

Nehemiah: A Motivator for the People

God's Word:

Nehemiah 2:1-20

Key Verse:

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.

Nehemias 2:17

Breaking It Down:

These passages are pretty straightforward. When we begin reading we find Nehemiah is in a bad mood. The reason for this is that his land and his forefathers' land has been destroyed. Jerusalem lies in shambles and not one person has done anything about it. Think about it. This is the Holy city, the city of God. This is the city that God's people are known for. When you think of Jerusalem, I'm sure the first thing that pops into your head is either God or Jesus or Israel. Yet this city that we associate with God and God's chosen people is in ruins. This is why Nehemiah is upset, because he knows his God is not a God that will ever lie in ruins.

So when the king asks Nehemiah why he is so sad, he asks the king to let him go and rebuild the city. Nehemiah takes it upon himself to become part of the solution to an existing problem. He decides to answer the call to a task that, without a doubt, God has placed on his heart. So Nehemiah goes, with a plan in mind, taking along all of the people the king has given him. He tells them nothing about their mission until he has surveyed the city and understands the task at hand. I want to believe that he wanted to see it all and take it in, that he wanted to see the level of destruction Jerusalem was in. He wanted his heart to be moved by what his eyes observed. When he breathes it all in, when the destruction has moved him, he opens his mouth and says: "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem..." (Nehemiah 2:17b)



Living It:

Have you ever heard people complain? Have you ever heard people complain about something so trivial, that it was just a joke? Have you ever encountered people who have been complaining about the same thing day in and day out for years? Living in these times of technological advancement can be considered a blessing. I heard a man say that today's youth are the most privileged youth ever to have lived because of the advancements in every field of science, the amount of knowledge available at their fingertips, and the comfort of their lifestyle. Now don't feel bad by me saying this. It's not a bad thing; it's just the way it is. People find hope in medicine in ways that once were just a fantasy. Technology has made the world so small and yet so fascinating at the same time. And manual labor ... well, there's machines for everything now.

Comfort, it's a beautiful thing to many. People just want to live comfortably. We don't want to do anything that would interfere with our comfort, or cause any exertion. Think about it. I'd rather sit and watch the boring program that's on the TV because I don't want to get up to change the channel. I'm too lazy to even get up to change the worn out batteries in the remote! I'll just wait until Mom does it. Walk to the corner store? We have cars and Segways that do the walking for us. Taking out the



trash is no longer a daily activity because we have trash compactors that have cut down the journey to the side of the house to once a week. And finally, washing the dishes no longer means actually "washing the dishes," it means rinsing them and placing them in the dishwasher. We can't even fathom what it would be like if that beautiful dishwasher ever broke. And don't even get me started on washing clothes.

Comfort, one of the biggest lies that Satan is using to paralyzed Christianity. We no longer want to leave our comfort zone. We don't want to talk to someone about God because it's uncomfortable. They might look at me weird. I don't want to go to church activities because I want to sleep in. I can't be at church early or on time because I'm sleepy (usually from staying up late the night before, no doubt involved in some late night "prayer"). I don't want to volunteer because I have things to do, and, well, I have my schedule set. I don't commit to any ministry in church because I'm comfortable just coming in, sitting down, watching everyone else do the work, and then leaving. We are comfortable.

But Nehemiah saw a job before him, a ministry, a burden that God had placed on his heart. He knew the work was going to be arduous and time-consuming. Yet, it did not matter to him. The task was something God had placed on his heart to do. It was his

ministry and he was answering the call. Nehemiah's personal comfort meant nothing to him. The ministry is the Lord's and the ministry is much greater than the tools used to fulfill it.

All we are is tools, tools to be used to accomplish a higher purpose, a purpose that goes beyond you and me. Your personal comfort is secondary when it comes to kingdom work. If you're comfortable, then you're not working. Be uncomfortable. Work for God so that everything in your life except ministry feels like it's just getting in the way. Jesus had no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58). he lived without regard for personal comfort. He lived to serve. Jesus urged each of us to "take up his cross and follow [Him]." (Matthew 16:24) Is there anything about the cross that looks comfortable?

I asked at the beginning of this section about people who complain. Let me leave you with this: DO NOT complain about anything in your church (possibly in your life) if you are not willing to be part of the solution. God has put a burden on your heart to accomplish a ministry. Will you answer the call, or just lay there in ruins complaining, yet comfortable?

Questions:

1. Define comfort.
2. Identify one personal comfort in your life. How hard would it be to give this up?
3. Nehemiah 2:19-20, who was he talking to and why did he say what he said?
4. Matthew 16:24, what does it mean to carry the cross?

Do It!

This week, pray about a task that God has placed before you. Call, text or email your youth leader so that together you can pray about how you can begin responding to this need.

