

I. Introduction:

- A. I am going back to chapter 1, not because I missed something, but because of the way tonight's theme ties the first two chapters together.
1. In fact, this, in some ways, may be the theme of the entire book.
 2. In my background reading on Nehemiah, I ran across the word "*patriot*" a couple times.
 3. And then as I re-read chapter 2, a couple of things jumped out at me in that regard.
 4. Let's say that Nehemiah was a "*patriot*;" what can we learn about that subject from his example?
 5. This may be particularly important in the light of the chaos in our country these last few weeks.
- B. Sadly, I am not sure that there is a universal agreement as to what "*patriotism*" might be.
1. Webster, 200 years ago, defined **patriotism** as –
 - a. "*Love of one's country; the passion which aims to **SERVE** one's country, either in **defending** it from invasion or **protecting** its rights and **maintaining** its laws and institutions in vigor and purity.*"
 - b. *Patriotism is the characteristic of a **good citizen**, the **noblest passion** that animates a man in the character of a citizen."*
 2. He said that a **patriot** is "*a person who loves his country, and zealously supports and defends it and its interests.*"
 3. As is usually the case, I think that Webster got it right.
- C. But when I **googled** the word, the internet computer defined a "*patriot*" only as – "*a person who vigorously supports his country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors.*"
1. There is nothing in that modern definition about "*service*," "*good citizen*" or "*noble passion*."
 2. And then on the next line, Google added, a patriot is "*an automated surface-to-air missile designed for early detection and interception of incoming missiles or aircraft.*"
 3. Aren't so many of today's patriots more like the missile than a freedom-loving, country-loving saint of God?
 4. Isn't the modern perception of a "*patriot*" someone covered with tattoos, camouflage clothing, riding a Harley with an American flag trailing behind, while bedecked with automatic weapons, ready to protect – **not** his **nation**, but his **personal property**?
 5. I'm not saying that Google's definition is wrong, despite its difference with Webster.
 6. And in fact, Google and the media are perhaps spot on in their depiction of **today's** kind of patriot.
 7. But what they depict doesn't at all look like Nehemiah, if he indeed was a Jewish "*patriot*."

II. Looking at Nehemiah as a patriot, what do we see?

- A. News was brought to him about the awful conditions of his nation so many miles away.
1. Nehemiah may have had a fanciful image of Judah and Jerusalem.
 - a. Perhaps, as a young man, he saw Ezra leading a great number of Jews toward the holy city.
 - b. He saw wealth, resources, high hopes, and enthusiasm heading down the road to the southwest.
 - c. And then in his imagination he saw these things implanted in his "*home and native land*."
 - d. He may have pictured the sunshine of peace and prosperity shining down on Jerusalem.
 2. But his perceptions were dashed by the report of Hanani.
 3. "*And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept.*"
- B. Can I rightfully say that Nehemiah's patriotism was lodged first and foremost in his heart?
1. Upon hearing the report, he didn't get angry – ranting and raving about persecution, injustice, loose immigration laws and a manipulated economy.
 2. He became melancholy – his heart broke – he got very sad – to the point of tears.
 3. He didn't reach for his AR-15; he sat down and his face fell between his knees.
 4. His patriotism may have been logical, but it wasn't rooted in his brain; rather poured out of his soul.
 5. It produced tears and prayers rather than letters to the editor about the wickedness of government.

- C. Please don't misunderstand, assuming that I can't see some similarities between this man & modern America.
1. There **are** some clear similarities, but there are differences too.
 2. Nehemiah said to Artaxerxes, *"Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste and the gates thereof are consumed with fire."*
 3. Should Americans be upset when aspects of this country's history are being destroyed – when statues of former heroes are being torn down? Of course they should be upset.
 4. When the honored sepulchres of our forefathers are desecrated, it should grieve us.
 5. Should this country's citizens be angry when the walls protecting her – such as the constitution, and immigration laws are laying waste?
 6. Shouldn't we all be in tears that so many districts, stores and homes are being ruthlessly destroyed and consumed with fire? Certainly we should.
- D. But I have to wonder – were all those armed men who were walking the streets of Coeur d'Alene two weeks ago, concerned about *"laws and institutions"*?
1. Were they moved by *"noble passion"*? Were they serving their country? Or were they serving themselves?
 2. Were they not more like *"automated surface-to-air missiles designed for early detection and interception of incoming missiles or aircraft"*?
 3. *"If we see one of those BLM people come to town with a torch in their hands we'll blast them into eternity."*
- E. What is patriotism? Is there such a thing as **godly** patriotism? Yes, I believe there is.
1. But I believe that it is more than a desire for freedom and the right to own weapons and to protect property.
 2. As we see in Nehemiah, it first involves honoring the sovereign God *"seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."*
 3. Without praising God for His blessings, and without trying to implement His will in our nation, our national patriotism is askew.
- F. Again, Nehemiah's patriotism didn't take him to his arsenal or to his weapons locker.
1. It didn't make his blood boil in rage; rather it was just the opposite – his blood instantly began running cold.
 2. The attack upon his brethren and nation didn't excite him with an instant desire to counter attack.
 3. When the bad news mixed with his patriotism his heart broke and he bowed before the sovereign King of Israel.
- G. Nehemiah was unlike Ezra in some ways, and yet they were united in their patriotism.
1. Ezra, Nehemiah's predecessor, was a priest – trained primarily as a teacher of the Word.
 2. *"Ezra (was a) priest, (a) scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel" – Ezra 7:11.*
 3. Nehemiah, although providentially serving in an important position, was a commoner.
 4. We aren't told that he had royal blood like Daniel; he was probably a regular guy.
 5. But the Lord had given him an important position which could be used for the Lord's glory.
- H. Gideon, too, had been a regular guy.
1. Doesn't Nehemiah remind you of some of Israel's judges, but without the weapons?
 2. Gideon was just a farmer, hiding out while trying to thresh a bit of grain to feed his family – until his Hanani came along.
 3. *"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.*
 - a. *And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.*
 - b. *And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"*

- I. Like Isaiah, Gideon, Jeremiah and so many others, Nehemiah heard *“the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”*
1. Nehemiah was a patriot in the sense that he was first and foremost a saint and servant of God.
 2. He was a man of two worlds – two kingdoms.
 3. In addition to being a Jew, his citizenship was in Heaven, from whence he was looking for his Saviour.
 4. And as such, his earthly patriotism was tempered by the Heavenly.
 5. He bowed in prayer months before he bowed before the king of Persia with his patriotic request.
- J. If it is God’s will that our country be devastated by storms – or terrorism – or foreign war – then Christian patriots will submit to that will, while praying for forgiveness and mercy.

III. What did Nehemiah’s patriotism make him do?

- A. *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*
1. *And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:*
 2. *Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.*
 3. *We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.”*
- B. If I might say, the difference between today’s average patriot & the patriot we see in Nehemiah is **spirituality**.
1. That difference might even be true to some degree in Webster’s definition.
 2. Today’s secular patriot has within his heart the age-old idea of entitlement.
 - a. *“Our forefathers came to this country and took it from the Indians, creating a country in their own image.*
 - b. *They made it into the greatest nation in the world, and I am reaping the benefits of their hard work.*
 - c. *If necessary I will die to defend my rights to ‘the great American dream.’”*
 3. I am not saying that there are no Christians among America’s patriots; I’m sure there are.
 4. But the Nehemian-type patriot is to be found in church on his knees **before** he’s seen on the street corner with his body armor and automatic weapon.
 5. And hey, if God is on his side, what does he need with body armor?
- C. Nehemiah acknowledged that the problem with destitute Judah was rooted in her citizens’ neglect of God.
1. There is a reason for the rioting in our streets, looting in our businesses and shootings in our homes.
 2. These are acts of lawless, godless people, many of whom are legal citizens of United States of America.
 3. Until America’s patriots are willing to join Nehemiah in his repentance before God, there will never really be any correction to our national situation.
 4. The real answer to this lawlessness is in **repentance**, not **armed defense** or a strategic **counter-attack**.
 5. *“I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.*
 6. *We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.”*
- D. When Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah what he would like to do, the patriot’s answer was – **“rebuild.”**
1. *“I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it.”*
 2. The answer to today’s problems isn’t to be found in the political slogan – **“Let’s make America great again.”**
 3. The answer is in **“Let’s make America godly.”**

4. While we are praying for an end to the rioting, looting and burning, we need to pray for the salvation of the looters, rioters and the political leaders, our police officers, and our religious leaders.
 5. As long as our nation deals very corruptly against God, and does not keep His commandments, nor His statutes, nor His judgments, we will remain scattered among the heathen, so to speak.
 6. *“But if we turn again to the Lord, and keep His commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.”*
- E. Notice that Nehemiah’s patriotism rendered him ready to make sacrifices.
1. Some people might have accused him of pandering to the enemy – with a job like his.
 2. But he did not in any way compromise his faith – any more than Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, or Azariah.
 3. It is true that he had a very comfortable job which probably paid quite well.
 4. But he was willing to leave it behind, risking his life in order to bless and protect his nation.
 5. I’m not saying that today’s patriot is not willing to risk his life, but Nehemiah actually committed himself to sacrifice.
 6. To him it was more than talk; it was action. He really did leave his cushy life and six figure income.
 7. He was ready to surrender his personal position, his future, everything for the sake of his nation.
- F. When Nehemiah eventually reached Jerusalem he found a variety of people there.
1. There were some good, godly people – like Ezra.
 2. They had been struggling for years with a few victories, but they were primarily filled with disappointment.
 3. The average Jew was struggling to survive from day to day – eking out a living as best he could.
 4. There was hardly any economy to work in.
- G. And then there were Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem.
1. We notice immediately that these people were not Israelites or Jews; they were foreigners.
 2. *“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”*
 3. Sanballat, according to *Isaiah*, was a Moabite – a sworn enemy of Israel, but at this point the man had power over Israel.
 - a. Who might we liken this man to in our society?
 4. Tobiah, was an Ammonite, and probably a particularly cruel man, because he had been a slave himself.
 - a. How did he rise from the gutter to a palace? Probably not by noble means.
 5. And there was Geshem an Arabian.
 6. These three men probably represented hundreds of others who were opposed to any spiritual or Jewish revival.
 7. This sounds like Israel today.
 8. Nehemiah’s opposition came from very vocal outsiders, who had far more power than they deserved.
- H. And what did the enemy call this potential revival?
1. *“What is this thing that ye do? will ye **REBEL** against the king?”*
 2. God’s people, as they endeavor to serve the Lord, are often considered to be rebels against an evil society.
 3. For example, when they desire to meet together to preach and to pray for the salvation, in the midst of an epidemic, they are accused of rebellion.
 4. When they call others to repentance, they are rebels against the public good.
 5. Contrary to the reality, the Biblical patriot is often considered to be just the opposite – unpatriotic.

- I. Not only did they call Nehemiah a rebel, notice how these men looked on the purpose for his patriotism.
1. *“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”*
 2. He sought the *“welfare”* of the children of Israel.
 3. The word means *“good”* – He sought the good of Israel – which means the blessings of God on the nation.
 4. And please notice that he sought the **welfare of the children of Israel** – at the expense of his own.
 5. It was not about protecting his rights, his property and his future – it was all about his country-men.
- J. Nehemiah’s patriotism moved him to move others – to motivate.
1. *“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me.”*
 2. I don’t know how, certainly the Lord was involved, but the words and tone of Nehemiah’s voice moved the down-hearted people.
 3. *“And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.”*
 4. Almost immediately, the people rallied together, nodded toward the leadership and wisdom of Nehemiah and began the work of restoring the walls of the city.
- K. Was it easy? It was not.
1. Satan’s triumvirate began to work against them almost immediately.
 2. But Nehemiah refused to give up, no matter how difficult things became.
 3. His patriotism refused to let him bow.
 4. And when the hearts of others began to fail, the patriotic heart of the Tirshatha reignited them.
 5. And 52 days later the walls were completed.
- L. The ultimate effect of Nehemiah’s love and patriotism had practical, national benefits.
1. But as we have seen and shall see even more clearly later, it began with the Lord and the spiritual condition of the nation and himself.
 2. That, I am afraid, is not a major part of the nationalism and patriotism which is often seen in America today.