

Covenantal Equivalence – we can learn from Nehemiah how God builds his church through his people; Nehemiah → OT context → fulfilment in Christ → us

Chp. 1-7 - Nehemiah's memoirs — crash course in spiritual leadership

Chp. 8-13 – the renewal of God's people through the bible teaching of Ezra

Secret of Nehemiah's ministry was daily, private, real dependence on God – e.g. 2:4,8,12,20; 4:9,14,20; 8:10; 13:14,22,29,31

10 x 'my God'

Ministry as a governor characterised by: 1) Prayer; 2) Compassion; 3) Humility

How Nehemiah led the people to survive three ways that Satan opposes gospel building:

1) The cynicism of critics; 2) The plotting of opponents; 3) The hardship of ministry

1. Defeating cynicism through prayer (v1-6)

- a. Cynicism = refusing to appreciate the value or potential of something
- b. Our imperfect will be better than the perfect ministry that will never happens
- c. Sanballat = 'sin gives life' – neighbouring governor hoping that the work fails
- d. Wicked cynicism is different from wise critique in its
 - i. origin (v7 - inflated view of self, competitive insecurity),
 - ii. expression (v2 – contempt, playing to his crowd),
 - iii. effect – hope of paralysing
- e. Our hope and potential is not in the height of the wall but in who the builder is
- f. Prayer (v4-5)
 - i. Start and end of meetings in prayer
 - ii. Invest in the quality of your central church prayer meetings – good musicians
 - iii. Senior pastors – lead prayer meeting
 - iv. Have an elders or church day of prayer
- g. Wholehearted church (v6)
- h. We will encounter cynicism from outside church, within and in our own hearts
- i. Look at how far you've come and who your God is

2. Surviving plots through preaching God (v7-15)

- a. We are not the only ones with a strategic plan
- b. Anger of clergy (cf. v7)
- c. When the world unites against you, you pray to the ruler of the world (v9 cf. Phil. 4:6)
- d. Pray then do something (v9)
- e. Grumbling from within disguised as a concern for burdens on others (v10)
- f. Terrifying threats from enemies (v11)
- g. Own people expressing doubts about the cost of gospel ministry (v12)
- h. Nehemiah preaches God to them (v13-14) - Doesn't get cross with people or bully them or minimise problems – he reminds them of God then calls them to fight

- i. People strengthened by the doctrine of God (v15)
 - i. Share with congregation a gospel dream – wouldn't it be wonderful if we could do X for the sake of...
 - ii. Lead from front in generosity and following the vision
 - iii. Be amazed what God's people can do, trusting in the power of God
 - iv. God is the one who will do it – he gets all the credit. "God has done this." We are just the instruments.
 - j. King's Church Walton – Lord provided the salary for Simon for 3 years through one family stepping in
3. Enduring hardships through teamwork (v16-23)
- a. Satan, the slanderer, the accuser = Abaddon/Apollyon the destroyer
 - i. Cf God the creator, Jesus the church builder
 - ii. When you sin, pray Psalm 51 and get on with the job
 - b. Nehemiah's 3 strategies:
 - i. Team ministry (v16-18)
 - 1. Everyone given a role or multiple roles
 - 2. We can refuse to delegate because of 1) arrogance, 2) insecurity, 3) laziness
 - 3. There are big churches with poor preaching that organise well and many conservative evangelical churches with excellent preaching delivered to a few people because they are not well organised
 - 4. Preaching is the heart but not the whole. Must organise
 - 5. Nehemiah carefully planned and allocated roles. Not anarchy or democracy but divide up gospel ministry, recruit, empower, deploy, encourage, support. Cf. Eph. 4 – equip members for ministry
 - 6. Have good comms, good meetings people want to come to
 - 7. Executive teams
 - 8. Co-Mission has grown through lay leaders and elders
 - ii. Mutual support (v19-20)
 - 1. Within a congregation and within a network
 - 2. Mutual support is how God will fight for us
 - 3. Being part of a network like Co-Mission can be costly, supporting each other's gospel work
 - 4. God blesses generosity. Churches that give are those that God transforms to be ever more generous
 - iii. Humble example (v21-23)
 - 1. Nehemiah shared in the sacrifices
 - 2. Lead from the front not shout from behind. People need to sense that you are utterly committed. E.g. evangelism
 - 3. I [RC] am ordinary but I can work hard. We need sustainable sacrifice. Some of us need more of the sacrifice (so that it hurts), some need more of the sustainable (3-4 evenings off a week).

[The value of an intermediate goal in the achievement of an ultimate aim]

Jesus is the perfect fulfilment of these patterns – praying, preaching, team building – to build his church.