

Community Builders 13

Internal Struggles



Sunday 10 July 2005

Community Builders 13 - Internal Struggles

Things were going so well

So much had been accomplished with the completion of the wall being restored, the rediscovery of God's word, renewed commitment to God and his purposes (Neh 12: 30). Chapter 13 shows us that Nehemiah had to return to Persia and whilst he was away Jerusalem went into spiritual decline v6.

This highlights that there is a continual need for reformation and renewal in our lives. We can never say we have arrived. This side of heaven and maybe even within heaven and the universe, community building continues. Jesus' favourite theme was about the kingdom of God (Mark 1.14-15). The very reason for Jesus coming into this world was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19.10).

What went wrong?

- Bad leadership – Eliashib – the High Priest
- Unhelpful friendships - v4 Eliashib and Tobiah
- Destructive priorities – v 5 Tobiah more than a store for the offerings
- Neglect of the gifts and care of the Levites v10
- Unhelpful working & trading practices v 15, Tyrians trading v16,
- Unholy marriages verses 23-28

More Community Building

V7 Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem (presumably after a considerable time).

With his return, he addressed the spiritual neglect within the community. Nehemiah was a man with authority from the King of Persia, but he also had authority that came from God and from God's word.

Nehemiah demonstrates that wrongs do need to be addressed and that at times confrontation cannot be avoided.

Our Internal Struggles

Within the UK the terrible terrorist events of 07 July remind us that evil needs to be continually confronted. We too are called by God to work for transformation not only within our communities but also our world. God doesn't want the world to be as it is. He

wants us to seek to make it a better place where the quality of life is improved for all, (love your neighbour). God also desires that all should respond to his love and turn from living their lives in their own way.

The Lord isn't slow about keeping his promises, as some people think he is. In fact, God is patient, because he wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost. 2 Peter 3:9

For us as Church and as individual members of God's family the challenge is to maintain our love for God. It was the loss of this love that led the Church in Ephesus into such serious trouble.

But this is what I have against you: you do not love me now as you did at first. Revelation 2:4

Within our own lives as Christians we too know something of internal struggle. The desire to live for God and failing to do so, at times responding to the darkness within ourselves rather than God's light. The apostle Paul writes of this. He knows of the struggle, he is aware of his own difficulties but knows too that Jesus is the one that can make the difference. We have to choose to live his way and draw upon his strength.

In fact, I don't understand why I act the way I do. I don't do what I know is right. I do the things I hate. Although I don't do what I know is right, I agree that the Law is good. So I am not the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them. I know that my selfish desires won't let me do anything that is good. Even when I want to do right, I cannot. Instead of doing what I know is right, I do wrong. Romans 7:15-19

There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

The personal challenge is for us all to desire and determine to be community builders, drawing upon the vast resources that God gives and His word reveals.

Small Group Study

Nehemiah 13

- Can you believe it, things were going so well in chapter 12 and by chapter 13, old ways are living are back in vogue.
- Create space for reflective prayer, express praise to God for who He is, take time also to seek God's forgiveness, for any times when we've gone back to our old ways instead of following God's.
- Take time to read through this chapter, can you see how things began to go wrong. What do you consider was at the heart of this?
- What do you see as the things that most stifle our spiritual lives? Think also about the needs of our nation particularly in the light of the terrorist attack. What needs are paramount for our nation and the world?
- Turn these thoughts and other others into a focus for your prayers.