

ARISE

Perseverance and Personal Sacrifice

2.19.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Nehemiah 4:15-5:19

SERMON:

QUESTION: What is possible when we as individuals quit assuming someone else will do the things needed & begin seeing it as our responsibility?

STORY

Why did he ask that question? Because he doesn't understand how radio works, he thinks it is built into the car itself, not that there is a signal the car is picking up. The point is: he doesn't understand how it works.

In a similar way, I think many of us who go to church do the same thing. We all want our church to be successful. We all want our church to make a difference. We all want to reach lost people. We all want to have the BEST kids ministries, the BEST student ministries, and the BEST worship experience. The BEST everything. We all want that. Yet, we don't seem to understand that if we want those things, we need everyone who calls this church home "on the wall" doing their part. We cannot have a few serve, a few giving, and few discipling, a few leading, and expect to be a part of something great. It doesn't work like that.

In churches, the typical breakdown is the old 80/20 rule. 20% of the people do 80% of the work, of the giving, of the inviting, of the discipling, of the leading, etc.. My experience over 17 years has been that many in the 80% often tell themselves they are in the 20%. I want to challenge all of us today that are Christians...don't desire to be in the 20%, rather, let's be a church that defies the 80/20 RULE. Let's not have a 20%.

QUESTION: What is possible when we as individuals quit assuming someone else will do the things needed & begin seeing it as our responsibility?

ANSWER: The church becomes an unstoppable force in the world with incredible momentum

The mathematical formula for momentum is $M=PV$ || Momentum = Mass x Velocity

Momentum = Increased Numbers of People x Increased Obedience

Perseverance and personal sacrifice are hard things, let's do hard things

EXEGESIS: Nehemiah 4:15-5:19

15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, 17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. 18 And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. 19 And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. 20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

The work continued, despite opposition. The work was hard. It was physical labor and there was danger. They labored physically and they dealt with the emotional fear of enemies against them. So they worked with building tools in one hand and weapons in the other hand. But their heart was: Our God will fight for us.

21 So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. 22 I also said to the people at that time, "Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day." 23 So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.

Again, the work is difficult. They are working during the day and then guarding the work of the wall at night. They couldn't ever get comfortable. They stayed in the ready. Notice, even the leaders stood on the ready. (STORY: when I was in the Army, the young and low ranked pulled overnight guard duty. The old heads slept.)

5 Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. 2 For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive." 3 There were also those who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine." 4 And there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. 5 Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards." 6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. 7 I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them 8 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. 9 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? 10 Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. 11 Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." 12 Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. 13 I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

So the poor cry out because they are struggling to get by while those with means to lend did so at a cost to the poor that they couldn't bear. Everyone is supposed to be rowing in the same direction and some of the nobles were taking advantage of those with little. They didn't contribute as everyone did, they only took. This contrasted big time with what we see next with Nehemiah: generosity.

14 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. 15 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. 16 I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. 18 Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. 19 Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah gave his time, but he was also generous. He sacrificed. And did it, with an eye toward the blessing of God. Remember last week, we discussed how the Scriptures motivate our labors with the promise of reward. Nehemiah asks the Lord to remember all he has done.

The two pillars in our passages today are: Perseverance & Personal Sacrifice.

PERSEVERANCE - doing something despite difficulty

PERSONAL SACRIFICE - giving up something valuable as an offering to God

When is the last time you did something in your life that required perseverance and personal sacrifice? In our marriages, it requires perseverance and personal sacrifice. Are you in college? To make it and do well, it requires perseverance and sacrifice. Working out, exercising, eating right is a work of perseverance and personal sacrifice. Many things in our life require these two components. But these are not natural things our flesh do easily.

STORY

But let's drill it down deeper now: when was the last time you did something for the kingdom of God that required perseverance and personal sacrifice?

Serving in a ministry area and sticking to it? Going to a Life Group or MDWK and sticking to it? Tithing or percentage giving and sticking to it? Making Sunday worship gatherings non-negotiable for you and your family and sticking to it?

You know why the 80/20 RULE exists? You know why most never do anything that requires perseverance or personal sacrifice? Because people as a whole typically don't like to do hard things. Perseverance is hard. The word itself implies that you continue down a course though it may be difficult and costly. Personal Sacrifice is hard because you are parting with things of value that could be used for one thing and giving them to something different, because you believe there is value and worth in doing so.

We talked last week about the names of the people recorded as building the wall. Everyone had a place on the wall and role in its restoration. We as Christians seek to continue building the wall of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. That's what ARISE is about. We can do so by SERVING, GIVING, and INVITING. It is one thing to get excited for a day or a week or a few months, but are we willing to do these things together and persevere and make personal sacrifice? That's how things change. That's how movements start. That's how the disciples turned the world upside down.

We must do hard things. Churches should be known for doing hard things. Christians should be known for doing hard things. I desperately want to introduce this phrase into the TJC lexicon: **DO HARD THINGS**. What we mean by DO HARD THINGS is to refuse to let apathy and excuses define our level of involvement. You're busy as a family. You've got sports. You've got bills. I know. So does everyone else. The question is whether we are persevering and exhibiting personal sacrifice.

The difference between those who do hard things & don't, isn't circumstances, but perseverance & personal sacrifice.

As a church, we are rebelling against low expectations. Expectations are self-fulfilling prophecies. We believe when the Scriptures tell us that our God is able to do immeasurably more than we can even ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Think about that! He can do more than we can even imagine in our minds. So we are not shooting for small things around here. We're not okay with lostness in our city. We're not okay with people dying and facing a Christless eternity. We are not okay with Jesus not being the center of every person's life. So we want to do everything we can to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. And in so doing, we believe it will generate a radical reorientation of people's lives towards Jesus. But we need to be a church of people willing to DO HARD THINGS.

When we do hard things it pleases the Father, glorifies the Son, & makes us dependent on the Holy Spirit.

One of the benefits of living a life of perseverance and personal sacrifice is increased faith. James 1:2-4 teaches us about enduring trials and persevering and how it matures our faith. You can say it like this:

Great faith is the fruit of great fights (doing hard things) The more we keep going when we don't think we have the strength, God gets to prove to us that His strength is sufficient. The more we keep giving and refuse to get entangled in material idolatry, the more God shows us the joy of generosity. You see, the more we do hard things, and fight great fights, the greater our faith becomes.

How do you DO HARD THINGS? How do you exemplify perseverance & personal sacrifice?

1. Refuse to quit when things get difficult
2. Quit waiting for all the conditions to be right before being obedient
3. Use struggles as opportunities to build your faith
4. Remember that all sacrifice is truly gain
5. Ownership is a stewardship, it's temporary, & you're accountable

Increased Numbers of People x Increased Obedience = Momentum

We will never accomplish the things we desire with the 80/20 RULE governing us. Instead, we need to be a church filled with people committed to PERSEVERANCE in our labor & PERSONAL SACRIFICE.

QUESTION: What is possible when we as individuals quit assuming someone else will do the things needed & begin seeing it as our responsibility?

Much like this example, if we would all work together, exhibit perseverance and personal sacrifice, there is truly no cap on what we can experience together. Can you imagine what it would look like if a church shattered the 80/20 RULE and all the people embraced the mantra of DO HARD THINGS? May we be a church filled with people who refuse to say, "it's too hard & it will cost me too much," not when we are the same people who claim allegiance to the One who rescued us by becoming flesh and embracing death, even death on a cross.

REVIEW:

- ❖ How did the families approach the wall when they restarted their work (4:16-18)? How do these verses instruct us to approach kingdom work?
- ❖ Why did Nehemiah have to rebuke the nobles and officials (5:9)?
- ❖ What was Nehemiah's reason for rejecting the food allowance (5:15-19)?

REFLECT:

- ❖ How did Nehemiah persevere and lead by example?
- ❖ Discuss the ways to **DO HARD THINGS** (what does this look like for each person in your group).

RESPOND:

- ❖ How can you persevere and not give up (James 1:2-4, 12; Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 6:18; Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:1-2)?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Nehemiah 5:17-19 - *17 Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. 18 Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Hebrews 13:16 - *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Pastor - **Brandon Sutton**
- ❖ Ministry - **Re:generation**
- ❖ Pray for the Lord to give us endurance to finish this task and a willingness to do whatever it takes to complete it.
- ❖ NAMB Church Planter - **Marlon Henriquez** - Temple Hills, MD - Iglesia Bautista Temple Hills
- ❖ Unreached People Group (UPG): **Burmese in Myanmar** (Burma)
- ❖ Population: 31,044,000
- ❖ Christian: 0.35%
- ❖ Evangelical: 0.08%

- ❖ Primary Religion: Buddhism
- ❖ Primary Language: Burmese
- ❖ Status: **Unreached**