

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH #24 "SPIRITUAL FIREWALLS"

Nehemiah 13:15-22

Canada: 16 ft long python got out of its cage – went through a hole in ceiling; killed 2 boys 5/7. Dangerous – lost sight over time. Our scrip: Neh sees danger that is creeping in over time. A leader must recognize – and build spiritual firewalls.

I. THE CONCERN

A. Important dimension in life of spirit: Motivating passion/outlook on life/values/worldview

1. Our choices/actions flow from our spirit

a. *Prov 4:23 guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it flows all the issues of life*

2. This plays out in numbers of areas of life: Each have a spirit; 1. Personally: 2. Home: 3. Church/corporately

3. This is something Neh. Had helped them with up to this point

a. *Chap 2 pointed out the walls destroyed; He helped defeat their enemies; Got focused on Kingdom purposes*

B. But we see the tendency to decline

1. Laws of nature: things left to themselves decline *Prov 24: field of a lazy man... thorns/broken down walls*

2. Decline begins in our own hearts: We have a problem – the flesh

a. *1 Peter 2:11 I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.*

b. We all have things that will crowd God out – and open ourselves to harmful influences

1. *Nehemiah 13:15 In those days I saw men of Judah treading out their winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in grain, loading it on donkeys, and bringing their wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of produce to Jerusalem to sell on the Sabbath. So I rebuked them for selling their produce on that day.*

a. Starts with desires that may not be totally evil: *Get work done/make \$/pay bills/get ahead*

c. Subtle: Happens slowly over time – comes with logical reasoning of why this is helpful

3. Our desires open us/make us vulnerable to our enemies

a. *Nehemiah 13:16 Some men from Tyre, who lived in Jerusalem, were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise. They were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah – and in Jerusalem at that! Traditional enemies that had hurt them before*

b. The enemy is persistent: Battles fought before – show up again

1. *Luke 11:24 When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, searching for rest. Finding none, it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.'*

4. The problem is that it is a spirit: A supernatural dimension that dominates

a. Personally: Our minds/time/energies are consumed b. Home: Influences creep in that take over

1. ML: TV in the back room... 2. Kids: Pick up fashions/music/friends/attitudes – cloud on house 3. Church:

II. THE CHALLENGE

A. Neh brings a righteous perspective: You are putting yourselves in danger!

1. He reminds them of past history: *V18 your ancestors were destroyed by this!*

a. Biblical history: *1 Cor 10: these things were written for our instruction...*

b. Personal history: *You have been hurt by these things before! How did that work out last time?*

2. Shows them the true nature of relationship with God: Honor Him above all else

a. *Nehemiah 13:17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?"*

1. Evil: Takes you away from God/His will 2. Profane: Wedge – opens you larger things

B. Practical strategies of protection

1. Deal with the heart: Challenging motivations and implications

2. Restrict access: *V19 shut the gates!*

a. Identify the access points: *How is this gaining access to your heart/home/church?*

b. Shut the gates: *Close your social media/cell phone/blockers Matt 5:29 Hand/cut it off...*

3. Protect against recurrence: *V20-21 the merchants set up outside the gates... ran them off*

4. Personal purity: *V22 cleanse yourselves*

5. Rekindle passion: *Rev 2:4-5* Has to come from the heart – or else it is simply a rule that quickly fades

III. THE REMEMBRANCE

A. Nehemiah recognizes this is more than following the rules

1. It is all about God blessing – being actively involved in our lives

a. *Nehemiah 13:22 ...Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

2. Neh recognized that God sees our hearts – and sees our actions

a. He had confidence that God is pleased when we make God/His will our priority

1. *Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

B. This remembrance works out in several ways

1. God helps us to battle through the effects of our own bad decisions

a. Book/Neh has some supernatural help to overcome consequences: Kings help rebuild/defeat enemy

1. Parents: If you will fight for your children/with your children – God will get involved

2. God releases supernatural blessings and benefits *1 Sam 2:30 honor those who honor me...*