

All right. Well, it is six o'clock,
so we're going to go ahead and get started with our study of
the book of Nehemiah. And we tonight are in chapter
seven. So bear with me. I'm going to
read a lot of names and numbers, but we Rejoice, this is the word
of the Lord. And so we'll hear what the Lord
has to say to us tonight from this passage. So let us turn
to Nehemiah chapter seven, beginning in verse one. This is the word
of the Lord. 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. "'I gave my brother Hanani and
Hananiah, "'the governor of the castle, charge over Jerusalem,
"'for he was more faithful and God-fearing man than many. "'And I said to them,
"'Let not
the gates of Jerusalem be opened "'until the sun is hot. "'And
while they are still standing guard, "'let them shut and bar
the doors. "'Appoint guards from among the
inhabitants of Jerusalem, "'some at their guard posts, "'and some
in front of their own homes. The city was wide and large,
but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt. Then my God put
into my heart
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 came up at the first and I found written in it, these
were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity
of those exiles from Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon had carried
in exile. They returned to Jerusalem and
Judah each to his town. They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua,
Nehemiah, Azariah, Ramiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispareth,
Bigvi, Nahum, Banah. The number of the men of the
people of Israel, the sons of Perosh, 2,172, the sons of Shephatiah,
372, the sons of Arah, 652, the sons of Pahath-Moab, namely the
sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818, the sons of Elam, 1,254, the
sons of Zatu, 845, the sons of Zechariah, 760, the sons of Benue,
648, the sons of Babi, 628, the sons of Asgad, 2,322, the sons
of Adonikim, 667, The sons of Bigvi, 2,067. The
sons of Aden, 655. The sons of Eter, namely Hezekiah, 98. The
sons of Hashem, 328. The sons of Bezzi, 324. The sons
of Herif, 112. The sons of Gibeon, 95. The men of Bethlehem and Netephah,
188. The men of Anathoth, 128. The
men of Baaz-maveth, 42. The men of Kiriath-jerim, Cheferirah
and Beroth, 743. The men of Ramah and Gebah, 621.
The men of Mikmas, 122. The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. the men of the other Nebo,
52,
the sons of the other Elam, 1,254, the sons of Haram, 320, the sons
of Jericho, 345, the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721, the
sons of Senna, 3,930, the priests, the sons of Judiah, namely the
house of Jeshua, 973, The sons of Emer, 1,052. The sons of Pasher, 1,247. The sons
of Haram, 1,017. The Levites, the sons of Jeshua,
namely of Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodah, 74. The singers, the

sons of Asaph, 148. The gatekeepers, the sons of Shalom, the sons of Eder, the sons of Talmud, the sons of Aqab, the sons of Hattatah, the sons of Shaboah, 138, the temple servants, the sons of Zihah, the sons of Hasephah, the sons of Teboeth, the sons of Keres, the sons of Sihah, the sons of Paden, the sons of Lebanon, the sons of Haggabah, the sons of Shalmal, the sons of Hainan, the sons of Gittel, the sons of Gehar, the sons of Reah, the sons of Rezan, the sons of Nakoda, the sons of Gazem, the sons of Uzzah, the sons of Pesaiah, the sons of Bessai, the sons of Maunim, the sons of Nephushim, sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakafah, the sons of Harher, the sons of Basileth, the sons of Mahita, the sons of Harsha, the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Tima, the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatepha. the sons of Solomon's servants, the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sofereth, the sons of Pereda, the sons of Jela, the sons of Darken, the sons of Gedel, the sons of Shephetai, the sons of Hatzal, the sons of Pokereth-Hazabayim, the sons of Ammon. All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392. The following were those who came up from Telmela, Telharsha, Cherub, Adon, and Emmer, but they could not prove their father's houses, nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel. The sons of Deliah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nechadah, 642, also the priests, the son of Hobiah, the sons of Hachaz, the sons of Barzillai, who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and was called by their name. These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there. So they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise. The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 245 singers, male and female. Their horses were 736, their mules, 245, their camels, 435, and their donkeys, 6,720. Now some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 derricks of gold, 50 basins, 30 priest garments, and 500 minas of silver. And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 derricks of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 derricks of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments. So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel lived in their towns. And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns. Well, this is the word of God.

Thanks be to God for his holy and inerrant word. Well, some of you may have had deja vu as we were reading that, and you perhaps should have, because it's the same list that we read, well, probably about six months ago from Ezra chapter two, and we'll talk about the significance of that in our second point. But first we want to

talk about

what is the significance of this passage at this point in the story of Nehemiah. We've all heard the phrase, right? It's not what you know, it's who you know, right? We understand that that can have both positive and negative effects. It's the truism that really applies to particular opportunities that might be made available, particularly maybe in the arena of employment, right? That there will be more opportunities available based on your social network, right? The people that you know, and

of course, who think well of you, rather than your qualifications, right? What you know. And we see that

played out in a number of ways in our society. And like I said, there can be both positive and negative aspects to that. And I don't want to get into

the details of the merits of that particular principle. But

I think it is particularly important, right? We're reading a genealogy here, which lists all the people of God who came out of Babylon. But we need to understand this

comes on the heels of a conflict that was happening in Jerusalem at the time, in Israel.

The conflict between Nehemiah and Tobiah. And we saw this last week, that Tobiah was a man who was well-connected within the community of God's people. In verses 17 through 19 of chapter 6, we read that, in those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to him. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shekeniah, the son of Aaron. His son, Johanan, had taken the daughter of Meshulam, the son of Berechias, his wife, "'Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence "'and reported my words to him, "'and Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.'"

When we read that in the context of what's going on in the book of Nehemiah, we see what is a real problem within the community of God's people. or at least can be, right? There

was this particular man, Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, but he had married into the right family, so to speak, although according to the scriptures, as an Ammonite, he shouldn't have been married to an Israelite, but he was. And, not only had he married well, but also his son had married well into another prominent family in the community. They had entered into financial

dealings with these prominent Israelite families, and so they were very well connected within the community of God's people, and were also, because of that, exercising great influence into the people of God. Nehemiah to them posed a threat

to this network that they had established. And so Tobiah and his associates continued to use that network against Nehemiah to threaten him, to make him, or at least try to make him afraid. And so we see something at work

here that's, You know, it didn't just happen in Nehemiah's day, it can happen and does happen even in our own day, doesn't

it? Where we have people who exercise great influence and

use these tactics because of their social network to have great influence in various aspects of society, but in particular, as we see here, even within the church. And so Nehemiah, as he is going on with his work that God had given him, of building the wall and establishing the city of Jerusalem under the authority of God's word. He is making a concerted effort as we turn to chapter seven to establish godly leadership within the community of God's people. And so as we look at chapter seven, as we talk about it, we're gonna really look at two key points. First, the necessity of calling qualified leadership, and secondly, the importance of a continuing community. So to begin with the necessity of calling qualified leadership, Leadership. We notice immediately in chapter seven, Nehemiah begins by trying to put the right people with the right qualifications into the right places for the good of the whole community. In verses one and two, it says, when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, the gatekeepers, the singers and Levites had been appointed, "'I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor "'of the castle charge over Jerusalem.'" But here's the key phrase, "'For he was a more faithful "'and God-fearing man than many.'" Right, that he selected him, not because he was his brother, He was, but because of his character, right? His spiritual discernment, his relationship with the Lord rather than his relationship with Nehemiah or his social standing within the community. And that's an important thing, isn't it, in the church, right? That we must always be careful to select leaders in the church that are, or at least for leadership positions in the church, right? Whether it's church officers or any position of leadership, not based on who they know, but because they exhibit the character qualities, the biblical qualifications for leadership in the church. That's not to say, right, well-connected people can't be leaders in the church, right? In fact, it's a wonderful thing when those two things go together, but the primary qualification to put people in positions of leadership is that they are men and women in the appropriate context or roles of character who love the Lord and love God's people. And of course, Scripture is very clear on what the characteristics are of godly leadership. We have wonderful passages in places like 1 Timothy 3, Titus chapter 1. I'm gonna read the Titus version, because we hear 1 Timothy 3 a lot, but Titus 1 is a great passage as well. It says this in Titus 1 beginning in verse 6, if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach, he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered. or drunkard, or violent, or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that what he may be able to give instruction

in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Of course, it's always a humbling thing to read the passages that talk about the qualifications for godly leadership or leadership in the church. And what always sticks out, isn't it, when we read these qualifications is that it has everything to do with character, biblical competence, right? holding firm to the trustworthy word as taught, that the word of God is our guide, that it has to do with those things, character and biblical competence, rather than the things that we often associate with leadership, confidence, influence, decisiveness, creativity, right? These are all things that we often associate with leadership. But interestingly enough, those aren't included in this list. These qualifications, not that you can't have those, it's just that those aren't included in this list. Another important passage that talks about the qualities necessary for leadership in the church, particularly elders, is in 1 Peter 5. When he says, when Peter is exhorting the elders, he says, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, he says, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly. as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. That God calls leaders in the church, not to be sort of demanding military type leaders, but to be, it says, shepherds. to the flock of God. Being examples by how we live of the flock of God. Again, these are all very humbling things to consider, especially if we've been entrusted as leaders within the church that God calls us to be shepherds And of course, this is important for all of us, right? As we keep in mind that, you know, these traits that are described here really should be in every Christian, but must be in every church leader. And of course, as a congregation, we have the responsibility to nominate people into those positions of leadership in our church that exhibits these qualities. And, you know, praise God that we do. But nevertheless, it's a good reminder that as we look at this passage, as we look at Nehemiah and his desire as he is setting up the community of God's people, that he has this principle in mind of establishing leadership that is qualified according to biblical standards. But also notice Nehemiah in this passage, he understands the need for delegation, right? He entrusts responsibilities to people other than himself. He doesn't try to do the work himself. He finds the right people to serve in the right capacities. Another important aspect, again, of biblical leadership. And so it really reminds you, doesn't it, of Moses, the story of Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro, in Exodus chapter 18, when Moses was sitting to judge all of the the disputes that had risen among the Israelites. And Jethro says to him

in Exodus

18, 17, what you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone.

Now obey my voice. I will give you advice. and God

be with you. You shall represent the people

before God and bring their cases to God. You shall warn them about

the statutes and the laws and make them known the way in which

they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able

men from all the people, men who fear God. who are trustworthy,

and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs

of hundreds of fifties and of tens." Again, right? character, competence, and a

shepherd's heart, also delegation, that these are the principles

that God has given us of biblical leadership. And of course, the

church, does not do well when all of the work falls to just

one or a few, but rather when every member understands these

responsibilities and understands the priority of character and

competence and of working together, using our gifts and talents for

the mutual good of the body and the glory of God, of course,

under the oversight of godly leadership in the church, right? Those who are called

to shepherd

the flock, to serve as examples of God. among the people of God

who love God and love God's people and meet the qualifications of

biblical leadership. That's what Nehemiah is pointing

us to in chapter seven. But a second point, that we'll

get to before we close is the importance of a continuing community. In verse five,

right, we read

about how Nehemiah found the book of the genealogy of those

who came up at the first and then proceeds to reiterate the

entire genealogy or list of those who had come from exile in Ezra

chapter two. And I should simply note there

are some differences between the two lists, between the one

here and the one in Ezra 2. And I only mention it quickly

because there are some who will point that out and say, well,

this shows the Bible is not trustworthy because these two lists aren't

exactly the same. But of course, that is not the

right response to the differences in the list, but we should answer

the question. So why are these differences

that exist? Well, it's important to understand,

first of all, that the ancient standards of historiography and

record keeping were not as exact as ours. It was common in those

days to use rounded numbers and occasionally omit names from

genealogies and other lists. Not to mention it was very possible

that different methods were used in accounting for the number

of women and children. But what is very significant

in comparing these two lists is that they both have the same

grand total, 42,360. And so all that is simply to

say we can be confident that there is an explanation for these

apparent discrepancies, and the Bible is completely trustworthy

and true. But what is the importance of

this list? Is this just the way they did it back then? We just read genealogies every once in a while. Well, it was important for one thing for Nehemiah to make a current list since the work of rebuilding was finished, and so creating a new list a current list, a record of people with whom the community would move forward. It was important for him to identify who that was, right? To update the roles, we might say, in modern vernacular, the membership roles. But the significance of repeating the original list is important because it provides a connection with those who had gone before them. As they read the list, they would have heard the names of those who had gone before them. They would have recalled the stories of God's work in their lives. And really that is one of the great values, isn't it? Of genealogies and of church history. When we remember those who've gone before us, the stories of those who have come and whom God has preserved through many toils and troubles and trials. It's important, isn't it, as God's people to remember that we are not the first generation of Christians that has lived on the earth. We need to remember that many of the difficulties and challenges that we might face in the world, though perhaps unique to our time in which we live, Others have gone through similar trials and difficulties and persevered by God's grace. A beautiful example of this is Hebrews 11, who the hall of faith, as it's called, how we walk through these different people of faith who've gone before us. And then of course, ultimately pointing us to the author and perfecter of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it's a great value as God's people to remember the rich heritage that we have, that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. And because we stand on their shoulders, we can see more clearly and go forward with the confidence that the same God who worked in those people's lives and accomplished his purposes is the same God who is at work in our lives and will accomplish his purposes in the church today. And of course we have that confidence, not because we stand on the shoulders of others, but because we stand on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ. The chief cornerstone, the stone that the builders rejected, who for us and for our salvation, not only came down from heaven and was made man, but suffered, died, buried, and third day rose again from the dead. who ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. From there, he will come to judge the living and the dead as we confess every Lord's day. And of course, this is the one to whom we must be truly connected by faith, trusting in him alone and what he has done for our only hope of eternal life. And so let us not only remember those who've gone before us, but let us look to Christ by faith, the one who is the only connection by which we will truly

stand on the last day. All right, well, let us go now into a time of prayer. If we could, let's just begin by praising God for who he is, his faithfulness to us. And then we'll go into a time of interceding for some of the folks we have on our sheet, but let's just spend some time praising God together.