

PP Nehemiah: Wall Security!

Text Nehemiah 7:1-3

Part 23, 1/12-13, 2013

Illus The Great Wall of China has been estimated at almost 2,150 miles long, with nearly 2,000 more miles in branches and spurs. It ranges from 15 to 40 feet high, up to 32 feet thick, with 45 foot high watchtowers every 100 yards. It was built to defend China from Mongolian invasion, yet China was invaded and eventually defeated by the Mongolian forces under Genghis Khan. The Mongols didn't knock down a section of the wall, they bribed a gatekeeper. The Chinese spent unimaginable time and resources building the wall, but neglected to be careful of their Gatekeepers, who were often unmotivated, poor and ill-treated.

The lesson in this is that walls are only as effective as those who guard them!
What we'll see in our passage today is how Nehemiah made the wall of Jerusalem secure so that the city could dwell in peace, worshiping and serving their God!

How to make the wall of our salvation secure!

PP 1-The Wall must be built

“Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors...” 7:1a

Remember the saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step?
The first step in making the wall of our salvation secure is simply this: *Have a wall!*

PP A wall that goes by the name God has given: ***“you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.” Isaiah 60:18***

The name of the wall that God builds is ***‘salvation’***

It all begins there...***salvation!***

Have you come to Jesus Christ as a beggar, too poor to possess anything to barter with God?

Falling down before Him in need of His grace?

Believing that He not only died to provide a way to forgive

The wall had been built...person is saved and secure in their salvation

Walls created separation and protection from enemies, while gates allowed those who should be in the city to enter

The doors, or gates had a name as well...***‘praise’***

And when any of them are down in the Christian's life, the enemy will pour through

The wall of salvation must be built, the doors set, but that alone will not make our salvation sure

PP 2-The Wall of our salvation must have those who protect us

If the wall of our salvation is to be strong and secure, it must be done within community!

So Nehemiah appointed 3 groups of people to guard the wall

The first were the **gatekeepers**, or **doorkeeper**, or what was called a *porter*

As the Great Wall of China showed, it was common for the enemy to offer a bribe if a gatekeeper would let them in, so the gatekeeper must be one who is trustworthy

It was an official, elected position, at one time chosen by the king of Israel

In King David's day, there were 4,000 of them, in Nehemiah's, 172 (**11:19**)

They were divided into divisions each serving one week at a time
They had their posts assigned to them by the casting of lots to avoid bribery and deceit
The job of the gatekeeper was to guard the gate admitting only those who had a right to enter

Elders act as gatekeepers in our church, making sure all who enter our fellowship as members
have a clear testimony and good reputation with those outside of the church
Parents, we are the gatekeepers for our children, helping to make their gates secure as you watch
over them

Older siblings are to watch over younger ones

If there is a movie we want to watch, it is not unusual for them to tell us that Andrew should
probably not watch it, and if there is an inappropriate word in a movie, they usually tell
him right at that moment that we should not say that word

Our country recognizes the need for this: Coast Guard, the Port authorities, border security
Who are the gatekeepers in your lives, who point out to you the strategies of our enemies?
Who have you opened the blinds of your heart to and let them see all the way in, even to those
dark rooms that you keep the door closed to?

PP *“consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet
together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as
you see the Day drawing near.”* **Hebrews 10:24-25**

God would have us appoint in our church and our lives those who watch for strategies of our
enemies and where our low places and open spaces are in our wall and shore them up

PP 3-The Wall of our salvation must have those who encourage us

Is it not interesting that Nehemiah appoints *‘the singers’* to help watch over the wall and gates?
Don’t picture the singers going all Les Miz on top of the walls and in front of the gates
They are to remind the people there is more to life than work and money, and struggle
There is mercy and joy, and community, hope and a future
Think of our own lives: financial pressure, relational struggles, health issues, worries and
anxieties begin to wear us down and our strength can fail and our faith falter
God can use music to weave encouragement and strength back into our flagging faith!

From 500 AD to 1500 AD, the church did not sing but what was performed by professional
musicians, in a language that could not be understood by the average person
They could not participate, but the reformation changed that
Martin Luther and so many others began to write some of the greatest hymns of church history
If you’ve read Pilgrim’s Progress, by John Bunyan, then you may remember that the pilgrim,
Christian, fell into the slough of despond, into despair, and each time he is delivered we
see him going on his way singing
Those who are singers, those who live with songs in their hearts, who watch over our walls and
move us to sing new songs to our God!
Friends, do you have people in your life who encourage you, who show you what God is doing
in your life and stir you to praise?

The compass needle of our hearts must point to God, and not to ourselves, and the singers were
to constantly remind the people of this

Music is powerful as it embodies a belief, stirs our passions, and moves us to action
The singers direct the people of God to the presence of their God in their midst, lifting their eyes
and hearts to the truth of God's power, mercy and love
Yes there are enemies all around us, but remember our God!
Yes, we have difficulty, but lift up your hearts and see what our God has done!
He is faithful to watch over us, faithful to protect us!
The singers would sing out the acts of God and bolster the faith of God's people
Are there singers in our lives that are keeping our walls and gates secure?

PP Paul tells us in **Ephesians**: *"be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,"*
5:18-19

Do you wonder what the differences are between singing psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs?

PP *'psalms'* are songs of man's deliverance and mercies received, set to musical accompaniment

PP *'hymns'* are songs of praise sung in honor to God and are distinctly Christian

PP *'spiritual songs'* are likely sacred poems

All three of them work in amazingly powerful ways

God loves to sing!

PP *"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."* Psalm 32:7

PP *"The LORD your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."* Zeph. 3:17

PP In **Hebrews 2:12**, Jesus proclaims, *"I will tell of Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise."*

Jesus Christ is singing hymns, songs of praise to His Father in our hearts, in our congregation

PP 4-The Wall of our salvation must have those who teach us

"the Levites had been appointed"

The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to serve Him full-time as priests, because they were the only tribe that stood with Moses against those who worshiped the golden calf

They were not allowed to work a career, but had to dedicate themselves fully to the Lord and they were provided for through a portion of the tithes of the nation of Israel

There were 284 Levites in the city in Nehemiah's day (**11:18**)

Nehemiah appointed the Levites to function as Israel's teachers and pastors who communicate God's truth and the great realities of their faith

PP *"For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."* Malachi 2:7

PP Job functioned in this way with others as his friends noted: *"Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees."* Job 4:4

If the hearts were to be inspired by worship the mind must be informed

Today, in the church, we have a Board, Pastors and teachers who do much of the same

The church does not appoint those who minister the Word, God alone does

The Holy Spirit gives that man a measure of grace, qualifying him to preach the gospel
The church tests those who preach by comparing their message with the Word of God
If it is in accord with God's Word, it must be received and accepted, and if it is not, both teacher
and doctrine are to be refused
Are there Levites who constantly bring you to God's Word, and encourage you to serve Him?

PP 5-The Wall of our salvation must have those who lead us

I think of our elders especially in these two, as well as my own appointment here: ***“Obey your PP
leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who
will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that
would be of no advantage to you.”*** Hebrews 13:17

Let's look more closely at those whom Nehemiah, who represents Christ, puts in charge
***“I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem,
for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.”*** Nehemiah 7:2

Do you remember Hanani who had taken a dangerous 800 mile journey north and east to Susa in
Persia to, in all likelihood solicit aid for his people and his city
He found Nehemiah and faithfully told him the truth of the condition of the Jews and Jerusalem
PP “Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.” Proverbs
27:6

Those who God puts over His churches, must speak the truth, and do so graciously

But look with me at the second individual, ***‘Hananiah the governor of the castle’***
He was in charge over the garrison which guarded the temple on its northward, vulnerable side
“he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.” 7:2

PP Let me tell you something about this word ***‘faithful’***

The Hebrew word occurs 127 times in the OT, and 117 of those times it has to do with truth
To be faithful is to hold to the truth, to keep the truth, and it was a characteristic of Hananiah
Nehemiah doesn't really mention any particular skill or gifts of Hananiah, rather his character
Hananiah had been faithful over the temple castle, the temple garrison, so Nehemiah trusted him
to be faithful in protecting Jerusalem

PP Names were important to the Jews and it is worth pausing to reflect on the name Hananiah,
which means *God is gracious*

The grace of God flooded his life and his God-shaped character was what moved Nehemiah to
give him the job of being in charge over Jerusalem

PP 6-Finally, The Wall of our salvation must have wisdom given to us

Building the wall and its gates is one thing, protecting them is another
Countless Christian organizations-churches, schools and universities-when left unprotected and
unguarded, have been taken over by our enemies
The same is true for countless numbers of believers!

Notice the wisdom that Nehemiah has: ***“I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them.” Nehemiah 7:3a***

The normal operation of gates was to close them at sunset and open them at sundown
But Nehemiah knows that they have enemies who will never quit, looking to destroy them
A city was least alert early in the morning and at night, the times an enemy was most active
So Nehemiah makes the necessary adjustments with wisdom

It is almost always a terrible time to try and resolve conflict when you are tired, or hungry
If you are experiencing waves of attacks from the enemy, then it is prudent to close the gates,
implementing those you have in place to guard them and hunker down until you are
prepared to handle the difficulty

When we’re grieving loss, we should try and avoid making major life-altering decisions

“Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses.” 7:3b

Even more, let the people be guards, so that ownership can develop
And some of them should guard near their homes, as they guard well to care for their families
Perhaps those who have nursery age children should be among those who serve in the nursery
Those with young children with our children’s ministry, and the same with teens in some way in
our student ministry

Ministry should not professionalized, in Nehemiah’s day, by priests alone

All believers are priests according to Peter, so we are all to serve to protect the community of
God’s people, and guard the wall and gates

The walls of our salvation must be guarded with godly men and women
Are you among those who protect; those who encourage; those who teach; those who lead?
Do you have the gatekeepers and singers and Levites and leaders guarding your own wall?
May we all report to duty!

Pray