

AUGUST 13

Nehemiah 5:14-7:60

The three charts at the end of this document might be helpful as you read today's entry.

Nehemiah 5:14-19

We had not been told this previously, but sometime during this year, Artaxerxes made Nehemiah the governor of Judah, and he remained in this capacity for 12 years. In a way, it was probably because of the threat of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and his friends Tobiah and Geshem. Nehemiah was not only a trusted Persian official, but he had true-blue Persians with him. The hijinks we'll hear about in the next chapter took place within the first two months Nehemiah was in Jerusalem. When word got back to Artaxerxes that the surrounding governors were nuts, he must have installed Nehemiah as governor to bring stability into the area.

As we have seen in so many situations, when the Lord allows opposition, He is often setting things up for His glory and for the progress of His plans.

Tomorrow when you read chapter 9 of 1 Corinthians, think of what Paul says there, and compare it to what Nehemiah did here. It could be that Paul was inspired by the selflessness of Nehemiah's leadership. In any case, this kind of maturity and sacrifice seems to run in God's family of followers.

V. 19 In this description and summary of Nehemiah's sacrifice and service to the Lord and to the nation, notice the mentions of God and how this love for God made him so sacrificial and generous. Nehemiah was a human like all of us are human. I'm sure he had his moments of rage and distress. But in all of it, before the Lord, all he wanted was the fellowship and comfort of God.

Nehemiah 6

Vs. 1-14 These are the traps that the rats set for Nehemiah. The wording is kind of ironic, isn't it? Since the wall took 52 days to build, and since there was violence threatened when they were halfway through the building, all of these three attempts must have come toward the very end, just as they were preparing to set up the gates.

Vs. 1-4 The old "Let's get you away from Jerusalem and kill you" trap. Notice that they never offered to meet in Jerusalem. Gene Getz, in the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 685, points out that Nehemiah never confronted the obvious motives of these men. By keeping things politically correct and peaceful, they revealed their hate and intent. This would have been obvious to the Persians who were with Nehemiah, and it would have been reported back to the king.

Vs. 5-9 The old "You're really trying to take over" ploy. The people were united around Nehemiah and knew this couldn't be true. Nehemiah's trust in God for all that had happened wasn't about to be shaken. Again, the Persians who were with Nehemiah would only have reported the irrationality of the governor of Samaria and the instability he brought into that region.

V. 9 Apparently all of this history was taken from Nehemiah's journal. It gives you an idea of how closely Nehemiah lived with God every day.

Vs. 10-14 The old "You think you can violate God's law and order" trick. This one was a little more subtle, because Shemaiah was someone Nehemiah apparently trusted. Shemaiah was apparently confined to his house saying that God had given him a prophetic vision. When Nehemiah went to visit him and heard the message, he knew it was not from God. Tobias had men on the inside. Obviously we've seen Uzziah and others violate God's order. A godly man

didn't go where he wasn't supposed to go, even if he was the king or governor. This was supposed to create disunity between Nehemiah and Ezra and the priests and Levites. Remember, Ezra was a main leader and the priests and Levites were heavily involved in the work on the wall.

Vs. 15-19 Doing this in 52 days was a miracle of unity and God's favor. Now we see how deep Tobias's influence in Jerusalem was. This is sort of a last desperate measure to show Nehemiah who is really in control.

Even in this exchange of letters and lobbying for influence, the messengers who reported this would only have underscored for Artaxerxes how unstable the region was. Art needed a good governor to look out for the interests of Persia.

Nehemiah 7:1-60

Vs. 1-4 The threats only made Nehemiah more determined to make Jerusalem secure.

V. 2 This is literally Nehemiah's brother. We met him in chapter 1. He was a lover of God and someone Nehemiah could trust.

Vs. 5-60 At this point very few people lived in the city. Nehemiah was now going to "stock" the city with true-blue Jews. That's why the genealogy, basically Ezra's list, is given here.

There are some differences here between Ezra's list and Nehemiah's list; but thankfully for us the scholars have "duked it out" regarding these, and there are good explanations. If you're interested, the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), pp. 687-688, gives some short, sufficient answers.

Having the Jews themselves occupy Jerusalem would be one of Nehemiah's final steps in making Jerusalem secure. The final step would be the uniting of the people in following God.

1 Corinthians 8

Paul has already raised several issues that he will revisit in this letter. He will bring some of these things together in chapter 10. This discussion in chapter 8 will be illustrated in chapter 9 and will really be addressed and concluded in chapter 10. Just as background for this chapter it is good to know that much of the meat sold in the markets had been offered in sacrifice to pagan gods. If you knew that these gods really didn't exist, why would it be wrong to eat this meat? Paul will eventually say that it is OK to eat that meat, but there are actually two issues that will be addressed in this discussion. First, there is a need for control and compassion for the weak believers, and second, there is great danger and self deception in being arrogant.

Vs. 1-3 This *knowledge/logic* is what Paul is aiming at. The Corinthians had found freedom in the knowledge that knowing Christ brought and some of them were flaunting that knowledge. But there is a difference between being "knowledge" driven and "knowing Christ" driven. The issue here is this proud knowledge that was resistant to being considerate of those who were still young in faith or weak in this area.

V. 3 is a very challenging verse for me. Paul is already anticipating 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter on love. Notice that this doesn't say one is known by love, but by what God does through us as a result of loving Him. I think the idea here is that it isn't knowledge that makes us known or gives us status, it is loving God. If we love God, He, working in us, makes us known by showing Himself to others through us. In a few verses Paul will use the phrase, *you who have knowledge*. In the OT because of his devotion to (love for) God, Elijah was known as a "man of God." That's the difference. Many people want to be known by what they know. God wants us to be known by loving Him and Him allowing Himself to be known through us. This may seem like a small thing, but for a disciple our lives have to be about following and reflecting Jesus, and not about

showing everyone how much we know and what we think about the government or the topics of the day.

Vs. 4-6 This is all good and true theology, but when Paul gets to chapter 10, he will put a very dark twist to this line of reasoning the Corinthians were using. Satan was using this arrogance to trick them into something foolish.

Notice in v. 6 how the Spirit details our relationship to the Father and to Jesus. This is great stuff. The Father gave the command and the Son carried it out. There is a lot to think about here.

Vs. 7-13 This portion is pretty straightforward. The question is: What does it mean to destroy another Christian? How does wounding their conscience when they are weak destroy them? Paul uses many of these same words in Romans 14. This would be worth discussing in your groups.

One reminder here, when we get to chapter 10, is that it is obvious that this liberty was being used publicly and with arrogance toward the weak.

Working in the harvest we have this fine line. The Pharisees among us judge and take away our liberty. Paul speaks against these all the time. Yet, there are some who have no freedom in certain areas because of their past life. If they walked into a theater or drank a beer, it would be a total violation of their faith and it would teach them to ignore their conscience. That might take them weeks or months to recover from. (Think of what would happen to your walk and testimony if you fell into adultery. This is the same for a weak person walking into a movie. It is devastating.) We need to speak against the Pharisee, but we need to support and strengthen (not convince) the weak. Sometimes the issues of both of these groups will be the same thing. The focus however is following Christ in the harvest. When Paul was helpless and unable to alter the thinking of groups who were acting out of wrong motives, he said, *Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.* (Philippians 1:18) 1 Corinthians 9:19 is the measure of a disciple following Christ in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples.

Now, chapter 9 will take an interesting turn. Paul had to treat many of these “knowledgeable” people in Corinth as weaker believers and we’ll see why.

Psalm 33:1-11

In the ESV Bible someone wrote, “The Steadfast Love of the Lord,” as the heading for this psalm. That is mentioned a couple of times in Psalm 33, once today and in the second half tomorrow. But for me, what stands out in this portion is *the Word of the Lord*, and *For he spoke, and it came to be*. To me, it is interesting that David understood that all that was made came by the Word and command of God, from nothing.

Vs. 1-3 This is the call to worship and to be totally enthralled with the Lord. The next verses will tell why.

Vs. 4-5 The two things highlighted here are *the Word of the Lord* that produced His faithful works. Then there is the *love of the Lord*.

Vs. 6-7 This is the Word of God in creation. His power and wisdom in creation are beyond anything we can imagine.

Vs. 8-11 The response to His Word should be respect and awe. But even when God's Word is met with indifference or rebellion, His Word is still sovereign over mankind, directing the progress of the plan of redemption.

Proverbs 21:8-10

I think the message is that *the guilty*, the *quarrelsome*, and *the wicked* are consistent in their crookedness, quarreling and selfishness. The pure person is someone whose heart is unburdened by unconfessed sin, who is not quarrelsome and who desires what is best for his neighbor.

