

The Fear of God (Neh 5: 14-15)

(Neh 5:14) Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year--twelve years--neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor.

(Neh 5:15) But the earlier governors--those preceding me--placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.

The construction of the walls of Jerusalem was nearly completed by Nehemiah and the Jews who respected and obeyed his leadership. Nehemiah was faced with an unexpected event when he could say it's enough and finally take some rest. This was not about building walls. It wasn't about disturbing foreigners either. Neither a flood nor an earthquake struck Jerusalem. It was resentment of people who had worked with Nehemiah, about their economic situation. In conclusion, Nehemiah and his people solved it well. People with different circumstances and opinions became one mind. We know this so difficult to the extent that it is almost impossible. When there is a divided heart in the family and in the church, when leadership or the actions of powerful people are disappointing, we too must live with the spirit of Nehemiah and his people. It is the constant, attentive, and absolute fear of God.

1. Disappointment

The walls of Jerusalem were demolished in 586 BC by the Babylonians and left unattended for 140 years. The history of the Jews repairing and rebuilding the walls had many meanings. For the Israelites to be safe, for the next generation not to be put to shame, for the Jews to be restored as a worshipping community, and it was their heart to work hard and devote themselves for the glory of God. It was such a very beautiful dedication. It is definitely a blessing to have the desire to do what God wants me to do. Even more blessed is to dedicate my strength, wealth, and gifts to that work.

These people repaired and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Near the end of the project, there were those who complained about the terrible hardships of life.

(Neh 5:1) Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers.

They blamed the other Jews, their own people. What happened? They had no money to pay the statutory taxes. There was no food to eat. They didn't have money to buy food. So they borrowed money from their own people, the Jews. They pledged their houses and land as collateral and had to pay interest. Some even made money by selling their children as slaves to foreigners. Borrowing money and paying it back is a commonsensical economic life. However, it was difficult to accept the reality of having to sell even children as slaves, even though they had devoted the previous 50 days to the wall project that pleased God.

I understand this weary feeling. This is not a disappointment with God. I was having a hard time and struggling while doing God's work, and I was disappointed because of the indifference of my family and church members. Recently, I received a phone call from a brother and the pain in me did not subside for several days. He asked me to pardon him to talk, and talked about the pain he had been through over the past few years. The brother said he came to rethink about the church, while listening to my sermon CDs from the nearby grocery store. After talking on the phone for about ten minutes, I could tell he was a good Christian. He said he was disappointed with the church he had served since he was young and was deeply hurt by the pastor and some church elders. Needless to say, they were like angels when they worshiped, studied the Bible, and served the church. However, he said it was painful because the hypocritical words and personality of such adults were not acceptable to him. 'They were the adults in the church I really admired, how could they do so?' The brother was unable to continue. I also could not talk.

We often say that there are not many trustworthy people in society and in the church. It is true that because of the fear of God, the wounds received at the church may be deeper. What should you do when you have been doing God's work on God's

☐☐☐ 캔사스 우리교회

side, but your economic situation has become the worst and you are disappointed with people? You must trust in the unchanging God. You must take your eyes off men and focus on Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our sins. It is because we are Christians. We need to stop thinking about the injustices of the world for a moment and immerse our thoughts in the amazing grace of God who sent His Son for such a world. Who in the world, in the church and in the family, will not be disappointed? Please keep in mind that the reason for our faith is not people and the church. Do not stop revering the faithful Lord today as you did yesterday, but continue to long for His provision and comfort.

(Jms 1:17) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

He does not disappoint those who do not cease to fear God.

2. Challenge and Encouragement through Nehemiah

We should wonder how God restored the disappointment of those who had collapsed due to the hardships of life while the walls that had collapsed were repaired and rebuilt. That's for two reasons. 1) There are times when people are indifferent to me, but to be sure, God is not indifferent to those who fear Him. 2) In order not to become discouraged because of society and people while I am doing things that are pleasing to God.

God sent Nehemiah not only for the Jerusalem wall project, but also to hold the hearts of God's people strong. God challenged and encouraged the Jewish community and broken-hearted people to become one through Nehemiah. Like a thread and a needle, encouragement follows challenges.

The challenge through Nehemiah was love that transcends law or system. It was a challenge to love brothers of their own people and faith. He challenged wealthy nobles and officials as follows; 'Let us not receive interest from the Jews who come to borrow money,' 'Let us return the interest we have already received,' 'Let's return the brother's houses and land we took as mortgage.' The Jewish nobles and officials said in one voice, "Amen." It is amazing. It was not wrong for them to lend money and receive interest. Nevertheless, because they feared God, they decided to be considerate of their brothers and sisters who were suffering from hardships of life.

Moreover, Nehemiah encouraged the Jewish people with sincere life rather than just words.

(Neh 5:14-15) Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year--twelve years--neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. 15 But the earlier governors--those preceding me--placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.

Nehemiah talked about the life he lived because he feared God. He did not pamper the people who helped him. They didn't try to take money from people. He lived his faith in real life! His way of life was a great encouragement to those who were weary of people.

The Great Thing

Nehemiah said that he lived such a life because he feared God. Because there was a great thing he wanted to see. He wanted something bigger than the wall project to happen within the Jewish community. What was it? Society is unjust. People are disappointing. However, God is righteous forever. He is God whom you can truly trust. He is not only the God of those who weep, but also the God of those who joyfully dedicate their lives. People divide the powerful and the powerless. People differentiate between young and old. But God is the God of all who fear Him. The great thing Nehemiah wanted to see was how people feared God more in the midst of conflict and resentment. Not by law, but by love. Through deeds that precede words.