

PP Nehemiah: The Power of Truth

Text **Nehemiah 2:14-20**

Part 7-6/16-17

Illus Andrew woke up Friday morning excited because he was going to go to a friend's house to play

He told me that his friend has a 'huge scar on his back' but he didn't know how it got there

When I was younger, scars were *stories waiting to be told*

Friends, don't outgrow that

Tell of how God has healed you from the worst experiences and give glory to our God

Our testimonies, our declarations of truth of our God, are powerful tools for rebuilding

As we return to Nehemiah, recall that the city was in ruin, and it had been for over 90 years

One attempt at rebuilding the walls and gates had already failed

The people of God were in despair, their enemies were powerful and surrounding them

What a formidable task that Nehemiah faced

What would he do to motivate the people to put their hands to the work?

He would speak the truth, simply and directly

To the people of God; about their God; and to their enemies

PP 1-We must speak truth to each other (2:17)

"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.'" 17

Notice that Nehemiah didn't send out a letter to communicate his plan, though he could have as their newly assigned governor

He didn't send out a servant either though that would have been possible

"Then I said to them"

PP First, we must learn to speak truth *personally* through relationships

Remember, Nehemiah had left a very secure, comfortable life as the most powerful Jew on earth, a trusted advisor to the King of Persia

He had never been to Jerusalem, for he was born in exile

Yet notice his perspective through the pronouns he used when he spoke to the people

'***We***' are in trouble, let '***us***' build the wall, so '***we***' will not keep suffering

I share your suffering and misery, so I am part of the solution with you

And this betrays where our American mindset has steered us wrong

We are all about individualism, even though we pledge to "*one nation under God, indivisible*"

The Bible views the people of God as a body, with covenantal solidarity

This is why one sin in the body of Christ can affect the whole body

A friend of mine had a wheelbarrow of rocks land on his toe, and his whole body felt the pain

One part can affect the whole body!

What Nehemiah is doing is saying we are in this together and what a powerful lesson we see

If you want to motivate someone to begin rebuilding walls, join them personally in the effort

PP The **second** principle in telling truth to each other is that we are *realistic*
I have a friend who is famous for trying to soften the truth and find the silver lining
Listen to Nehemiah, who refuses to mince words: ***‘Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates burned’***
Avoiding the truth to protect the person won’t motivate anyone, and God never does this
Things are really bad, Nehemiah tells them, *we are a ruined people*
But Nehemiah wouldn’t leave them there, He led to them hope

PP Which shows us that **thirdly**, that Nehemiah spoke truth *redemptively*
“Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”

God doesn’t want to leave us in ruin, He wants to deliver us in His grace

PP (Prov, 18:21) This is the power of the tongue, which either leads to death or life

PP Listen to how it can lead to life: ***“let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another...Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*** Ephesians 4:25, 29

And when we speak truth to one another, we can’t leave them in despair and hopelessness, we connect them to the grace and hope of Jesus Christ

PP 2-We must speak the truth about our God (2:18)

Friends, this may be the most important wall-building principle we’ll see today

What motivates God’s people to rise up and build?

More than anything, it is the testimonies of the power and goodness of God!

When people come to me and reveal their broken walls, I love to share the stories of how I have seen God rebuild broken lives!

Nothing we say will be more powerful than testifying of our God’s faithfulness!

Struggling believers do not need our opinions or advice from some godless author

They need the bold clarity of the Word of God and the evidence of its trustworthiness in our own lives

Testifying of God’s power and goodness restores hope and faith to hearts of despair

PP (Map) Nehemiah went out at night to look at the walls and gates and at one point had to turn back because the broken ruin of rubble blocked his path

This is often the case when you step into the lives of broken people and churches

The first step of rebuilding is removing the rubble of lies and distorted truths, so you can get back to the foundation

And for the believing brother or sister, that foundation is Jesus Christ

PP ***“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”***

1 Corinthians 3:11

Jesus is the foundation, His finished work on the cross is what the wall of salvation is built on

He is the gate through which we enter that salvation with praise on our hearts

If we are to help those whose walls have fallen down, or rebuild our own walls, we have to clear

the rubble and get back to that foundation
The best way to clear the rubble is to begin testifying of God's power and goodness!

"And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me." 18a

Have you ever noticed how often the Psalms tells us to sing a '*new song*'?
It is because new evidences of God's goodness and power are being written into our lives all the time and we must testify of them
Maybe your new song is 2 minute story you tell to a coworker of what God just did for you
Or your new song is a blog you write, or a literal song you create
It may be your own story you share with a fellow struggler and God's deliverance
We are all to be song writers who tell the truth about our good and powerful God

PP "The Lord has brought about our vindication; come, let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God." Jeremiah 51:10

"And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work." 18b

PP 3-We must speak the truth to those who will oppose us (2:19-20)

When I worked in a psychiatric treatment center, God made it clear to me that my role there went beyond a job, it was a ministry
I carried my bible in with me, and looked for opportunities to share God's Word with the patients
I was called into the Director's office and told that I could bring the bible to work but I couldn't bring it out with the kids
So I wore T-shirts with biblical verses or slogans on them, and tried to live in such a way that prompted those struggling teens to ask me questions about my faith
I was called back into the Director's office and told that I couldn't talk about my Christian faith
I prayed through what I should do and realized that the King of all Kings had given me the authority to speak about His Son Jesus Christ, He would protect me and provide for me as I was faithful to the task in a respectful honoring manner, so I continued my ministry

When you rise up to build, enemies will come!
And when these enemies come, our weapon is truth, and it is powerful!
"But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it," 2:19

We've already met two of these enemies
'*Sanballat*' was the governor to the north, the land of Samaria
His name means *enemy in secret*, he is the leader and he points to our greatest enemy, Satan

We've also met his servant and willing vassal, '*Tobiah*' the Ammonite, governor of Ammon
This is the land directly east of Jerusalem across the Jordan river
He represents the flesh, the part of us that wars against God wanting our own way
Now we are introduced to a third enemy, and '*Geshem the Arab*'
He was a wealthy, powerful ruler to the south and west of Jerusalem and likely saw a revived

Israel as a threat to the success of his commercial trade routes
He represents the third and final enemy of God's people, the world

They work together in unity against God's people: *"they jeered at us and despised us and said, 'What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?'" 2:19*
But notice how Nehemiah responds to them: *"Then I replied to them, 'The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem'" 2:20*

He begins to declare truth to these enemies

You have no **'portion'** meaning that Jerusalem is God's and ours, not yours

PP *"The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob."* Psalm 87:2

PP *"For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place"* Psalm 132:13

Christian, learn to say the same, for the same truth applies to us

God has chosen you from before He created the universe, He has always had His eye on you, the beloved of God!

Illus The first time I ever had a conversation with my wife at college, she knew I was the one
We shared a class and during the break in that class, I had gone to the campus bookstore and
bought her a chocolate tootsie roll lollipop, and gave it to her as I introduced myself to
her

She never ate it, she saved it and put it in her flower bouquet as she walked down the aisle March
24, 1990

To an infinitely greater degree, God knew you before you were even born brother and sister, and
He knew that one day you walk down the aisle of salvation for an eternal relationship
with Him

Speak that truth to your enemies when they conspire together to tell you that God doesn't really
have your goodness in mind, that you cannot depend on Him

Then Nehemiah said that these enemies had no **'right'**, no authority over them

The same is true for us

Jesus Christ has freed us from the power of Satan, given us a new heart and taken us out of this
world system to serve God and be His people

These enemies have no right over us, that is the truth!

We are His blood-bought church, the apple of His eye, His treasured possession, which He has
engraved on the palm of His hand

We belong to God!

This is truth, and it has the power to defeat the lies of our enemies

Nehemiah has one final piece of truth for their enemies: you have no **'claim'**, no **'memorial'** no
future with us

Jerusalem is not your land, our God is not your God, we are not your people

We will build God's city again, and you will never be part of it

Satan, you have claim over us, we are no longer under your control, Jesus has redeemed us
World, you have no portion with us, you have nothing that can truly satisfy our souls
And flesh, you have no right to us any more, for we consider ourselves dead to you

This is the truth that wall-builders speak to our enemies who try to discourage our efforts

But let me explain briefly why their enemies were so angry and active in this whole book

PP In **Daniel 9:25**, we read this: ***“Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one”***

This prophecy was set into motion the day that King Artaxerxes gave the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, and the clock began to tick on the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah

The One Who would defeat Satan from that cross, destroying the power of the flesh, and overcoming the God-opposing world system in which we live

The enemies of God live in abject terror of Jesus Christ and His people!

This is truth Cornerstone!

Jesus Christ has already won, and His cry of victory was uttered on the cross: “It is finished!”

The evidence of His victory was when that stone was rolled away and Jesus Christ walked out of that grave victorious over death, over Satan, our flesh and this world

This is the confidence we see from Nehemiah and it is contagious: ***“The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we His servants will arise and build”***

Friends, are you ready to build?

It will require each and every Christian here to do their part!

There will be opposition from our enemies, but they are already defeated by Christ

God will give us success!

Pray