

Rebuilding the Ruins

Often a group of believers that God Has intended to be together can be in a state of dispersion and not able to take on the function that God had intended. These circumstances are not a disaster; but the decisions made that created the circumstances in the first place are. We can find ourselves in a state of pain and want: this is always the starting point of rebuilding what has been lost or in fact what has never been realized at all. God always has a purpose for those of us who have been caught in these various levels of mediocrity. The reason we feel as though we have fallen short of our expectations is because without God being the central focus of our life and existence nothing is going to have that sparkle we want to see and experience.

The most important thing to realize is that God is able to put things back together again. The problem is there are destructive things within the mixtures of our lives. These things in our lives are like bombs that explode destroying the opportunities God wants to create in and around us. God in the beginning accepted these bombs in our lives; even blessing and protecting us and others from these destructive tendencies. During these times, we experienced the mercies and Graces of God and felt closeness with Him and others within our circle. This is part of His plan and He intends for us and others to have these advantages of knowing Him; but as with all Children, there remains the need to grow up and to take on the responsibilities associated with the extended will of God. At a certain point these childish behaviors need to be left behind: 1Cor 13:11. Some of the things that need to be set aside are things that people perceive as being sinful; other things may not be sin but God calls us to set them aside so we will be more acceptable to a broader spectrum of people: 1Cor 10:31-33.

Certainly, there is some sacrifice that will be expected of us from God at some point. For many of us this has been our point of departure from God's plan related to our life. Before this point, we have been under the blessings of God and enjoying all of the related benefits. After this point represents a different phase in our relationship with Him; we have come to the point in God's plan where He expects work out of us that is reflective of His ultimate purpose. The thing that is the most important to God is saving as many human beings as possible: 1Tim 2:3-4. There are people that God wants to save that are in your sphere of influence; people who are waiting to see the light. Beyond this main objective there are many other objectives that take His plan to an ultimate conclusion and, in turn, a new beginning for us and others.

For now, we are in a portion of His plan where we have to set our own agenda aside in order to be an active participant in what God is doing. At some point any sin we can commit is going to be counterproductive to His purpose. It is important to note that normal things can become a sin if they are set against the will of God for our lives. To be a player in what God is doing we must play by God's rules: 2Tim 2:5. The rules vary for each individual player. One player should not expect another player to do what he is being told by the Lord. Many people are being told to sit and watch and this is what they do in order to please the Lord. There can be people doing God's will and it may not look

that way to somebody else; when this happens, it is because we don't understand what we are seeing. This does not mean we are to trust everything we see; the point is to put our trust in God who can make order from disorder.

In the Book of Nehemiah, we can see how God over time made order out of the destruction of Jerusalem. He can also set in order the destruction within our own lives. The condition of Jerusalem is much the same as the condition of a group of believers that the Lord is wanting to assemble and restore in such a way as to making us useful for His purposes. We are the building material God wants to use. In the city of Jerusalem some of the materials had undergone total destruction and would not be of any value: Neh 2:17. These useless materials needed to be discarded in order to give the City a new fresh and orderly appearance. God wants us to have an orderly appearance if we are to be used as His representatives. So, a major point that resides is we need to help each other get rid of the rubbish that is in our lives so that we will be presentable to others. We can not look like the world, the flesh or the Devil and expect the Lord to be pleased with us or, let alone, put us on display for His purposes. We need to be prime examples of what he expects from us; otherwise we are just deceiving each other. If we start looking like we should look to God, then we will start looking like we should look to each other and also outsiders. This would be the starting point; so, getting rid of the garbage in our lives should be common sense.

Some of us are getting a late start and have come to the point where we can be useful to God. We have a great King and we need to repent (change our mind) because the kingdom of God is at hand; this is our life. The day is drawing near for him to come. We need to care about the Lord and each other and not to be taken in by the passing pleasures of sin and the various forms of lust that are of the world. Sooner or later, God brings us to the point where we have the best opportunity to see what He wants us to see, experiencing the things that are of Him. Most of the time we get used to experiencing our own endeavors and not those of God; otherwise we would be more concerned about the desires of God. The dispersed Jews of Nehemiah had experienced a great deal of suffering, such to the extent that they were motivated to undergo the sufferings related to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. A project like this is of such a nature that it will challenge each individual to perform their various skills for the good of all: Neh 2:18. The Idea is, how well will they work together? When people work together, it is inevitable it is going to bring out the dysfunctions that are within them. Are the leaders going to address these dysfunctions or just let the corruption have its way? Throughout the project of rebuilding the city there were multitudes of obstacles that the people had to face and deal with effectively. It is this testing that cleans up our lives, enabling us to have effective testimonies in the world. Another way to put this is that when a group learns to deal with their internal problems, then they are ready to grow. Some of the problems that Israel faced were from enemies on the outside: Neh 2:19. Once a group has effectively organized on the inside, then the only recourse the enemies of God can deploy are threats to the group as a whole. When we all have the same care for one another, then our enemies have less power over us: Neh 4:14-15.

From this point forward, we will observe as many different scenarios as we can see that arose during the rebuilding of the city. First of all, we see the genuine concern of Nehemiah for the welfare of the people and His interest in rebuilding Jerusalem. Our hearts can be damaged in ways that make us insensitive to the needs of others; this is a major objective of Satan. Believers that God is going to use to assemble a portion of His Church will always face challenging situations requiring courage and the willingness to make peace; yet, on the other hand, not willing to compromise the truth but, on the contrary, exulting it whenever possible. Nehemiah recognizes the fact that God was granting him favor through the king; yet maintained his humility as to give the king the proper honor, subjecting himself to the King's requests. The attitude of Nehemiah is indicative that he is the right man for the job. We see in Nehemiah 2, verses nine and ten, that when people are doing God's will, often people will not be happy about it. We need to be very careful not to provoke or be disrespectful to the people that are already nervous about us being around them. Yet, on the other hand, we do not sacrifice the objectives that we have been called to do because of threats or in the name of conformity. There will never be any victories for the cowardly of heart because the devil is always ready to defend what is important to him. Serving the Lord according to His plan often will involve our death for the sake of the (cross) stake. In the case of the Israelites, they maintained a high level of vigilance while rebuilding the city: Neh 4:15-23. This is a picture of us realizing the vulnerabilities related to our spiritual life with God i.e. when we are in the process of recovering spiritual losses we are more aware of the enemies' tactics to seduce, victimize, and oppress. Once the walls and Gates have been established in our lives, then Satan is forced to deploy different tactics in order to delay the progress with God and His plan for our lives. One of the most interesting threats that Nehemiah was receiving was from somebody on the outside that had ties with the people on the inside. Read 6:17-19 and you can see that this enemy was attempting a very subtle manipulation designed to shake Nehemiah's confidence in the Lord. It is necessary for a Christian in many cases to simply hold his ground, waiting on the Lord who will in His own timing remove those who instigate this type of evil, evil which can be manifested in many different ways; not allowing any action on our own part. In some of these cases, if we were to take personal action, the enemy has persuaded us to leave our post with God where we are being protected: Neh 7:1-3.

Once much of the construction was finished, Nehemiah took a census in order to establish the inheritance of all who had participated in the reconstruction: Neh 7:5. A lot can happen and we need to maintain our confidence in the Lord who will make sure that credit is given to whom credit is due. These things are analogous to our spiritual gifts from God. God graciously provides us at least one spiritual skill and expects us to exercise it for the building up of the body of Christ. The greatest advance any group of believers can make is to meet consistently each week. These meetings allow us to maintain our orientation in God's will in our lives'. This advance is challenged by our enemies who want to distract us from doing these things. Often this advance is stifled by the devil leaving us without a victory or the glories that go along with it. Since God wants us to have a taste of the glories that go along with spiritual combat, pain can be inflicted in order to get us on our feet and to the place where we are able to take note of what God is saying to us. At the point of time it was time to dedicate the walls of the City, all the

Levites were called in so they could participate. This is a picture of the freedom of worship and thanksgiving that the body of Christ can experience after we have gone through the process of building each other up: Neh 12:27. Before we have the protection that each of us provides for one another, God is willing that we be in various forms of spiritual discomfort until we gather with the other believers God has for us.