

Profoundly moving services today. God is incredibly good!

Love y'all.

Pastor Heard

Part 24: Feel the Passion!

Texts:

Ecclesiastes 9:7 (The Message) - "Seize life!"

Hebrews 4:14-16 (KJV) - "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. [15] For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Key No. 12 (Part 10) – Incredible Keys To Incredible Breakthroughs

- A. We have been studying the life of Nehemiah, the great leader who almost single-handedly restored God's favor and prosperity to the disgraced nation of Israel, especially the tribe of Judah.
 - 1. Because of their apostasy, Israel was already in ruins. As a people, the ten tribes of Israel had been practically wiped out and swallowed up in anonymity. Many had been slain in the siege of Jerusalem, God's holy city, and the Temple had been demolished.

2. So many pagans had moved into the area with their idol gods, Israel had forgotten who they were.
3. Though we may not realize it, Nehemiah's role of turning Israel back to God could make him the most pivotal character in Old Testament history. Had it not been for his leadership, Israel could have faded into oblivion and be long forgotten, much like the Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites and other Old Testament nations.
4. While at their lowest point as a destroyed, pillaged nation in Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah helped God's people rediscover their identity as the divine vehicle through whom the Messiah would enter the world.
5. He reminded them of the promises made to their father Abraham that through Israel, God would bless all nations of the world.
6. His amazing assignment was to lead them from total and complete ruin to greatness and prominence. What he did for Jerusalem proves that nothing or no one is beyond God's ability to save and restore.
7. With clear steps, Nehemiah helped Israel recover. Too often, leaders will either pursue unclear goals or introduce plans that are not specific enough to point them in the right direction.

8. **Joke:** Be Specific!

Many people are like the man who called the law offices of Boudreaux, Boudreaux, Boudreaux & Boudreaux and asked to speak with Mr. Boudreaux.

He was quickly told, "Mr. Boudreaux is out playing golf." Since the law firm was named Boudreaux, Boudreaux, Boudreaux & Boudreaux, he asks to speak to Mr. Boudreaux, right?

Again, he was told, "Mr. Boudreaux is out of town on business. He won't be in 'till week after next." So the caller asks, "Well, let me speak to Mr. Boudreaux."

Once more he is told, "I'm sorry; Mr. Boudreaux is out sick. He is seeing the doctor today." Totally frustrated, the man tries once more, "Then let me speak to Mr. Boudreaux."

The voice answers, "Oh, sure. Dis is Boudreaux."

B. Leadership Principle No. 14 – To empower his people, Nehemiah taught them to experience divine favor by sanctifying their lives unto God.

1. If you serve God with your whole heart, life will ALWAYS be greater than it would have been otherwise.
2. We have a choice. Deuteronomy, chapter 30, tells us that God sets before us a blessing or a curse; life or death. Which will we choose?
3. Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology gives the generic meaning for 'sanctification' as: the state of proper functioning. To sanctify a person or thing, it must be set apart for the designer's intended use.
4. **Nehemiah 9:1-3 (NKJV)** - "Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. [2] Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. [3] And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God."
5. Nehemiah first reminded the people that they *belonged*; there was a reason and purpose for their lives. Not only were they the people of Israel, they belonged to God and the family in which they had been born—which should be taken very seriously.
 - a. You do not place yourself; God does that. He told Elijah to go to the Brook Cherith because ravens had been commanded to feed him there. The ravens, which represented God's supernatural provision and grace, would only come to this precise place—not anywhere

else. Neither will your ravens. They come to where God has placed you!

- b. We Americans have developed a consumer mentality that often bleeds into our spiritual lives. This isn't good. I don't believe we choose a church; I believe God places us where He wants us to be.
 - c. At times, He moves us toward a purpose of ministry; but if the climate is disagreeable for growth, He emphasizes His love by moving us again. We are not to move ourselves.
 - d. In the biblical pattern of Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit told the Antioch church leaders to separate Barnabas and Saul for the ministry to which He had called them.
 - e. Occasionally, people may become angry about a situation and choose to leave a congregation. Or if a certain ministry is not according to their liking, they will go somewhere else. But God may have placed them there to **improve** their ministry. Had they remained, they may have found their true purpose, while helping to build the Kingdom.
7. Nehemiah's second instruction was for the people to purposely sanctify and rededicate themselves to God. Because we are all tempted with the whispers of compromise and enticed to follow a lesser standard of integrity, we should regularly repeat this commitment.
8. We are all prone to fail, but we must never give up. A mistake doesn't define you anymore than a single photograph can reveal the story of your life. Do not expect to be blessed if your life opposes God's laws.
9. Re-dedicate yourself to your Creator and Lord! If you'll set yourself apart to be used for His purposes, you'll experience His divine favor!

C. Leadership Principle No. 15 – Nehemiah lived every day in the light of eternity.

1. **Nehemiah 5:15 (NKJV)** - "But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God."
2. Knowing that someday he would face God, Nehemiah chose to lead with integrity. He refused to use people for his own personal agenda. We may easily bluff our way out of some situations, but we can never fool God.
3. Abraham Lincoln said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time." I would add that you cannot fool God at **any** time!
4. We will someday give an account to God for the way we have used our office, how we have treated others, and the life we chose to live. That is true—even for those who serve as a minister or pastor.

D. **Leadership Principle No. 16** – Nehemiah lived for a cause greater than himself.

1. **Nehemiah 5:19 (NKJV)** - "Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."
2. Having no objective worth living for must be very frustrating. So, how do you know if your life is being spent on something worthwhile? Ask yourself if you're willing to die for this cause or if it would be an appropriate exchange for your life. By that definition, most people would look at their jobs and possessions and say, "No!" . . . Family? Now that's a different matter.
3. What is your definition of success? Is it fame? If so, by that standard even Kim Kardashian and her reality show is successful. Is it wealth? Then Saddam Hussein was successful. Stacks of \$100 bills and pallets of gold bars were found near his body. By that same standard, the preachers of LA are successful, though I wouldn't cross the street to hear any one of

- them. But they do have the 'flash.' Is it office? Then Hitler was successful because he ruled most of Europe.
4. Leo Tolstoy's tale of "How Much Land Does a Man Need" addressed the matter of what a person would give in exchange for their life. In his story, Pahom was offered all the land he could walk past in one day. After selecting a starting point, early in the morning he began to walk. At first, he moved neither fast nor slow. But in his greed, he decided to see how much ground he could cover and began walking faster and faster. By the close of the day, Pahom had hurried so fast, he barely made it to the starting place—only to fall dead on the spot from so much exertion. At the end of the story, all the ground he had earned was a six foot burial plot.

E. Leadership Principle No. 17 – Nehemiah's example for becoming a great leader was to first become a great follower.

1. Many who desire to lead forget about this principle.
2. Before gaining a reputation as 'the man who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem,' Nehemiah had faithfully served—not just an ordinary king, but a pagan king in an ungodly environment. The king was so impressed by Nehemiah's servitude, he willingly financed the entire building project.
3. **Nehemiah 6:5-8 (NKJV)** – “Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. [6] In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. [7] And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together. [8] Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.”

4. Loyalty to his king, his people, and his God proved that Nehemiah was not an opportunist.
5. Sanballat and Tobiah accused Nehemiah of being disloyal. What others say often reveals more about them than about you!

F. **Leadership Principle No. 18** – Nehemiah glorified God for all of his accomplishments.

1. **Nehemiah 12:27 (NKJV)** - "Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps."
2. After completing his assignment, Nehemiah rose from the lowly, inferior position of a cupbearer to becoming one of Israel's greatest leaders. By finishing the wall, he brought security and elevation to his despised, downtrodden people.
3. Though he had succeeded in influencing a pagan king to underwrite the cost of reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem, at the end of the day, Nehemiah gave all the glory to God for his accomplishments.
4. Unlike his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar viewed the mighty empire he had built and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30 NKJV). By failing to honor God, Nebuchadnezzar lost his sanity that day. All the glory should be given to God for our successes and achievements.
5. In the words of Andre Crouch:
"How can I say thanks for the things you have done for me,
Things so undeserved, yet You gave to prove Your love for me,
The voices of a million angels cannot express my gratitude,
All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee.

(Chorus)

To God be the glory; to God be the glory;

To God be the glory, for the things He has done,

With His blood, He has saved me, with His power, He has raised me,

To God be the glory, for the things He has done!"

8. The many principles taught in the last few weeks have made us remember Nehemiah as a leader of excellence.
9. Excellence isn't just doing one thing right; it is a lifestyle defined as: the quality of excelling, or being committed to do everything with quality.

G. Life Application Principles:

1. It's not too late to follow Nehemiah's example of becoming an honored and admired leader. Don't wait for others to act; do something yourself!
2. Be a Nehemiah to your family and children by leading the way to God.
3. Be a Nehemiah to your generation, your church and your community.
4. Find a place to serve and then build a ministry of excellence.
4. Be a Nehemiah in the market place, regardless of whether others mock your integrity or consider godly principles to be foolish.
5. As Nehemiah did, let's maintain our godly values and identity in a foreign, hostile environment.
6. Live for God in such a way that even the pagans will have to respect and admire the fact that you stand for something!