

Work: Benedict, Brother Lawrence, and Nehemiah 7

Sunday, July 9, 2023
Covenant Church
Pastor Zack Phillips

Nehemiah 7:1-7

¹ Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, ² I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel—for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. ³ And I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot; while the gatekeepers are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their watch posts, and others before their own houses.” ⁴ The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been built.

⁵ Then my God put it into my mind to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who were the first to come back, and I found the following written in it:

⁶ These are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried into exile; they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. ⁷ They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

A. A Place to Grow in Christlikeness: Benedict

Saint Benedict (480-547?), wanting to be a hermit, was drawn to being a community leader (abbot). He became known, among other things, for emphasizing work.

Arguably, his emphasis on work derived from: (1) combatting idleness; (2) promoting humility; and (2) seeking to serve others. That is, his emphasis on work derived from his desire to made more Christlike.

B. Part of Praying Ceaselessly: Brother Lawrence

Nicholas Herman lived in France ~1616–1691. A lame lay brother in a Carmelite monastery, he cooked and repair shoes—and became famous for *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

“The times of activity are not at all different from the hours of prayer, for I possess God as peacefully in the commotion of my kitchen, where often people are asking me for different things at the same time, as I do when kneeling in front of the Blessed Sacrament.”

“In the ways of God thoughts amount to little whereas love accounts for everything... I flip my little omelette in the frying pan for the love of God, and when it’s done, if I have nothing to do, I prostrate myself on the floor and adore my God who gave me the grace to do it, after which I get up happier than a king . Our sanctification depends not on changing our works, but on doing for God what we would normally do for ourselves.”¹

¹ All quotations from <https://carmelitesofboston.org/history/our-carmelite-saints/brother-lawrence-of-the-resurrection/>

1 Thess 5:17 pray without ceasing,

He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn. —C. S. Lewis

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” —The Westminster Shorter Catechism

C. Part of Participating in Christ: Nehemiah

1. Re-focusing everything as Kingdom-building

Neh 7:1 Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed...

2. A “continuous conversation” with God

Neh 6:9 —for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

- Hear, O our God, for we are despised... (4:4)
- Remember for my good, O my God... (5:19)
- Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God... (6:14)
- Remember me, O my God, concerning this... (13:14)
- Remember this also in my favor, O my God... (13:22b)
- Remember them, O my God... (13:29)
- ... Remember me, O my God, for good (13:31b).

Neh 7:5a Then my God put it into my mind to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy...

Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?