

## The Initial Stages of a Great Reformation<sup>1</sup>

Nehemiah 2:9-20

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **I. Reformations often have a small beginning and are slow to develop.**

- A. Who expected such great things to spring from a meeting of Nehemiah with the king?
- B. Who expected such great results of one man's visit to Jerusalem?
- C. Cf. the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31, 32).

#### **II. Reformations require vigorous leaders.**

- A. Nehemiah...
  - 1. Occupied a commanding social position.
  - 2. Had intense enthusiasm (cf. Jer. 20:1-9).
  - 3. Possessed unwearied energy and perseverance.
    - a. His enthusiasm was not fitful but patient.
    - b. "We never saw Alexander Campbell idle. This is the main key to his greatness."<sup>2</sup>
- B. See the reformation work of Calvin, Zwingli, Stone, Campbell, etc.

#### **III. Reformations should be preceded by deliberation.**

- A. Blind courage that counts no costs is short-lived.
- B. Nehemiah...
  - 1. Forestalled opposition (v. 10; Eph. 6:11). Expect to be assailed.
  - 2. Carefully examined the work to be done (v. 12). Accurate knowledge helps judgment and stimulates courage.
  - 3. Weighed the matter before proceeding to action (v. 11).
- C. Cf. Luke 14:25-33.

#### **IV. Reformations almost certainly provoke opposition.**

- A. This often comes from a misconstruction of the nature of the work (v. 19).
- B. This often comes from an aversion to self-sacrifice.

#### **V. Reformations need cooperation.**

- A. It works as a security against discouragement (v. 18).
  - 1. Workers in isolation are liable to discouragement.
  - 2. Cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
  - 3. Jesus sent His disciples out by twos (Luke 10:1).

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from lesson by same title found in *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Nehemiah*, chapter I to VI edited by W.H. Booth, J. H. Goodman, and S. Gregory (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, reprinted 1974), pp. 50-52. Adapted by Andy Kizer (09/21/2012).

<sup>2</sup> Tolbert Fanning, "Sketches on the Life of Alexander Campbell, No. 2," *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 8, No. 21 (May 22, 1866), p. 325.

- B. It works as a safeguard against organized opposition. Good men must present a united front to the forces of wickedness and opposition.

**VI. Reformations cannot succeed without God's help.**

- A. When every precaution has been taken, and all available human aid has been enlisted, still all depends on God for success.
- B. The forces of evil are strong for the unaided powers of man.
- C. The blessings of God compensate for any amount of opposition (cf. Rom. 8:31; 1 John 4:4).