

Sunday Morning Message

September 29, 2019 (Text and basic message preached December 15, 2010 – this message revised considerably)

Eager to Enter the House of God

Text for Today's Message – Nehemiah 8:1 – 18 (Text verse – 8:6)

Congregational Reading – Nehemiah 8:5 – 6; 8 (don't read verse 7)

Introduction

The Book of Nehemiah is a post exilic writing, meaning that it was written after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and Persia. The people of Israel were taken into captivity because they had forsaken God, and had forsaken His House (the Temple). The first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC under the direction of Zerubbabel; and, through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah the Temple was finally finished some twenty years later in 515 BC. Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem in 444 BC, almost one hundred years after the Jews were first granted permission to return. The condition of the city was described in Nehemiah 1:1 – 4; 2:11 - 18.

The beginning chapters of the Book of Nehemiah focus on the re-building of the walls and gates of Jerusalem, and the fortification of the city. In chapter seven, the reconstruction project lead by Nehemiah is complete, and the city is secure. However, there is still a lot of rebuilding and renovation that must be done within the walls of the city. Nehemiah who is known as the "Tirshatha", or governor, along with Ezra the priest will continue rebuilding Jerusalem.

When we get to chapters eight through ten, the focus shifts from structural rebuilding to spiritual revival, and this revival seems to have been driven by the people, not the priests. (Nehemiah 8:1) In these chapters, we find one of the greatest revivals that God's people have ever experienced. In these three chapters, we see all of the necessary ingredients for revival.

In chapter eight, there is a heavy emphasis on the preaching of the Word of God, which is one of the reasons that we gather together as a church.

"But if I tarry long, that thou mightest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

"I don't have to go to church; I get to go to church"

Here in Nehemiah 8, the people were gathered together outside the eastern part of the temple near the water gate.

These people in Nehemiah's day were eager to gather together near the house of God to worship the Lord together.

We ought to be eager to enter into the house of God.

Note – For practical purposes, let me explain what I am referring to when I say the House of God

Not the O.T. Temple

Not the N. T. Temple – the body of the believer

The gathering place for N. T. believers, commonly referred to as a church, though a church is not a building, it's people.

Two extremes when it comes to coming to the House of God

1. Duty – Hebrews 10:22 – 25

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:22-25)

2. Desire

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 84:10)

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. (Psalm 122:1)

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing (Psalm 100:2)

Transition – From this passage we will see **three purposes** for the gathering together of God's people here in the time of Nehemiah that are applicable to our gathering together today. And then we will point out a couple of practical applications that will help us rekindle the desire for gathering together with God's people.

I. Primarily for the Preaching and Teaching of the Word of God. (vs. 1 – 8)

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

II. Partaking in the Wisdom and Welfare of Each Other (vs. 9 – 12)

A. Through Fellowship – we edify and encourage each other.

B. Through provoking one another to love and to good works.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" (Hebrews 10:24)

The word, *provoke* means to incite or even to irritate or make angry. We do not like to be provoked. We do not like people telling us that there are some things that we need to put in place, or correct in our lives.

If someone within the body provokes us, we tend to get mad; but we really ought to be thankful that God allowed that person to tell us something that perhaps we have been too blind to see ourselves.

1. to love each other

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." - (John 13:34 - 35)

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." - (John 15:12)

"These things I command you, that ye love one another." - (John 15:17)

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." - (Romans 13:8)

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:" - (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." - (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" - (1 Peter 1:22)

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." - (1 John 3:11)

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." - (1 John 4:7)

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." - (1 John 4:11)

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." - (1 John 4:12)

Illustrate – the church often demonstrates its love toward one another by helping people within the body.

2. to good works

We are not saved by good works, but according to Ephesians 2:10, God has ordained us to good works after we are saved.

We need people within the body to consider us and to provoke us to do the right thing.

Here is what we do instead. If somebody considers us or provokes us as this passage says they should:

We get angry, which is OK because it is an emotion, which we cannot control. It is what we do next though that leads to the problem.

We activate our inner lawyer. We immediately begin to defend ourselves against any criticism.

We avoid the person, or sever ties with that person, because they told us something that we did not want to tell ourselves – they showed us something that we were too blind to see.

We attack the person to ourselves and sometimes to others by pointing out their flaws. If they have flaws themselves, then they have no right to teach me.

We come apart - we isolate ourselves – we start coming in right at the beginning of the service – we leave the minute the service is over. We don't participate in fellowship. We avoid any duty or function where there will be the potential for contact and communication with other members of the body.

III. Participation in the Work of God (vs. 13 – 18)

A strong, vibrant New Testament church will not be a one man show. It will be a group of people who all participate together in the worship of the Lord.

A. Singing

Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints.
(Psalm 149:1)

B. Serving

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. (Romans 12:10 & 11)

There are a multitude of ways that you can serve: usher, greeter, choir, soulwinning, Sunday school teacher or helper, preaching, discipleship, Kid's Club, bus driver, bus captain, bus worker, bus mechanic, administration, deacon, treasurer, building and grounds, food preparation, etc.

What do you like to do? That may be just the thing that God has gifted you in so that you can use it for His glory.

C. Sharing (Acts 2:44 – 47; 2 Corinthians 8:1 - 5)

Conclusion

How do I rekindle the fire in this area? I know that this is where my heart should be, but how do I get it there?

1. **Partake in it** (If you are a new Christian) Try it out – give it some time. Very few things in life are enjoyable the first time that you try them. (e. g. coffee, vegetables, Pastrami Reubens)

O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. (Psalm 34:8)

2. **Pray about it** – confess to God that you are apathetic about His House. Ask Him to revive you.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12 & 13)

3. **Perform it out of duty** – your heart will follow.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:21; 12:34)

Illustration – Review my Christian life – CBC; Lighthouse; LBT; Here

The people of Nehemiah's day said:

*"For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: **and we will not forsake the house of our God.**"*

(Nehemiah 10:39)

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)