

Nehemiah: Restoration, Reconciliation, And Rebuilding

(this transcript has been lightly edited for readability)

If I love Ezra, you just have to love Nehemiah. It's a companion book, same sort of period of time of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the wall. It's a time of restoration and reconciliation and rebuilding. And I love the picture of those three words; think of those three words: Reconciliation, Restoration, Rebuilding.

Those three words are at the heart of the redemptive story. Reconciliation-God reconciles us to Himself; Israel is reconciled again. God restores us to what we were meant to be and what we were meant to do. And God rebuilds us-your heart is in the process of rebuilding. We call that progressive sanctification. It's God's process of a moral rebuilding of all of us because the house that has a heart has been broken down by sin.

And so what Nehemiah teaches us, in this moment in redemptive history, is embedded in restoration, reconciliation, and rebuilding, is this bright hope, the hope of fresh starts and new beginnings. That what grace offers us, what redemption offers us, what God offers His people is fresh starts and new beginnings.

Listen, God, in His righteousness, would have been completely right in turning His back on these people and saying, "I am going to walk away from this." They were covenant breakers; they were lawbreakers; they were idolaters. But God is not just a Righteous Judge; He's a Compassionate Redeemer; and so He finds a way of delivering fresh starts and new beginnings to His people without compromising His holiness and His righteousness. And so without a moment of compromise, God offers that second opportunity, that fresh start and new beginnings. And in that way, Nehemiah preaches the cross; because on the cross of Jesus Christ, justice, holiness, and grace kiss.

You see, God would not walk away from His holy requirement, and say, "You know, these are kind of nice people, let's just forgive them and move on." Jesus had to come; He had to live a

perfect life; He had to die an acceptable death, because God would not turn from His justice in order to deliver His grace.

On the cross, justice and grace intersect, intermingle. The hope of humanity is that God would not abandon His righteousness. If this world is not run by One who is righteous, we have no hope! But the hope of the world also is God would not abandon His grace.

Restoration, Reconciliation, Rebuilding--that was not just the plan for Nehemiah; it was not just the hope of the people in that period of time that God would restore them, that God would reconcile them, that God would rebuild for them. It's the hope of every human being who has ever taken a breath that there is reconciliation, there is restoration, there is rebuilding. Welcome to the hope of Nehemiah!

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