

The question of stewardship is never, "Do we have enough?". The question is, "Will we trust God with what we have?". Nehemiah did not have a complete picture of how dire the situation was in Jerusalem. He had no idea of what resources would be needed. But he is sure of the one thing that matters most, I believe. God's hand was upon him. As a result, he could not fail because this was God's work. His hands, but God's work. So, we pick up where we left off on last Sunday and I want to share three additional things Nehemiah's example teaches about faithful stewardship.

First, we see in Nehemiah's example that faithful stewardship is neither hasty, timid, nor forced. V11-15, "¹¹ So I arrived in Jerusalem. Three days later, ¹² I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. ¹³ After dark I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. ¹⁴ Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. ¹⁵ So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate. ¹⁶ The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the Jewish leaders—the priests, the nobles, the officials, or anyone else in the administration." When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he took three days. He does not tell us what he did during those three days. I imagine he settled in his new residence,

made the necessary introductions, shook the necessary hands, kiss the babies, etc. But on the fourth day he got to work. He was not hasty nor was timid. He was focused and determined. He did a full assessment of the wall and gates before presenting his request to the leadership. Church, faithful stewardship is like that. It does not need a boost, nor does it need to be awoken from a stupor. It identifies the needs and responds accordingly. Period!

2 Cor 9:7, “⁷You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure.”

Exodus 25:2, “Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them.”

1 Chronicles 29:6-9, “⁶Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king’s administrative officers all gave willingly. ⁷For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. ⁸They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the Lord under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon. ⁹The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord, and King David was filled with joy.”

Second, we see here that faithful stewardship starts with the leadership. V17-18, “¹⁷But now I said to them, “You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!” ¹⁸Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!” So they began the good

work.” I have to believe that Nehemiah understood that the people would not get behind any effort that the leadership did not fully embrace. And what I have learned in my leadership experience is that the congregation will not rise above the commitment, the faith, and/or the trust of the leadership. Stated this way, as the leadership goes, so goes the congregation. Does not matter how obvious the decisions that need to be made may be. If the leadership does not trust God, the people will not either. Leaders, what message has our example sent or what message is our example sending?

Number 13:30-32, 14:1-4, “³⁰ But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!” ³¹ But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” ³² So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites....¹ Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. ² Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. ³ “Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” ⁴ Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”

Hosea 4:4-9, “Don’t point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! My complaint, you priests, is with you. ⁵ So you will stumble in broad daylight, and your false prophets will fall with you in the night. And I will destroy Israel, your mother. ⁶ My people are being destroyed because they don’t know me. Since you priests refuse to know me, I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children.

⁷ The more priests there are, the more they sin against me. They have exchanged the glory of God for the shame of idols. ⁸ “When the people bring their sin offerings, the priests get fed. So the priests are glad when the people sin! ⁹ ‘And what the priests do, the people also do.’ So now I will punish both priests and people for their wicked deeds.”

1 Chron 29:3-6, ³ “And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. ⁴ I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings ⁵ and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the Lord today?” ⁶ Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king’s administrative officers all gave willingly.”

Finally, we see in Nehemiah’s example that faithful stewardship is not deterred. V19-20, ¹⁹ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. “What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” they asked. ²⁰ I replied, “The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem.” Why isn’t it deterred, because it’s God’s work, Yes, our hands brothers and sisters, but God’s work. And our God cannot fail! Faith stewardship is not hasty, timid, nor forced, starts with the leadership, and is not deterred. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.