

MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR

Nehemiah 9:1-38

February 15, 2009 Sunday pm.

INTRODUCTION

- A. This has been a bad week for many Oklahomans.
 - 1. Nine died in the Lone Grove tornado and many others injured, some seriously.
 - 2. Several Oklahoma businesses either destroyed or badly damaged.
 - 3. Scores of homes, mobile homes and even million dollar homes damaged or destroyed.
 - 4. After the storm, many on the spot television interviews have shown storm casualties saying they were just glad that they and their families are alive.
 - 5. They learned the hard way this week that there is more to life than bricks and mortar.
- B. The Israelites also learned that there is more to life than bricks and mortar.
 - 1. The walls had been down around Jerusalem for nearly 200 years.
 - 2. However, with Nehemiah's leadership and the people's enthusiastic participation, they were rebuilt in just 52 days-6:15.
 - 3. It was then that the people realized that they needed something more in their lives, that they needed "someone" more in their lives.
 - 4. Even though they enjoyed great success in rebuilding the walls, it just wasn't enough.
 - 5. What they discovered is that they needed to renew their relationship with God. Chapter nine tells us how to do this.

I. FIRST, WE NEED TO LOOK "INWARD".

- A. This is what Israel did—1-2.
 - 1. They examined their lives and didn't like what they saw—that they had drifted away from God.
 - 2. Ironically, this happened while they doing God's work—rebuilding the walls.
 - 3. What caused their drift? Sin.
- B. We need to look "inward" too as individuals and as a nation.
 - 1. In 1953 President Eisenhower made history by being the last President to refer publicly to the need for our nation to confess and repent of our sins in order to receive mercy and pardon. Even though many presidents have used religious terms and imagery in their speeches, none since Eisenhower have addressed the crux of the problem of American society and called for national repentance. Can you imagine the backlash such a statement would create today?
 - 2. We need more than an "economic" stimulus package. We need a spiritual one.
 - 3. Is it possible that as individuals and as a nation we have drifted away from God?
 - 4. Are we still "on nation under God"?
 - 5. We would do well to look "inward" as Israel did.

II. SECOND, WE NEED TO LOOK "UPWARD".

- A. This is what Israel did. They looked upward and renewed their commitment to God—5-6.
- B. We need to look "upward" far more than we need to look toward Washington to solve our problems.
 - 1. Many Americans are very hopeful that our new President can solve our country's problems.
 - 2. God, however, is the only one who can solve our problems because our real problems are spiritual not just financial.

III. THIRD, WE NEED TO LOOK “BACKWARD”.

- A. The prayer of Nehemiah 9 summarizes the history of Israel and honestly acknowledges their sins and failures.
- B. It's been said that “those who forget their past are condemned to repeat it”.
 - 1. As Christians we shouldn't dwell on our past sins and failures. If we have asked for God's forgiveness that's all that is necessary.
 - 2. However, we should learn from those sins and failures and refuse to constantly repeat them.
 - 3. Have we taken this “backward” look at our lives and learned from our sins and failures?

CONCLUSION

- A. There's more to life than bricks and mortar. Many Oklahomans know that after last week.
- B. If we would know this too, we need to....
 - 1. Look “inward” and see if we have drifted away from God.
 - 2. Look “upward” and renew our commitment to God.
 - 3. Look “backward” and learn from our past sins and failures.
- C. Which way will we look today?