

Time to Rebuild: Who Will Start?

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Turn to Nehemiah 9 (Page 336)

Recap

“In view of all this” - Nehemiah 9:38a

What is this?

The people needed to repent

They had walked away from God

They had gotten lax about their faith

They had allowed sin and compromise

To become a normal part of their life

I have a creek

Down behind my house along the edge of my property

My house kind of sits up on a rise

And the creek is down below

So if I were down by the creek at night

Which I do sometimes

And let's say I got some mud on my shoes

Or on my pants
Which happens sometimes
I probably wouldn't even see it
Because it's dark down by the creek
But as I started up towards the house
And got closer to the back porch light
Or the light from inside my kitchen or living room
Coming out the windows
I would become aware of the mud
That had been there all along

Why did their sin jump out to them?

It was the rebuilding
As they *re*-built
They were *re*-minded of the goodness and holiness of God
And as they were re-minded of the goodness and holiness of God
They became aware of their rebellion before Him
That pattern works for us to
Rebuilding draws us closer to God
And that nearness makes us aware of our sin
So the people had allowed sin and compromise
To become a normal part of their life

And because of *that*

"In view" of it

We get to verse 38

Read Nehemiah 9:38

And then at the top of chapter 10

Do you see it there?

It lists 83 specific people who affixed their seals to this document

And then look at Nehemiah 10 verse 28

Read Nehemiah 10:28-29

That's a powerful picture

Imagine what would happen if a group of politicians

Would lead us to change something like that today

I don't honestly even care what it is

We're going to eliminate stray cats

Or roadside litter

I don't care what the issue is

The picture of a group of people

Coming together to tackle something in unity

Is powerful

It's even powerful if its not good

Back in the book of Genesis

The people had again turned away from God

So He destroyed the earth with a great flood

And started over with Noah

And the people's response, initially

Was fear and reverence and obedience to the things of God

They essentially said,

"We don't want to get in the same spot that previous generations did"

But over time, their response became more narcissistic

Their response changed from

"We'll follow God so that nothing nasty like the flood happens again"

It changed to

"We'll be our own God so we're ready if something nasty like the flood happens again."

And they set out to build

History's first skyscraper

God saw their wickedness and pride

But He also saw their ingenuity

Genesis 11:6 - The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

And to this day

A group of people being unified around a common cause

A common vision
Is among the most powerful things on the planet

So Nehemiah unites the people
Around the highest aspiration possible
The pursuit of God

Think about it
There's not another aspiration
No vision
No common destiny
That is more significant
Or has larger implications
Than a group – or family – or society
Uniting around the pursuit of God

I want you to notice how Nehemiah lead them

Read Nehemiah 9:38

First, they made a

Binding agreement

Some translations say
“A solemn promise”

The first week of this series

I asked the question {Show Nehemiah 1:4 - When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven.}

“What do you care enough about to commit to mourn and fast and pray for, “for some days”?”

Nehemiah mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven for about four months before he did anything

What are you willing to mourn and fast and pray for

Everyday – from now till summer

Nehemiah said let’s get everybody on the same page

Let’s make a pledge to each other

A binding agreement

This may be something you set out to do as a family

This maybe something you set out to do as a LifeGroup

Starting next week, I’m going to be asking all of us to do this as a church

To make a commitment

A pledge – a solemn promise

To achieve something together

Next he said,

Let’s put it in writing

This is not necessarily spiritual

This is just practical

Let me ask you a question

Which is more likely to actually take place

An appointment you put on your calendar

Or a general notion to do something

You know, sometime

Let's put it in writing

If you're a business person

And something goes wrong

Which is more likely to happen

The other guy honors the commitment they agreed to in the signed contract

Or the other guy follows through on something his salesman agreed to verbally but never agreed to contractually?

Let's put it in writing

Which is more likely to happen

Agreeing with your friend to meet for coffee next Tuesday at 9

Or agreeing with your friend that "we ought to get together for coffee... sometime"?

Let's put it in writing

Nehemiah says

We're all emotional

We're all pointing the same direction... TODAY

But let's put it in writing

So that when the emotions settle

When life gets busy

When other priorities are calling for our time or attention

We will have a record of this solemn promise

But they don't stop there

They made a binding agreement

They put it in writing

And then they

Affixed their seals to it

This was an ancient near-eastern practice

But it wasn't an everyday occurrence

Families would have a family seal

Often called a signet ring

And this wouldn't be for each individual family

This was passed down from generation to generation

The leader of the family would keep it

And pull it out for special occasions

They would take moist clay

And impress their family crest into it

And then bake the clay

Hardening it

Making it permanent

I don't think the specifics are important

We don't have anything quite like that today

But don't miss the formality of it

We're so casual today with our agreements

We go to sign up for something online

And before we can agree to it

We have to accept the terms & conditions

That their legal team drew up

We click that we've not only read it

But agree to it

This 47 page legal document

We click that we've read it and agree to it

About 3½ seconds after we open it

Next time you click one of those things

I want you to remember that this was different

This was a leader of the family

Not just their immediate family

But their... family

And they were committing on their behalf

To follow God

And to remain true to His Word

They fixed their seal to it

If you could fix your families seal to one thing

You can't commit to everything

If you could fix your families seal to one thing

What would it be?

That's not a hypothetical question

If you could fix your families seal to one thing

Nehemiah said we're all in for God

Nothing will impact my life

Nothing will impact my kids life

Nothing will impact this community or this nation

Like men & women of God

Saying "as for me & my house"

We will serve the Lord

This is the Greenbrier Resort Hotel

In Greenbrier County West Virginia

And this is Paul Fritz Bugas

Bugas headed up the TV repair team at the Greenbrier for over 20 years

His team of 15

Maintained all of the TV's in the Greenbrier's 710 rooms

10 lobbies

And 40 conference rooms

However

All of that was a lie

Bugas' team were actually in charge of overseeing

The secret bunker underneath the Greenbrier's West Virginia Wing

The massive underground covert facility

Was procured by President Eisenhower in the 50's

And was intended to house the US congress in the event

Of all-out nuclear war

It was large enough to house 1100 people

And their immediate families

They kept food and medical supplies on hand

That constantly were flipped out to keep them fresh

Catch that:

Until it was discovered and decommissioned in 1992

They kept fresh food

And fresh medical supplies

Enough to treat congress who just got nuked

Fresh food / fresh medical supplies
That was constantly rotated out
For over 30 years

They had briefing rooms for the press

And meeting areas large enough for a joint session of Congress
the latest communications equipment
Constantly upgraded for over 30 years
To allow congress to operate during the most important of circumstances
Imagine how much communications have upgraded
In Washington since 1958

Bugas and his team
Spent their careers
Operating a massive facility
That was never used

Don't miss what I'm saying
Bugas and his team
Spent their career
This was a highly decorated combat veteran
With the highest security clearances
And the most impeccable record
He spent his career operating a property
That was never used

He oversaw a multi-million dollar budget

To upkeep facilities

That never... really mattered

Now I know some of you are saying

And you're right

It wasn't a waste

If there had been a nuclear holocaust

It would have been worth every bit of it

Certainly

But think about this

Reports say that Bugas and his team

Spent about 20% of his time

Approximately one day out of each week

Actually working on televisions

At the Greenbrier

Can you imagine?

I mean, no one would have believed they were TV repairmen

If they never repaired TV's

So 20% of their time was spent

Doing just that

Let me say it again:

This is a highly decorated combat veteran
With the highest security clearances
And the most impeccable record
Who spent his career operating a property
That was never used
And 20% of that time
Was spent keeping up a ruse
That wasn't really... real

Before we get too critical

How many of us
Spend lots of time
Lots of money
Lots of energy
Maintaining property
That doesn't really... matter
Keeping up a ruse
That's not really... real

Not Nehemiah

He said I'm calling you to make a binding agreement
We're gonna write it down
So we don't fudge on it later

And I'm asking you to fix your families seal
Committing yourself to make it happen
Committing *for* your family
That they were gonna make it happen

And I'm not going to ask you to do that
Nehemiah says
On anything less important
Than the pursuit of God

So what's that for you?

What are you pull out the family seal
To make happen
What are you willing to pray to God every day
Begging Him for His help
Whatever else happens these next few months
I'm gonna try to make that happen

What's that for you?

This is a great topic for your family
This is a great topic for your LifeGroup

Next week

I'm gonna give you a great option

A great option worth committing yourself and your family to

I titled this message

Who will start?

Because that is the key

Who's going to take the lead

Who's going to step out front and call others to follow

There are a lot of people willing to follow along

But who will start?

That's exactly what Jesus did for us

The writer of Hebrews says it so well:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. – Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

We've got a race to run friends

It's time

No more games

No more distractions

And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. – Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

We're highlighting Nehemiah in this story

But he's not the hero here

God is

God is the one who provided the permission

And the plan

And the materials

And the help

God doesn't need us to be a champion to shine

God needs us to be brave enough

To stay in the game

During tough opposition

So that He gets to shine

And so that He gets the glory

It says, "Keep our eyes on Jesus

Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. – Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

Do that

Do that

Think of all the opposition He endured

To rebuild you

So that you won't become weary

And give up

When the rebuilding in your life...Gets hard