

God the Master Builder:

Nehemiah 2

Opening Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:10-11.

Christian Leaders not only need to be from the Knees Up, they also need an unswerving belief in the sovereignty of God, the Master Builder!

Nehemiah had experienced heart surgery! To run with a new vision as a leader you can't use an old heart - N needed a new Holy Spirit leading. He was comfortable, had a good job and a position of influence. In Chapter 1 we saw that he enquired about the state of Jerusalem, received the report, sat down and wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. He prayed to the Awesome God, he stood in the gap for Jerusalem (we), he claimed God's promise, and cried out to God for help in his appeal to the King!

Proverbs 21:1 (Solomon's word which N would have known well) makes an amazing statement: "The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases." So it proved to be true when this praying leader waited for God's perfect timing and opened up to the earthly King Artaxerxes. The dates mentioned tell us that four months had passed: patience is indeed a virtue that God can grace our life with and the Leader needs it often in good measure!

So N as Cupbearer is doing what he does well: taking wine to the King. But this time the King detects a difference in N's countenance, or perhaps the Lord told N no longer to hide his true feelings. "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

At this point you sense that God gives N a boldness to overcome his fear, and to tell the King what is making him sad: He affirms the King and then tells him of the desperate situation of Jerusalem (Walls ruined and gates on fire). The King immediately responds and asks what he wants?

Notice that N whilst serving probably the most powerful King in the known world at that time is at every turn listening to God's leading (Twice he has addressed God as the God of Heaven, an

important affirmation putting all in its right perspective): so he prayed (he shot off an arrow prayer) and then answered:
King: Please send me to rebuild Jerusalem! When we know the Mountain Moving God of Heaven nothing is impossible: every leader needs to know this (Faith is the currency of growth and advance).

The King (with the queen sitting beside him: suggesting influence?): How long will it take? When will you return? N was so confident in God that he set a clear timetable (by faith). I remember when we came to St Andrews the Lord had me set a personal timetable of seven years to build something lasting and significant for the His Glory. Goals are important: for the Christian Leader, godly goals even more so!

N was shown amazing favour with God & Man: the King, (Acts 2:47) and this resulted in him not only being able to go and do this task but also gave him the boldness to further request that he be given letters to Governors (granting safe conduct) and the keeper of the forest (to access new timber for the rebuilding). N comments: Because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the King granted my requests. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 says: the one who calls you is faithful and He will do it! Many leaders experience God's gracious hand upon them but so often they fail to bow at all times to the Master Builder! The King also sent a Cavalry unit with N (or was it a **Calvary** unit!!): the Knees Up Leader knows that he leads with the whole company of Heaven as his advance party and rearguard!

Whenever God starts to do something new there will be opposition, whenever Godly Leadership starts to be exercised the Religious Spirit will rear its head: hence the first mention of the unholy Trinity: Sanballat and Tobiah (and later Geshem). Clearly they were on the take and making much out of the misery of the population. Whether their action was motivated by personal greed, misplaced religious zeal, or the threat to their control of the city, it can all be labelled in general as a demonic reaction against God's people and God's work. Comfortingly it's a helpful

confirmation for God's people and especially Godly Leadership that they are heading in the right direction!

So N presses on to Jerusalem: then notice how again he pauses for three days (a good biblical pause) perhaps waiting on God and seeking the next move. Many plans of God how floundered on us being impatience and wanting to get ahead of Him! Then at night he goes on an inspection tour: "I had not told anyone what God had put on my heart". Leadership can be a lonely place to be especially when God has spoken but you can't as yet share what He has said with others.

He takes a few men on foot with him on horseback: thus follows an inspection of the Walls and Gates. The walls had been broken down and the Gates destroyed by fire just like his brother had told him. His tour was kept secret from the Jews, Priests, Nobles and Officials. Leaders need to make their own assessment of needs rather than go on the assessment of others: the perspective of the leader can differ hugely from the perspective of the follower! Remember the 12 spies in Numbers 13/14: they went to the same Promised Land but ten saw giants and two saw a good land flowing with milk and honey. *I'm grateful and you should be too that over St Andrews history, men and women of faith have steered us fruitfully to where we are today.* Then at God's timing N gathers all the people who will be the labourers to rebuild the Walls: first he reminds them of the trouble they are in (sometimes we can settle for far less than God's best and we need shaking out of our complacency, sometimes we need to tell it as it is to people: warts and all!). "Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire".

Then the Call of God through his servant: Come let us rebuild the Walls of Jerusalem (and we will no longer be in disgrace). To help their faith in this matter he shares his testimony thus far: how God's hand was upon him and how God had moved the King to help: faith building stuff!! The people respond: "Let us start rebuilding" So they began this good work. Green lights are flashing, Angels are getting excited, Heaven open door stands ready to pour out

holy unction on the people of God as they begin to rebuild not just physical Walls but also the spiritual Walls of their lives (Isaiah 49:15-16).

You could not get more ruined than Jerusalem but in 52 days it was rebuilt (6:15). For that reason I say whatever the state of the Church in the UK it can be rebuilt with Godly Men and Women raised up by God for this crucial task. If we like N were once again to trust the Master Builder we would see a massive spiritual shift in our nation once again and we would see marriages and families restored as God intends as the building blocks of Transforming Community.

Our Unholy Trinity: Sanballat, Tobiah & Geshem now raise their heads again: mocking and ridiculing the plan (Can you think of contemporary equivalents???) Whenever Gods people begin the rebuild then you can be sure that there will be opposition from outside and sadly often from within). What is this you are doing? Are you rebelling against the King? (they said).

Now N could have responded that he was there on the Kings business with his full approval, favour and help but he doesn't! He responds as the Godly Leader will always respond: The God of Heaven will give us success: we will start rebuilding.....but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.

Faith's response to mockers of today is to give the Glory to God from start to finish, to remind them that if they continue in the their unbelief that that choice will keep them outside the covenant of grace, and to evidence the reward of faith by the transformation first of people and second of communities.

Leaders from the Knees Up need also to be 100% God's men and women with an unswerving trust in God and belief in His sovereignty, if we are today to rebuild the walls of people's lives and weave afresh the fabric of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Hear the word of the Lord to you: Isaiah 58:12 is God's promise as we defer to the Master Builder: "Your People will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age old foundations. You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls & Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" Receive that promise and lets make it so in this day and generation!

Pastor David

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