide protection and the context for God's people and purposes to flourish. In the same way, Jesus received and fulfilled his mission from God the Father to rescue his people and bring eternal life with him. Although he was met with resistance as well, his trusting of the Father brought him much glory and his people much joy. As we look to Jesus who secured eternal life for us, we will have freedom and direction to fulfill his purposes in our context.

John 6:35-42 ::

'Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?''

Mark 6:30-34 ::

'The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.'

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1. What does this passage reveal about God and him being the foundation/motivation for Nehemiah?
2. In the first 2 chapters, we see Nehemiah taking both time for praying and planning but also action. Why are both important? How do you tend to lean one way or the other?
3. What are the various responses Nehemiah gets for his plan of restoration (vs. 10, 18-19) and how does he handle them (vs. 20)?
4. What is your usual response to resistance or not getting your way (fight? flight? etc)? How does the gospel allow you to rightly respond?
5. What is the significance that Nehemiah 'had a few men with him' (vs. 12)? Who are specific people who are speaking in to your life/plans? (your plans, your character, your relationships, how you use your resources, etc.)?

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6. What can we learn from Nehemiah who waited 3 days after arriving and taking time to survey the situation of the city before announcing his plan (vs. 11-16)?

7. How does Nehemiah call/encourage/motivate the people to rebuild the wall (vs. 17-18)?

8. What have you observed about the brokenness in you and around you through studying and seeking to understand it? How can you bring the gospel to bear on it?

9. Read John 6:35-42 and Mark 6:30-34. What is Jesus' mission and how was he met with resistance? What is the importance of both rest (prayer, solitude) and action?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

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Study 4 :: Nehemiah 3:1-32

Read :: Nehemiah 3:1-32

Passage Overview

In this passage we see the beginning of the building of the wall. Nehemiah has planned prayerfully, diligently and trustingly to implement God's mission and now many people from many different backgrounds work hard to implement the mission. As a church, we look to Jesus, who is the head of the church, to use our gifts and abilities to fulfill his mission of spreading his message and bringing new life. God has uniquely wired each of us and placed us in a particular place to play our part in his mission.

Colossians 1:15-23 ::

'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.'

1 Corinthians 12:1-14 ::

'Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus is accursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.'

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1. In chapters 1 and 2 we see Nehemiah plan prayerfully, trustingly and diligently. How do we see that preparation fleshed out in this passage? Why is that important?

2. Why are both organization/structure and freedom to implement both important for the church to fulfill God's purposes?

3. There is a continual refrain of people working 'next to them' in this passage. Why is significant that people both work together and have individual roles (in the church, community etc.)?

4. In this passage we see the priests (vs. 1), goldsmiths and perfumers (vs. 8), rulers of Jerusalem (vs. 9, 12) people from different regions (vs. 13, 14) merchants (vs. 32), daughters (vs. 12) all playing their part in building the wall. What is the significance of people of all backgrounds playing their part? What can we as a church learn from it?

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Study 5 :: Nehemiah 4:1 - 14

Read :: Nehemiah 4:1-14

Passage Overview

As the building of the wall moves closer to completion, more resistance and opposition (both verbal and physical) come to those working on it. Nehemiah and the people respond with prayer to God, trust in God and continuing in the work from God. This points us to Jesus who trusted in God as he was mocked, beaten and ultimately crucified to accomplish the mission of God through his death on the cross for the sins of the world. As we look to Jesus and his mission as the purpose and power of our work, we can be sure we will face resistance, but that he is faithful to get us through it.

Luke 23:32-43 ::

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him (Jesus). And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

1 Peter 2:18-25 ::

'Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.'

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1. What forms of opposition/resistance do those building the wall face (vs. 4:1-3, 7-8, 10-12)?
How do they respond (vs. 4-6, 9, 13-14)?

2. When have you experienced opposition/resistance in seeking to follow Jesus and be about his mission/purposes? What was/is your natural response?

3. Talk about circumstances you have experienced that outwardly looked bleak but God proved to be faithful?

4. How is Nehemiah motivated/encouraged and how does he motivate/encourage others (vs. 4-5, 6, 9, 13-14)?

5. Compare Sanballat's responses as the building of the wall progresses :: 2:10, 2:19, 4:1-3, 7-8.
What can you expect as you move forward with God's call for you life? Why?

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6. Verse 9 says 'we prayed to our God AND set a guard as protection...'. Verse 14 says 'Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, AND fight for your brothers...'. What does this teach about how being dependent on God and our actions work together (see also Philippians 2:12-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:10). Why is that important?

7. What about God makes it vital that we 'remember him' (vs. 14)? Why is that challenging?

8. What/who do you tend to turn to in times of trouble? How are those things fleeting in comparison to the Lord who is 'great and awesome'?

9. Read Luke 23:32-43 and 1 Peter 2:18-25. How did Jesus overcome persecution? How does what he accomplished for us allow us to overcome persecution/trouble?

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Study 6 :: Nehemiah 4:15-23

Read :: Nehemiah 4:15-23

Passage Overview

The resistance and opposition continue and Nehemiah again reminds people of the goodness and power of God who fights for his people and works to accomplish his mission. Nehemiah calls the people to be diligent to protect and carry one another's burdens as they build the wall as God has called them to. Similarly, despite persecution and abandonment, Jesus was and is diligent in building God's Kingdom through bearing our burdens on the Cross and sending his Spirit to empower us to build the things he has called us to build.

Mark 14:39-50 ::

'And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.'

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." And they all left him and fled.'

1 Peter 5:5-10 ::

'Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.'

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Study 7 :: Nehemiah 5:1 - 19

Read :: Nehemiah 5:1 - 19

Passage Overview

Nehemiah shifts from dealing with external conflict in previous chapters to dealing with internal conflict as the poor in the Jewish community are being oppressed and taken advantage of by those in power. Nehemiah is angered by the sin, confronts it and brings new life to the people through calling for repentance. He continues to sacrifice and brings unity to God's people through putting God's mission before his personal interests. All this points to Jesus who in his grace, exposes our sin, confronts the injustice brought by it and brings new life through his death, resurrection and sending of his Spirit. Jesus sacrificed the wealth of heaven and put his interest aside to die on the Cross and bring salvation which allows us to live lives of sacrifice and generosity.

John 2:13-22 ::

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.'

I John 3:16-18 ::

'By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.'

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1. Who are the people crying out against (vs. 1-2) and for what (vs. 3-5, 7-8)? In what ways is internal fighting/opposition as or more destructive than external opposition?
2. In what ways does internal fighting take away/distract from the mission of the church? How can we fight against this (see Ephesians 4:1-7, Hebrews 10:23-25)?
3. How does Nehemiah respond to what is happening against the people (vs. 6-11)? Why is it important that he wasn't just reactionary after being convicted of the injustice (vs. 6) but took time to think before responding (vs. 7)?
4. How was Nehemiah's anger righteous and what does it result in? What is the difference between righteous anger and anger that is sin?
5. How can we learn (personally and as a church) from Nehemiah who confronts the people who sinned (vs. 7), named their sin (vs. 7-10) and called them to repentance (vs. 9-13)? How does the gospel allow us to do this humbly yet confidently (with our personal sin and others sin)?

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Study 8 :: Nehemiah 6:1 - 14

Read :: Nehemiah 6:1-14

Passage Overview

Nehemiah's enemies are still trying to thwart God's mission only this time with deception and temptation. Nehemiah uses his knowledge of God and his ways to see through the lies and move forward in accomplishing the mission. Like he did with Nehemiah, Satan tried to divert Jesus and his mission of bringing salvation through his life, death and resurrection with temptation, false promises and lies. Jesus didn't fall into Satan's trap and accomplished his mission of destroying Satan, sin and death on the cross and now gives us his spirit, word and people to fight the work of Satan and sin in our lives and this world.

Luke 4:1-13 ::

'And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.'

Ephesians 6:10-18 ::

'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.'

NEHEMIAH :: a **CHURCH** for the **CITY**, the **NATIONS**, the **GENERATIONS**

5. How is Nehemiah tempted this time (vs. 10) and how is it still sin but just with the appearance of spirituality? How does he respond (vs. 11-14)?

6. What do verse 10-13 teach us about temptation and sin? How do we know if something is from God or not (vs. 12)?

7. What tools do we have to resist temptation? How are you/can you utilize them today and in the future?

8. Read Luke 4:1-11 and Ephesians 6:10-18. How was Jesus tempted and how did he not succumb to it in order to live the perfect life for us and die the death we deserve for us? How can you battle against sin and temptation day in and day out?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

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Study 9 :: Nehemiah 6:15-7:4

Read :: Nehemiah 6:15-7:4

Passage Overview

Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem finish building the wall and recognize it was through the power and hand of God. With continued opposition, Nehemiah shifts from building a wall to building a people to inhabit the city and worship God. Nehemiah points us to Jesus who cried 'it is finished' from the cross as he completed his victory over sin and death. Jesus then rose and ascended in to heaven to gather a people to himself to worship God together forever.

John 19:28-33 ::

'After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.'

Ephesians 4:11-16 ::

'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.'

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1. Look back to God's call and Nehemiah's communication for the people to build the wall (vs. 2:17-18). What would it have meant to the people to say 'the wall is finished' (vs. 7:15) (what did it take to finish the wall, what did they go through? challenges? triumphs? who accomplished it? etc.)? How did their enemies respond?
2. Look back over your life (recent and long term). What have you experienced/seen 'accomplished with the hand of God'?
3. Who do the people give credit for accomplishing the building of the wall (vs. 16)? What is the significance of understanding that God gives both the purpose and the power to accomplish what he calls us to do?
4. In what ways is Nehemiah still facing conflict and confrontation even though the wall is built (vs. 16-19)? How does he respond (vs. 7:1-4)?

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5. What is challenging about persistent opposition/critique? How have you experienced that?
How have you contributed to that (in your family, church, neighborhood, vocation, school, etc.)?

6. What is the importance of setting up positions/people to guard/care for and build the city?

7. How have you experienced and been invested in by people who care for/guard the church?
What role are you playing in that in your church? City?

8. Nehemiah was diligent about building the wall so the city could be filled with people (vs. 7:4).
Do you desire to build a church and city that is filled with people who worship Jesus? What is your role to play in that?

9. Read John 19:28-33 and Ephesians 4:11-16. What did Jesus accomplish when he announced 'it is finished'? What is the role of the church in accomplishing God's mission?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

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Study 10 :: Nehemiah 7:5-73

Read :: Nehemiah 7:5-73

Passage Overview

Nehemiah again is diligent in seeking God for direction and planning and receives a plan to re-populate the city within the wall. Nehemiah is obedient to the call and organizes the people in the city to use their gifts (time, talent and treasure) to help the community flourish. The Scriptures all point to Jesus who leads the church and is faithful to God the Father in building his people.

Hebrews 3:1-6 ::

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.'

Romans 12:1-8 ::

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.'

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

Study 11 :: Nehemiah 8:1-18

Read :: Nehemiah 8:1-18

Passage Overview

The book shifts to Ezra, the priest, bringing the community God has created together to hear, understand and live out of God's promises. The scriptures are explained and reveal to all who God is and what he has accomplished on their behalf. This results in conviction, repentance of sin and lives of celebration and sacrifice because of God's love. The Scriptures reveal that it is ultimately through Jesus that God accomplished freedom from slavery and sin and results in a people who live in community celebrating and sacrificing for others.

Luke 24:44-49 ::

'Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'

1 Thessalonians 5:10-24 ::

'For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.'

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1. What is the significance of the community to all 'gather as one'? What is the purpose of them gathering and what can we learn from them being 'attentive to the book of the law' (vs. 3)?
2. What is the importance of us gathering together on Sunday morning? What happens? What are we missing if we don't gather?
3. What is the posture of the people towards God and his word (vs. 3-6)? What is your posture toward God and his word?
4. What happens after the people hear God's word preached (vs. 7-8)? What is the importance/ purpose of gathering in community groups to discuss, apply, and seek to understand what God is teaching us and calling us to through his word?
5. Why can we have joy (vs. 10-12) in the face of conviction of sin, repentance and trust in God's promises (vs. 9)? How can you do this continually/daily?

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6. How should the gospel bring freedom, joy, celebration of God and result in sacrifice (vs. 10-12) vs. earning, guilt, shame (vs. 9) before God? In what way of the two do you tend to view God?
7. The feast of booths was a time to remember God's protection and deliverance of Israel from slavery to freedom. In what ways have you/are you experiencing God's protection/provision and deliverance from sin in your life? In what ways do you forget who God is and what he has done (vs. 17)?
8. Why is it important that the study of God's word (vs. 13-15) results in repentance and obedience to God's word (vs. 16-18)? How is obeying because God loves you (vs. 10) different than obeying to get God to love you?
9. Read Luke 24:44-49 and I Thessalonians 5:10-24. How does this passage (and the whole Bible) ultimately point to Jesus and the deliverance he provides from sin into life with God? How can the church flesh that out for each other?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

Study 12 :: Nehemiah 9:1-37

Read :: Nehemiah 9:1-37

Passage Overview

The people of the city shift from hearing and studying God's word in community to confessing and repenting as a community. We see them reading and remembering the greatness and glory of God and confessing and repenting of their disobedience yet realizing the love, mercy and acceptance of God despite it. This points us to Jesus who in the greatest act of love, mercy and forgiveness took the sin and rebellion of his people upon himself on the cross to bring ultimate freedom and life. This prayer encourages us to continually dwell on who God is - his glory, grace and goodness - and repent of our waywardness to turn to him.

Romans 3:21-26 ::

'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.'

1 John 1:5-2:1 ::

'This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.'

'My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

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6. What was Israel's continual response to all that God had done after being brought out of captivity? What was God's response to them?

7. How has the sin in you and around you (past, present and future) caused you 'great distress' (vs. 37)? How does the gospel bring hope?

8. Read Romans 3:21-26 and I John 1:5-2:1. How is the gospel about God and what he has accomplished through Jesus? How does the gospel allow us to truly repent :: acknowledge sin, confess sin, believe that Jesus died for that sin and turn to love, worship and obey him?

9. Spend some time alone and then as a group or smaller groups reading scripture, confessing sin and remembering the faithfulness of God.

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

Study 13 :: Nehemiah 9:38-10:39

Read :: Nehemiah 9:38-10:39

Passage Overview

After hearing/studying God's word (ch. 8) which leads to confession (ch. 9), the people of God repent, turn from their sin and make a covenant to follow and obey their good God and his good ways. Ultimately the covenant is based on God and his grace, goodness and faithfulness as the Israelites, like us, will fail to keep all of God's commandments. This points us to our need for Jesus who fulfilled our covenant with God for us through living the sinless life, taking our sin upon himself on the cross and rising to defeat sin and its punishment of death. As we look to Jesus, he empowers us to live the life we ought to live and give generously towards the mission of helping others do the same.

Romans 6:1-14 ::

'What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.'

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 ::

'The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.'

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

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Study 14 :: Nehemiah 11:1-36

Read :: Nehemiah 11:1-36

Passage Overview

In this passage we see God continue to be faithful in his promise to rebuild Jerusalem through his people. Although Jerusalem was not the ideal place to live due to the destruction and devastation it had experienced, God called people and they were obedient to settle in various areas of the community with the purpose of building God's kingdom and people. Ultimately this points us to Jesus who left the comforts of heaven to enter in to the brokenness of humanity and re-build a people unto himself who would worship and follow him. Through following Jesus, the church can sacrifice their comfort and enter in to various neighborhoods and communities with the mission and purpose of pointing people to Jesus.

Philippians 2:4-13 ::

'Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.'

Acts 17:24-27 ::

'The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.'

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1. What is the importance of having people live in Jerusalem (the holy city - God's place where the temple was located)? Why wouldn't people want to live there (see Nehemiah 1:1-2, 7:1-4)?

2. What does this passage teach us about the importance of church having a presence in cities? What is challenging for the church to have a presence in cities/metropolitan areas?

3. What is challenging about living and staying long term in Orlando / Central Florida? What unique opportunities does Orlando / Central Florida offer to point a diversity of people (nations) and generations of people to Jesus?

4. What does this passage teach about the faithfulness of God who promised to re-build Jerusalem (see vs. 2:5, 17-20)?

5. In verse 6-36, what various roles and places do we see God calling people to?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

Study 15 :: Nehemiah 12:1-26

Read :: Nehemiah 12:1-26

Passage Overview

Chapter 12 of Nehemiah lists out two different generations of priest (spiritual leaders of God's people) during this time period. This shows the importance of faithful leaders who invest in the next generations to continually remind people of the grace, glory and goodness of God. Ultimately the priests point us to the great high priest, Jesus, who fully reconciles and brings us into a right relationship with God through the sacrifice of his death on the cross. As we follow our great leader Jesus, it allows us to invest in others, including our own family, to create generations who love and worship Jesus.

Hebrews 10:10-18 ::

'And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

*"This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:*

*I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,"*

then he adds,

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.'

1 Peter 5:1-5 ::

'So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'

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5. Why is it important to continually identify and invest in a next generation of leaders?

6. 2 Timothy 2:2 says to entrust God's message of salvation through Jesus, the gospel, to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Who are you/can you intercede for and invest in that will be able to teach others the gospel? How?

7. Throughout this passage it speaks of 'sons' and 'fathers' (vs. 1, 10, 12, 22, 23). What does this reveal about the importance of leading your family spiritually, particularly to men? How has that gone in your family? What is your plan to lead your family spiritually?

8. Read Hebrews 10:10-18 and 1 Peter 5:1-5. How does this passage point to Jesus and our need for him? In what ways can you / have you grown through the investment/leadership of others? What is your plan to help others, including your family, grow in the gospel?

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Study 16 :: Nehemiah 12:27-47

Read :: Nehemiah 12:27-47

Passage Overview

The people gather together to celebrate God's goodness and faithfulness for what he accomplished through them to build the wall and establish the city as a place where God can be worshipped. The people know of their brokenness so they look to God who purifies them and they joyfully and sacrificially sing of God's grace, glory and goodness in a way that is heard and seen by those around them. Ultimately it is the anointing and dedication of Jesus through his death, resurrection and sending of his Spirit that allows us to be purified of our sins and gives us freedom to live a true life of joy in community with God and others on His mission of making all things new.

Mark 14:3-9 ::

'And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.'

I Peter 2:9-12 ::

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.'

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts

Study 17 :: Nehemiah 13:1-14

Read :: Nehemiah 13:1-14

Passage Overview

Nehemiah had established the community of God's people in Jerusalem and went back to his job with the king only to hear again that the people were listening to false teachers, worshipping false gods and doing evil in God's house. Nehemiah loves God and the people so he goes to Jerusalem to bring order back to God's people by putting reliable leadership that loved God and loved people in place and throw out the people who sought to lead others astray. This points to Jesus who saw the destruction and devastation that sin and Satan bring to the world so he came and destroyed it through his life, death and resurrection. We can look to Jesus and his truth to battle against sin in us and around us to bring freedom and true life that worships God and cares for others.

Luke 19:41-48 ::

'And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."

And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.'

Philippians 2:8-18 ::

'And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.'

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Study 18 :: Nehemiah 13:15-31

Read :: Nehemiah 13:15-31

Passage Overview

The book ends with the community of people abdicating the worship of God with their whole lives as they had covenanted to do and Nehemiah once again calling them to repentance and faith in God. This passage reveals the depth and seriousness of sin--particularly how it effects the sabbath day and a families worship of God--and that our only hope in the midst of it is the grace, glory and goodness of God who alone can rescue us from it. This points us to Jesus who is Lord of the sabbath and everything else and who alone has the power to rescue us from the life of sin we all live through his perfect life, death and resurrection. As we look to Jesus, we will see his grace, glory and goodness and continue to repent of our disobedience toward him and turn to true life worshipping him in all things.

Mark 2:23-28 ::

'One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'

Ephesians 2:1-10 ::

'And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.'

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1. What is the issue that Nehemiah (and God) had with the people in verses 15-18? Why is this an issue and what does it reveal about the people's hearts and view of God (see Nehemiah 10:31, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Genesis 2:1-3)? How does commanding a sabbath rest show the grace, goodness and glory of God?
2. What does the sabbath look like in your life? What distracts you from taking a sabbath? (What does it reveal about your view of God?) What does it look like for you to repent and glorify Jesus with a weekly sabbath (what will you do? not do? how will you rest in Jesus? enjoy God? etc.)
3. In what ways had the people abdicated their covenant/call/responsibilities to their God by not leading their families spiritually (vs. 13:23-24, see also Nehemiah 10:30)? Why does this matter?
4. How is it loving and gracious of God for everyone to not have people marry who have different and competing views, motivations and desires for life (one for God and one not for God, see also 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)?

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5. How does Nehemiah respond to the sin he sees destroying God's people (vs. 19-22, 25, 28-31)?
What does this tell us about the seriousness and effects of sin?
6. What areas of your life do you need a rebuke? What does it look like in your life to have God and people rebuke you for your sin and you rebuke others for their sin? Does that happen?
Why or why not? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:11-22)
7. What does Nehemiah's final prayer (vs. 31) reveal about his only hope and our only hope?
8. Read Mark 2:23-28 and Ephesians 2:1-10. How does this passage ultimately point to Jesus?
What does it teach us about our hope only hope being in God and his goodness?

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Prayer / Notes / Thoughts