

Monday, 1 April 2019 Nehemiah 2:1-4

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Haven't we all been in situations where we are to face a fundamental question in our life; one where we know that our answer is going to change our life somehow? The wrong answer and the king could very quickly have had him put to death. (Remember Pharaoh and his cup-bearer in Genesis 40:1-3? Don't offend a king with a sad face while handing him his wine)

Nehemiah answered truthfully even in his fear of the consequences, received a followup question and prayed to the LORD for guidance. Not a bad scenario to keep in mind when I'm in a bind.

Tuesday, 2 April 2019 Nehemiah 4:7-14

But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall." And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, "You must return to us." So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to 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 homes."

Ever have a project where everything you tried just uncovered more problems? We all have had experiences like this as described in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. Too much rubble! Those who were against the project banded together to make sure that we were aware of all the problems. But Nehemiah rallied the troops by pointing out that the Fear of the LORD, God, the Almighty was more than sufficient to protect them against the fear of their enemies. Let this be our guiding principle

in all the challenges of life.

Wednesday, 3 April 2019 Nehemiah 5:8-9

and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find a word to say. So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?"

How quick are those around us to call us out on the way we treat fellow Christians? We need to be very careful to observe John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.*"

Nehemiah is telling us that the Fear of the LORD, God, the Almighty is expressed to the world around us in the way we treat our brothers and sisters in Him.

Thursday, 4 April 2019 Nehemiah 5:14-15

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

How many of our leaders, whether secular or clerical, practice this discipline of righteous application to all the aspects of their responsibilities? Should not all of us who name the Name of Jesus be driven to live out every aspect of our lives as defined by the Fear of the LORD, God, the Almighty? Is this not the life of righteousness, peace, and joy that is life in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Friday, 5 April 2019 Nehemiah 6:5-9

In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together." Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

Now the attack is based upon spreading false rumors, but Nehemiah's response is based on facts. He has not set up prophets nor has he declared himself to be king. His defense is based on a calm recitation of the facts.

I need to learn to adopt the same tactics. Keep my cool, stick to the facts, trust in the LORD to rectify the situation and trust in Him for guidance.

Saturday, 6 April 2019 Nehemiah 6:10-14

Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night." But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me. Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

The lesson here dwells on keeping my focus on the tasks that the LORD has set before me. Nehemiah refuses to be distracted from the effort to rebuild the wall and seek a place for his safety. What could be safer than hiding in the temple? But he knows that if he displays fear of the enemy so will the people, and reconstruction of the wall will be impeded.

When the LORD directs me to a specific task, I must trust in Him to protect me and to provide for all that is needed. Deuteronomy 31:8 *"It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

Lord's Day, 7 April 2019 Psalm 119:122

Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me.

Lord, guide so that I know I am in Your precious, righteous and good will. Shield me so that I will not sully Your name by selfish behavior. Protect me from those who would deride You because of my sins and failures. Help me, Lord.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



April 1-7, 2019

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

Lord, may that peace that passes all understanding be the fleece that guides us through our ministries. Our prayer for the [congregation] is that we will always be guided by that infallible lantern, Your peace; that it will be the lamp for our feet and the light for our path. *Amen*

To fear or not to fear, that is the question.

The fear of the Lord, an expression that occurs many times in Scripture, 142 in the ESV in various forms, is not well understood in the Church today. For many, the phrase represents a weak and flabby description of an overly saccharine spiritual being of some sort. It certainly does not include the concept of the LORD, God the Almighty who spoke all things into being and who controls all things.

Join with me in examining the fear of the LORD and seeking an understanding of life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now as guided by that fear.

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