

The Distress That We Are In +++

Nehemiah 2:17 - 3:3

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~ Do your enemies frustrate, discourage, and hinder you in your commitment to walk with the Lord? Well, you're not alone; Nehemiah dealt with exasperatingly difficult opposition when he returned to Jerusalem after the captivity to rebuild the walls and streets of the city. We can all take heart, because Nehemiah is going to provide us with some excellent Biblical principles in this section of Scripture for handling just such situations. This Spiritual Safari is considering the Old Testament and the New Testament in tandem; because, quite frankly, I don't find all of the books of the Bible a thrill to read – such as the little book of Nahum, for example. However, the entire Bible, when examined completely, has a very real message for each of us; and I am merely attempting to convey to you dear readers by the power of the Holy Spirit what that message for your life is.

We simply *MUST* have a complete picture of the Word of God, or it is absolutely useless. Some people seem to be stuck in the Pentateuch, and some are stuck in the Gospel of Matthew. I hope those of you who check off the “like” button on this forum on which I teach are actually reading these reports – because I am not here to be popular – that's for sure. This safari has only one purpose: to find and see the Lord Jesus Christ on every page of the Word of God – and this is for you, personally; so that you, too, can understand God's Son and take Him at His Word. I have no other agenda. If you think differently, you're wrong — and you likely stopped reading a long time ago. So.

In our previous report, we left Nehemiah in Jerusalem where things weren't going well for the returning remnant. The city was in distress, and the people were utterly discouraged in the rebuilding process. Nehemiah received a lot of help from King Artaxerxes for this return to the land; whereas Ezra hadn't received any help from anyone – as we saw in Ezra's book. Well, God will lead us all in different ways, to be sure; and God will

lead you differently than He will lead me. Either way, Nehemiah didn't ride into the city with a huge fanfare of trumpets; all Nehemiah said was, "... so, I came to Jerusalem."

He quietly made an inspection of the construction progress during the middle of the night. His survey was made that way purposely; so he could determine whether or not they could actually do the job. What Nehemiah saw was frightful, but he still believed it could be done. Nehemiah was a true optimist; and he is the type of layman I would like to have working with me. I feel much more like Ezra must have felt when it comes to getting the Word of God out to the world – alone – ALL alone. There are also many enemies who love to hinder the work at hand in this so-called safari. I suppose that's just the way it has to be; even Paul said, "... there is a great door open, but there are many adversaries..."

II

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

~ Here we see Nehemiah's inspection is complete; so, he calls a meeting of the leaders who had previously returned to Jerusalem to witness to them concerning how God had led him. Nehemiah says, in essence, "... God is with us – let's get busy working." The response to his enthusiasm was a motivated group of people who replied, "... let us rise up and build!"

Nehemiah is a genuinely God-inspired leader. He could have written a great deal of excess verbiage at this point, but he only gives one little sentence when he says, "... so, they strengthened their hands for this good work." Nehemiah isn't going to tell us what a great leader he is or how these people are responding to his leadership. There is no self-serving prose; he is

a very modest leader who stays very much in the background. One cannot help but love this man – this layman. I do....

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

~ We have already met two of the men in this trio of discouragement from verse nineteen; and they aren't the type of people we want around us. Every sincere man of God is going to have a Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem lurking in the darkness. These three represent the methods an enemy uses to discourage and stop the work of God.

The first phase of Satan's warfare is to laugh at you and ridicule. Typically, this will stop the Lord's work dead in its tracks and that's it – the end. If that does not succeed, the second way the devil works is to have others despise your work for God; and generally, those who should be supporting your work of the Lord will attempt to make others hate you and despise you by spreading lies, gossip and rumors. After these first two attacks, ninety-nine percent are eliminated. If the first method didn't work, the second way is extremely effective at discouraging us. When this happens you'll find the going extremely rough.

But those first two way leave one percent for the devil to deal with. The third way is to question what you are doing. This is when the enemy of God can truly twist Scriptures to make you think you just might be wrong about it all. The third way is an attack that is so difficult to withstand that most men of God – even very well-meaning men – throw their hands up and say, "... I've had enough." Your safari leader just happens to know all about this experience....

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

~ Nehemiah tells all three of these losers to get out of his way. God was with him, and Nehemiah knew it; so he turned his back on them and gets busy working. That's wonderful! And, that brings us to the rebuilding of the walls, which is one of the most spectacular building projects I have ever heard of. It is an absolutely tremendous thing this man did. God always moves in a very wonderful way when we persevere!

Remember, God first led Zerubbabel and Ezra as they returned to Jerusalem after the captivity. God led both of them differently, but their commission was to rebuild the temple – which they did. Now it is the walls and infrastructure that are in disrepair; and God is going to work in yet another miraculous way. God *ALWAYS* moves this way, too, by the way. Most of us in the ministry began by trying to imitate someone who had mentored us. Unfortunately, that never works. We must be ourselves. It's very interesting to me how the Lord can take two eyes, a nose, a mouth and two ears and create literally *BILLIONS* of different faces! That's because God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts, my beloved readers – you may want to think that all the way through....

III

¹ Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

² And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

³ But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

~ So, the rebuilding of the walls will be explained to us through the rebuilding of the ten "gates" in Jerusalem. We'll begin with the sheep gate, and we'll end back at the sheep gate in our Spiritual Safari. We're going all the way around with Nehemiah. There could have been other gates in the

walls at this time in which we are studying – but – personally, I don't think so. I base my conclusion on the fact that the ten gates Nehemiah tells us about in the Word of God bear out the complete Gospel record for the plan of salvation. We could say the Gospel is *in* the gates of Jerusalem; and we're going to see the Lord Jesus Christ standing in each gate as we proceed.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem, to the Pool of Bethesda, He entered in through the sheep gate, you will recall. I believe Jesus came in through a different gate each time He entered the city; and in His so-called Triumphant Entry, He came in through the east gate. Many people make the mistake of confusing the east gate with the golden gate. They say that, because the east gate is sealed up today, it won't be reopened until Jesus returns — and then He will come through that gate. Well, the golden gate just happens to be the gate to the temple. The golden gate will be opened for Him because it will lead Him directly into the Holy of Holies.

Be that as it may, the sheep gate is the gate where animals were brought in for sacrifice; and that's where Jesus entered as he acted out a walking parable fulfilling what John the Baptist had said, "*... behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.*" Let's behold the Lamb of God in His Person and in His work now as we consider Him in everything. We also see the cross in the sheep gate. That, my friends, is where you begin with God. If you do not begin at the cross, then you do not begin with God. God isn't asking anything from the unsaved world *NOR* from *YOU* for salvation; and He has this world absolutely shut up to the cross of Christ. Until we have trusted Christ, we will never be of any service to Him.

The only question God ever asks the lost world is, "*... what will you do with My Son Who died for you?*" Until we answer that question, God doesn't have anything else to say to us. You can just write that down. If you turn God down, and reject the Lord Jesus Christ, then God isn't asking you for anything – and He never will. I hope I have made that abundantly clear; especially to those who like to focus on the Mosaic Law. If that is you, then you are not saved. If you are reading this and that is you, then I am not asking for your support, either. I rarely say anything about supporting this safari to begin with – but – when I do mention support, I am *ONLY* talking

to believers. God has something to give *YOU*, and if you have received that gift, then you will *WANT* to support this Spiritual Safari which takes the entire Word of God to the entire world properly, correctly and completely.

The Lord Jesus Christ died for you on the cross, was buried, and rose again from the dead on the third day. The sheep gate sets the cross before us – it all begins there. Notice that the men of Jericho built at this place; and Jericho is the place where the curse was pronounced. It was told to Joshua, “... *cursed is the man who rebuilds Jericho.*” Well, in the days of Ahab, king of Israel, there was a man who rebuilt Jericho, and the curse came upon him and his sons – as we have already seen on this safari in the Books of Kings. If you come around the Mount of Olives on the road from Jericho today, you will discover you are directly at the pinnacle of the temple area; so, naturally, that’s where the men from the Jordan plain and those from the city of Jericho built.

Today, you and I live in a world that has been cursed by sin. The curse is turning into a malignant spiritual plague. I don’t think I need to belabor that point – all we have to do is look around – if you do not see the curse on this world, then you’re either blind, or you are not living in reality. Man has this world in the biggest mess he could possibly make — and we are compounding our errors as fast as we can. Man has *NO ABILITY* whatsoever to solve the problems that we have in our world as you read this report – no solution can be offered for our biggest problems; and there is no hope at all outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even men in high places who are rank unbelievers do not dispute this statement; with the exception of my solution — but those are crack-pot comedian types who only desire to laugh their way to hell. Well, they’ll ultimately be successful at that. That’s where they’re going, you may be sure.

Only the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross can remove the curse of sin from your life or from my life, my beloved. The soul that sinneth shall die. That isn’t a maybe. That judgment is on you, and it is on me, unless Christ bears the burden for us. The good news is: if you have never trusted Him before, you can do so today — right now!

That brings us to the next gate — the fish gate. This is where fish came in from the Mediterranean Sea, from Jordan and other places; and these people ate a whole bunch of fish in the day in which we are studying. There was no problem locating the fish gate. All one had to do was follow their nose! The Lord Jesus said, “... *I will make you fishers of men.*” However, after the Gospel was given to the disciples, they were told to tarry at Jerusalem for a while — “... *until you be endued with power from on High*” — to be specific. Of course, they needed to be filled, baptized, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit — and they needed to be indwelt. So, they became fishermen on the Day of Pentecost. That’s what God wants to do with His own children today. It’s a family business, you might say.

The lost world cannot hear what God is saying to His children. If this report makes no sense to you, then you just don’t happen to be God’s child, my friend — it’s just that simple. We’re all going to go fishing and we’re all going to do it quite differently. Not everyone is to go out knocking on doors — because not everyone is qualified to do that. Some people make a colossal mistake by doing so — because God hasn’t asked them to go knock on doors — and they generally do more damage than they do good. Prayer evangelism and raising support for your church ministry is likely the two topmost effective outreach opportunities there are today — and those are the two most neglected, by far.

These reports are fueled by prayer from all over the world — and no other way. There is minimal material support for this expedition — but there is some — and I thank God for those people. If they are reading this, they know who they are. Without certain lovely people from a wonderful church in Florida, I would have blown away in the hurricane a *LONG* time ago. If you’re praying for this ministry, you will do well to pray for those people, too — anonymously. God knows them.

We all have different gifts, but we all need to go through the fish gate one way or another. The fish gate speaks of getting the Word of God to the world, friends. You can have part in that if you will actually pray and ask God how He wants you to participate in the rebuilding of the walls. If you know someone who actually believes God, and teaches you the Word of God correctly, sincerely and completely — and in an educated manner — you

ought to have a part with that person. He needs you if you he is truly teaching the Word of God.

We have too many people who say they teach the Word of God – but they don't teach it at all. I am rather amused at what passes as “*Bible study*” today during the week. Most merely pick up something from yesteryear and parrot it; but it means less than nothing to them. My believing friends: you are commanded by God to support a legitimate ministry today. These so called “*missionaries*” who do not even help in their own church to clean up – and they never come to the mid-week Bible study – not to mention they are doing *NOTHING* in the community – are not worthy of *ANY* support; and that support you give them is sinful giving for you, by the way. You will be held accountable. It's one reason a church will never grow, too. That's what's real.

Well, we have gone through enough gates for this report – and we end on a harsh note that is not going to make me any friends. I already knew that. It's not my problem – it's *YOUR* problem if you don't like this message – because this message has been brought to you by God Himself. If you can't hear it, then you aren't listening; or you are not chosen to be the elect according to the foreknowledge of God. I'll stop there, but in the next leg of this expedition, we're going through more gates in Jerusalem. If you didn't like this report, then my suggestion is: *DO NOT* read the next several reports. Have a nice day – may God richly bless you, my beloved ~

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