

Nehemiah 5

- The restoration of Israel is in its final phase
 - The Lord has raised a godly leader to take Israel from the classroom to the field
 - And they began to encounter the opposition of the peoples surrounding Israel

[Neh. 4:7](#) Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry.

[Neh. 4:8](#) All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

- As we learned previously, the enemies of Israel from among the surrounding nations are determined to stop the rebuilding of Israel
 - This opposition is more than merely political
 - It is a reflection of God's decree through the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah
 - That beginning with the Babylonian captivity, Israel had entered into a period when Gentile nations would persecute – and at times – overrun the nation
 - This period continues until the Second Coming of Christ
 - Here, we see but a small example of that endless Gentile persecution of Israel
 - Three men lead the opposition to the rebuilding and take up arms to stop Nehemiah
 - Sanballat and Tobiah are back, along with Arabs, Ammonites and Ashdodites, all long-time enemies of Israel
 - These four groups represent the four sides of Jerusalem
 - They attack would come from the north, south, east and west

- Though Nehemiah doesn't record it in detail, we know an attack took place and it claimed many casualties
 - Josephus reports that many Jews were killed in the initial attack that followed
 - But the attack wasn't strong enough to capture the city
- The attack gives the people a firsthand lesson in why the wall needed to be rebuilt,
 - God allowed the enemy to succeed in a limited, measured way to teach Israel a lesson on the importance of finishing this wall
 - As we saw earlier, Nehemiah's response is prayer

Neh. 4:9 But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

Neh. 4:10 Thus in Judah it was said,
 "The strength of the burden bearers is failing,
 Yet there is much rubbish;
 And we ourselves are unable
 To rebuild the wall."

- All the people pray together for the Lord to strengthen them for the work and to protect them from further attack
 - We remarked last time that prayer is always the first response of God's people to any circumstances
 - Prayer recognizes God's irreplaceable role in seeing us through our trials
- But having offered a prayer, the people move forward to do what they can to protect themselves and their work

Neh. 4:11 Our enemies said, "They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work."

Neh. 4:12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,"

Neh. 4:13 then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.

Neh. 4:14 When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses."

- Nehemiah tells us that the enemies of Israel conspired for another attack, one that would bring an end to the work
 - But Jews living outside the city overheard the conversations of Israel's enemies
 - They reported those conversations back to Nehemiah and the people
 - Now, Nehemiah could have responded to these reports in one of two ways
 - He could have returned to prayer and asked God why He wasn't intervening to stop the attack
 - Or Nehemiah could conclude that the reports from these Jewish spies were evidence of God's divine intervention and take action
 - Nehemiah chose option #2
 - He reacts to the news by taking the necessary steps
 - Prayer is essential to walking in the will of God with His divine blessing
 - But prayer is a prerequisite to action, not a substitute for action
 - Oliver Cromwell said, "Trust in God and keep your gun powder dry"
 - Spurgeon said, "Pray as if everything depended on God, then preach as if everything depended on you."
- Nehemiah stations guards at various points to protect the workers
 - You might have wondered why he didn't do this in the first place
 - Clearly, he underestimated the degree of threat
 - And by using so many families to guard the work, he's losing valuable labor for the wall building
 - So until the threat was obvious, he hadn't wanted to remove any workers from the task
 - Also, Nehemiah responds to the people's fear

- The guards must have looked pitiful compared to the strength of the surrounding nations
- So Nehemiah doesn't try to pump them up by telling them they were strong or fearless or invincible
- They knew better than to believe that flattery
 - They weren't strong enough and they were very vulnerable
 - They knew that
- Instead, Nehemiah reminds them of God's power
 - The union of reliance on God and personal action has come full circle
 - Nehemiah began with an appeal to God through prayer
 - Then, he stood up and took every action he could to accomplish the work God had given him
 - Yet even as he went about the work, he recognized he was sustained by the power of God
 - His success was ultimately a product of God's strength, not his own
- Here is a secret to Christian maturity and success in personal ministry
 - Never see your partnership with God as an "or" partnership
 - God makes something happen or I do it myself
 - If that's how you see your relationship with the Lord, then over time, you'll often sit on your hands and go nowhere
 - Then, you'll get tired of seeing no progress, so then you try to do everything in your own power, never bothering to check back with the Lord to get His input
 - Instead, recognize it is an "and" partnership
 - It is God *and* us
 - He is the beginning and end of all things
 - So every good work begins and ends with God

- But if He wanted to accomplish the work on His own, He never would have called us in the first place
 - So He expects us to put our shoulders to the work, because He plans to accomplish His work through us
- Therefore, serving God is work, it requires sacrifice, it can be demanding, requiring we bear other's burdens
 - But that burden is light, because we're not working to earn the Lord's favor
 - Christ earned that favor for us
 - We serve in joy – just don't think it's going to be easy
- So now it's become apparent that defense is as important as construction, so Nehemiah adjusts the procedures and institutes new rules to guard the people

Neh. 4:15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.

Neh. 4:16 From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.

Neh. 4:17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.

Neh. 4:18 As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me.

Neh. 4:19 I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.

Neh. 4:20 "At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

Neh. 4:21 So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.

Neh. 4:22 At that time I also said to the people, "Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day."

Neh. 4:23 So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.

- Notice, in v.15, that Nehemiah credits God with frustrating the plans of Israel's enemies
 - This was option #2

- Nehemiah knew that the discovery of the impending attack was a work of God to protect Israel
- But if God's move was to warn the people, then it stands to reason He expected the people to take the next move
- God could have simply wiped out Israel's enemies, but instead, He allowed them to stand by and threaten the city
 - Meanwhile, He sent the warning to Nehemiah
 - And Nehemiah correctly recognized that the warning meant it was Nehemiah's turn to respond to God's move
- Nehemiah's move is quite impressive
 - First, he takes half his workforce and redeploys them to guard duty
 - That's the price he was willing to pay...slowing the work down by 50% for the sake of the people
- In Nehemiah's case, the need for protection is easy to see, but there is a lesson for leaders in ministry that may be easy to miss
 - We learned earlier that God gave Nehemiah a construction project
 - But that construction project wasn't building a wall
 - It was a call to build up the people of Israel
 - God provides leaders in ministry to shepherd His people, so the work of ministry is ultimately about building up people
 - The word edify means "to build up"
 - Often, leaders begin to confuse their purpose
 - They come to think they are supposed to build walls – or buildings or campuses or Internet and television empires
 - They see people as nothing more than the means to building walls
 - Instead, they should understand that walls are merely an opportunity to build up people
 - Nehemiah didn't care that he lost 50% productivity when he appointed half his workers as guards

- What good would have been to finish the city walls twice as fast if in the end, there was no one left to live in city?
- He knew the people mattered far more than the speed or efficiency of his project
- Similarly, what use is our ministry, no matter what it accomplishes, if in its pursuit we disappoint, demoralize or discard God's people as the price of success?
- Secondly, notice that even with the actions Nehemiah has taken, victory isn't assured
 - He says to the trumpeter, "Stay nearby so you can warn the people"
 - There just weren't enough people to cover the entire length of the wall
 - So the plan was, if an attack came upon one part of the wall, Nehemiah would sound the trumpet to rally the people to the point of the attack
 - That way, the entire strength of the guard could be brought to bear in defense of the wall at a certain point
 - This is a sensible plan, given his limited resources, but notice also that Nehemiah points the people once more to God for victory
 - Despite the planning, Nehemiah says in v.20 that God will fight for the people
 - Here is another example of "and" theology
 - God and the people will defend the wall
 - The people will rally together and God will fight for us
 - Throughout all this, you can clearly see God's wisdom in not solving this problem for the people directly
 - Rather than vanquish the enemy on His own, God has enlisted the people to defend the wall
 - But as Nehemiah says, God is working through the people to accomplish that outcome
 - The wisdom is requiring the people to work together in seeking an outcome that only God can bring

- In a nutshell, that's the point of any gathering of God's people
- The Body of Christ is assembled to accomplish a work that only God can bring about
 - The people are united, encouraged, strengthened and edified when they come together in a common obedience to the will of God
 - In the end, the Lord will accomplish the work, but the unity of the Body makes that work possible

[Col. 2:6](#) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, **[Col. 2:7](#)** having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

- The "you" in that passage is plural
 - Paul says the Church as a whole is being built up and established in faith by walking together with Christ
- Therefore, the people have successfully weathered the storm of attack from outside, so now it's time for the enemy to attack and divide from within

[Neh. 5:1](#) Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers.

[Neh. 5:2](#) For there were those who said, "We, our sons and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live."

[Neh. 5:3](#) There were others who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine."

[Neh. 5:4](#) Also there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards.

[Neh. 5:5](#) "Now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

- As Paul wrote, the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and that truth is apparent here
 - In the days before and during the wall construction, the people had begun to take advantage financially of each other
- There are three types of complaints, representing three types of abuse within the camp

- In v.2, we hear that larger clans were hoarding and consuming much of the available grain, leaving too little for the smaller families
- As a result, in v.3, a second group of Jews was forced to mortgage their land to other Jews to pay for grain, since their own lands weren't yielding enough
- Then, in v.4, we find a third group who borrowed money to pay taxes on their property because they didn't have enough income from their grain production
- So selfishness reigned in the land of Israel
 - Those who hoarded placed the rest of the camp into need
 - Those in need were required to borrow from other Jews
- And evidently, the Jews who lent were making a profit at the expense of their Jewish brothers
 - They were taking advantage of the misfortune of their brothers in the land by charging exorbitant interest (usury)
 - They took advantage of those in greatest need
 - Charging interest against another Jew was illegal under the Law of Moses, but the Jews did so nonetheless
- In v.5, the people complain to Nehemiah that some families have been forced to sell their children to other Jewish families as servants to pay their debt
 - The Law itself provided a means for families to send their sons and daughters as indentured servants to pay off family debt
 - Think of it like a family today that forces teenage children to work to help meet ends meet
 - Families in Israel could do the same, but within limits set by the Law
 - But now that the work of the wall is consuming so much of their time, families still need to eat
 - And with the debts are coming due, the families are suffering as they find themselves unable to repay

- They complain to Nehemiah that they are returning to slavery again
- Only this time, they are becoming slaves to one another
- Nehemiah's response follows

[Neh. 5:6](#) Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words.

[Neh. 5:7](#) I consulted with myself and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, "You are exacting usury, each from his brother!" Therefore, I held a great assembly against them.

[Neh. 5:8](#) I said to them, "We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?" Then they were silent and could not find a word to say.

- Naturally, Nehemiah was angry with the people's sin
 - And their behavior was sinful
 - First, the larger families were selfish and showed no regard for the needs of their brothers
 - Secondly, the families lending were robbing from their brothers and sisters, placing them in even greater financial hardship
- So he considers his next course of action carefully
 - He begins by consulting himself
 - The phrase simply means to give careful consideration
 - Then he consults with the nobles and rulers, which means the tribal and family leaders
- This is smart politics on Nehemiah's part
 - Nehemiah may be the governor of the Persian province and the established leader in the city, but that doesn't mean he can act unilaterally
 - He needs to lead in building a common perspective before he can expect to lead a unified response
- Every Christian leader faces this challenge sooner or later
 - No matter what authority we feel we have, that authority is never absolute

- Only Christ's rule is unchallenged
 - The rest of us need persuasion
- Nehemiah likely knew the right thing to do from the very moment he heard the news
 - His time spent in consultation was more likely a process of building allies to his side
 - This is manipulation
 - This is politics
 - Politics isn't a dirty word, even if most politics are dirty
 - Politics is the art of influencing people into agreement
- Nehemiah's role as a leader was to influence God's people into an agreement with God's expectations
 - And so it is for every godly leader
 - We seek to influence God's people into agreement with the Word of God
 - We want to influence them into an obedient walk and life lived for the Kingdom
- But a leader can't mandate those things
 - He can't order obedience or command faithful living and expect that to settle the matter
 - He must exercise skill in politics, in the best sense of the word
 - He must teach, exhort, correct, persuade, and admonish God's people, until they see the truth for themselves
 - Then, with the truth reigning in their hearts, God's people will obey
 - Then a leader will truly have led
- In v.7, Nehemiah has built his alliances and arrived at a consensus among the leaders, so then he begins to persuade the people
 - He begins with an accusation of misconduct

- He says they are charging usury interest
- In other words, he says the people are violating the Law of God
- They are sinning
- Then, he makes a teaching point from recent history
 - Nehemiah says he and the other exiles who traveled down from Persia were able to redeem some Jewish brothers owned by Gentiles
 - Most likely, when Nehemiah decided to go up to Jerusalem, he decided to bring as many Jews with him as he could
 - But many Jews remained slaves in Persia, and their Persian owners would not release them for free, of course
 - So Nehemiah and the others raised funds, probably from their own personal savings, to free as many Jews as possible
 - Like Oscar Schindler, Nehemiah purchased the freedom of as many Jews as he could
- Then Nehemiah, takes this fact and uses it to convict the hearts of the people
 - He says if Jews were willing to pay for the freedom of their brothers and sisters in Persia, then why would these same Jews turn around and re-enslave their neighbors?
 - It makes no sense that these people would be so sacrificial and selfless in one moment, and then do an “about face” and become the oppressor the next
- In response, the people are silent, with no one able to respond
 - That is a sure sign of conviction
 - Conviction is a powerful tool of the Spirit
 - Conviction is a feeling of self-condemnation
 - The flesh is wired to reject conviction
 - If at all possible, we wiggle out from under its pressure
 - We seek excuses, we rationalize our choices, we blame others

- We require convincing and we defend our position
- But when the Lord is working in our heart, conviction is inescapable
 - We may try to fight, but in the face of overwhelming evidence of our sin, we lose our strength
 - We may run, but we can't escape the reality of who we are
- So when Nehemiah speaks with spiritual authority, the conviction of the Spirit is present, working in the hearts of the people
 - They hear the truth, and in their hearts they sense their guilt
 - And there is no argument they can make to defend their actions
 - So they remain silent
- Hear again, leaders should learn the lesson from Nehemiah
 - Leading God's people into conviction requires a willingness to call sin "sin"
 - We can't avoid the hard moments
 - We must have the courage to call it like it is
 - Then, having named the sin, the leader needs to teach and exhort the people to see themselves as God sees them
 - Showing them their hypocrisy or their selfishness or stubbornness or whatever may be their personal stumbling block to obedience
 - In revealing these things, we give opportunity for the Spirit to speak truth to their hearts
 - And as the Spirit works, the heart is changed
 - Maybe not at first, but in time
- When conviction takes hold, then the leader moves to restore the people by offering a path to obedience

Neh. 5:9 Again I said, "The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"

[Neh. 5:10](#) “And likewise I, my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury.

[Neh. 5:11](#) “Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money and of the grain, the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them.”

- Nehemiah asks a leading question: should not the people walk in the fear of the God so they may stand apart from the ungodly nations of the world?
 - In other words, shouldn't God's people look differently than the world?
 - Every man or woman of God under the conviction of the Spirit will agree with that truthful statement
 - Of course, we want to be a witness for the Lord
 - We want to stand for truth and righteousness, as the Lord expects
 - Next, Nehemiah offers himself as a model for the people
 - He says he and his servants have been lending money to the people in need
 - Yet Nehemiah isn't charging interest, we presume
 - And therefore, he concludes, the people should stop charging interest to one another
- Nehemiah's call to obey the Law addresses the sin of Israel, but there is still the matter of restitution
 - Ceasing to charge future interest doesn't correct for past injustice
 - So to rectify the situation, Nehemiah calls for a jubilee
 - In v.11, he asks that all debts be forgiven and all property be returned to its owner
 - Also, he asks that of any interest charged, that the “hundredth part” be returned
 - That was the interest rate, which amounted to 1/100th (1%) of the value per month (or 12% annual interest rate)
 - Everything was to be made right

- Would we have the guts to make such a demand of God's people?
 - The ever-present dilemma of any leader is how to balance strength with popularity
 - On the one hand, God appoints leaders to move people where they won't go on their own
 - On the other hand, leaders are people too, so naturally they seek the people's agreement and admiration
 - But they can do this to a fault
- Godly leadership isn't about building consensus
 - It requires taking people where they do not want to go
 - But doing it in such a way that they think it was their idea from the start
 - Margaret Thatcher once said:

Consensus is the process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies. So it is something in which no one believes and to which no one objects.

- Nehemiah's approach leads the people to make a very difficult, but absolutely essential conclusion
 - Yet they adopt it willingly in the end, as if it was their own idea
 - They made this decision based on the conviction of the Spirit, the example of their leader and his call to respond

[Neh. 5:12](#) Then they said, "We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say." So I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.

[Neh. 5:13](#) I also shook out the front of my garment and said, "Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" And they praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

- As we see the people's response in v.12, it's obvious they have taken Nehemiah's words to heart and are willing to work the works of repentance
 - To ensure the people don't experience a change of heart later, Nehemiah makes them swear an oath before the priests

- This is smart leadership as well
- Believers who live in their flesh are easily swayed one way or the other
 - When they're alone, they do as their flesh desires
 - But when they are in the company of godly influences, they quickly agree to change their behavior
 - And then, just as quickly, they revert to sin when the influence is gone
 - The flesh offers no stability
- Only when we live in the Spirit, when we grow spiritually mature through a practicing of the disciplines of our faith – only then, do we become stable in all our ways, as James says
- Nehemiah knows this people are not stable, so he puts a fence around their flesh, so to speak
 - He calls them to promise before the priests
 - This meant they were bound under penalty of loss
 - Nehemiah names the loss that would result: the offender would lose all his own possessions
 - So that if any revert to their old behavior or fail to keep their promise, they lose far more than they might gain
 - And notice in v.13, all the people kept their promise
- A godly leader must consider the need to enforce godliness through whatever means necessary and proper
 - Establishing rules that protect us from ourselves
 - Avoiding even the appearance of impropriety
 - Don't underestimate the flesh and its power to draw us into sin
- And the need for boundaries doesn't end with the people
 - The leadership must also guard against temptations and the schemes of the enemy

- Many pastors and other leaders have fallen because they failed to respect the power of their own flesh
- Even Nehemiah set boundaries for himself

Neh. 5:14 Moreover, from the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, for twelve years, neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor's food allowance.

Neh. 5:15 But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people and took from them bread and wine besides forty shekels of silver; even their servants domineered the people. But I did not do so because of the fear of God.

Neh. 5:16 I also applied myself to the work on this wall; we did not buy any land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work.

Neh. 5:17 Moreover, there were at my table one hundred and fifty Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

Neh. 5:18 Now that which was prepared for each day was one ox and six choice sheep, also birds were prepared for me; and once in ten days all sorts of wine were furnished in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the governor's food allowance, because the servitude was heavy on this people.

Neh. 5:19 Remember me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

- Nehemiah says that for the entire 12 years he served as governor over the province, he set strict boundaries for himself
 - Neither Nehemiah, nor anyone employed by him, accepted the governor's food allowance
 - The allowance for the governor was a tax upon the people whom a governor ruled
 - The tax was paid in grain and livestock
 - As a result, the governor usually enjoyed a lavish lifestyle at the expense of the people
 - But Nehemiah was determined not to repeat the sins of prior governors who profited from their service at the people's expense
 - The prior leaders not only took an exorbitant allowance for themselves, but they also took more for their servants
 - Nehemiah chose a different course
 - He applied himself to the work of the people

- Initially, it was the work to build the wall
- Later, it would have been other work in the city
- Furthermore, he insisted that his servants work alongside the people as well
- And Nehemiah never bought land
- Nehemiah states these things to make clear they earned their keep by their work
 - Both Nehemiah and his servants made a living through working in the same way as the people
 - He didn't accept an allowance of food
 - Nor did he earn his living by become a land baron, lording over the people
 - He did it the old fashioned way...he earned it
- Finally, Nehemiah says he was generous with what he had
 - He regularly invited 150 other Jews to share the food at his table, along with Gentiles from the surrounding area
 - Inviting others to the table was a Persian custom, which partly justified the governor's allowance
 - Still, Nehemiah carried on the tradition without taking the allowance he was due, he says
- It's not hard to appreciate the example Nehemiah was setting by his sacrifice
 - He demonstrated a love and concern for the people above himself
 - He didn't want to burden them anymore than necessary
 - Godly leaders should be a source of refreshment to the people they serve
 - People should see us coming and be encouraged by our presence, rather than feel added stress
 - We all know how many pastors and other religious leaders have made godliness a means to gain, despite Paul's warning in 1 Tim. 6

- Secondly, Nehemiah set the example of working to provide for oneself
 - Ministry is not a profession, ministry is a service
 - And while one may make his living from the proclaiming of the Gospel, the focus should always remain on proclaiming the Gospel, not on making a living
 - And in many cases, it is better for all concerned that a leader make his own living so that those he serves will benefit from both his words and his example
 - It's easy for our flesh to dismiss godly counsel when it comes from someone we resent
 - If our leader burdens us financially, then we may use that burden as excuse to ignore what they say
 - Nehemiah set an example every day of his 12 years of service by never taking his allowance, while showing diligence to work alongside the people
- Finally, Nehemiah didn't wear that sacrifice on his sleeve or find ways to remind the people how much sacrifice he was making on their behalf
 - On the contrary, he was generous with what he had
 - Furthermore, he continued in the expected traditions of hosting men at his table, even though he was doing it on his own dime
 - If it's possible for a leader to burden his people financially by taking too much, it is also possible for a leader to burden his people emotionally by reminding them of his sacrifice
 - Nehemiah took nothing and lived like he had everything
 - No doubt, the people saw him as a refreshing change from past leaders
- Why did Nehemiah makes these sacrifices? We know he cared for the people, but that wasn't his only motivation
 - In v.19, Nehemiah asked the Lord to remember his decisions and sacrifices as he served the people without burdens
 - When Nehemiah says "remember me Lord", he doesn't mean remember to bring me to Heaven

- Nehemiah was a man saved by faith alone, just as you and I are today
- So if Nehemiah wasn't asking God to remember him for the sake of entering Heaven, what was he asking from God?
- Nehemiah was asking God to reward him in the Kingdom for his faithfulness and sacrifice
 - Nehemiah wasn't interested in receiving his reward on earth
 - To be rewarded on earth means to forfeit reward in Heaven
 - And the Heavenly rewards for service will far outshine any reward we could possibly receive on earth
 - Nehemiah understood that, so he willingly gave up a reward on earth so that he could be eligible for greater reward in Heaven
- This should be the motivation of every Christian, and especially every godly leader
 - This is why Paul says

1 Tim. 6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

- The great gain Paul is speaking about is the eternal gain that godliness will yield
- But if we are to see that eternal reward in its fullness, we have to be content with what we have here and now, however meager it may be
- In fact, the more meager our life today, the more opportunity we have to earn eternal treasure
 - Because it means we aren't spending a lot of time trying to gain the world's treasure
 - Instead, we should be putting our time toward earning eternal treasure
 - Like Nehemiah, who spent his days working with the people, living on less so that he might be rewarded with more