

Coach House Church BEACONS

GET READY!!

23RD NOVEMBER 2020

The way we prepare for things is very important. I'm talking about preparing for simple and ordinary things as well as things to which we give more importance, things which have life long effects.

For example how you prepare to start the day, for your work, or even for dinner can impact the way you manage your time, and how well you organise yourself to get through the day. Perhaps more importantly how well you prepare for exams can have much bigger consequences. As a parent the way you educate your child and the values you instil in him or her, will decide what sort of person she or he will be and how they will live. Pretty important.

When you go on holiday, the more you prepare beforehand the more time to relax you have once you are there. The same works for when you go on a journey. The stress levels are really low when you have done your homework.

In the light of this introduction, I would like us to look at the story of Nehemiah. The Lord God put on his heart to rebuild Jerusalem's city wall. When you have time I would encourage you to read the book of Nehemiah in your Bible. It's a very interesting historical book. I would like us to look at chapter 2 from verse 11-20. And then at chapter 4.

"I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate.

The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

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." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

If you read the first chapter of the book, you will see that Nehemiah had the blessing of the Babylonian king, which he was serving, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls.

"It may look like I'm surrounded but I'm surrounded by You "

To begin with Nehemiah inspected the damage he and the others had to deal with. And from the answer he give to Sanballat , we see very clear that his trust was in the Lord his God.

In chapter 4 we read the following :

"So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." When our enemies heard that we were

aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me. Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, "Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day." Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water."

Nehemiah 4:6-23

"This is how I fight my battles

From reading the book of Nehemiah we can see that it was of the upmost importance that Jerusalem had its surrounding wall rebuilt. The wall had no defensive purpose as the Jews were still under the dominance of the Babylonians; rather, the rebuild of the wall had a spiritual meaning: the Lord God was restoring his nation and his people after the exile. We are going to explore this further on another occasion maybe. What I would like to draw your attention to is the way how Nehemiah leads the people through the threat posed by the nations around them: the first thing he did was to pray . Then he set armed guards around the clock. Everyone working on the wall was armed ready to fight when necessary.

Nehemiah did not only pray but he prayed and prepared and it was important that he did it in that order. He trusted God but he was also ready to fight if God decided that He would give them the victory in that way.

Let's think a little about our own lives and circumstances. What is your first response when faced with a challenge? I must say I'm not awfully proud of my responses all the time. Im sure you are all better than me in this respect. I'm sure you respond in the same way that Nehemiah did; which as we have seen was to pray and entrust his worries to the Lord.

It's important that we pray and prepare for our battles and have an open mind when it comes to the way in which God choses to answer, because God is not limited to what we can see or understand. If you walk closely with

Jesus as Nehemiah walked closely with God He will protect you.
I would like to close with some of the lyrics from a Michael Smith song called
Surrounded :

"This is how I fight my battles
It may look like I'm surrounded but I'm surrounded by You "

Amen



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