

THE GIFT OF LEADERSHIP

Romans 12:8

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This Sunday and next Sunday, we're going to be finishing up verse 8 of Romans chapter 12 and let Christmas Sunday be devoted exclusively to a Christmas message.

We have been learning in this passage of God's Word that each of us have been given a gift of grace. And God has not called us to be like one another, but like the Lord, and to each individually express the gift of grace which God has called us to. We're to think soberly on these things and analyze our own lives—which gift or gifts He has imparted to us.

Verse 8, especially, we single in on the phrase today that is found in the middle of the verse: "He who gives aid, with zeal." This giving of aid, literally the word which stands behind it can be translated, "to stand before." It means to lead, to manage, to facilitate. It's used elsewhere in 1 Timothy 3 to describe bishops and deacons—that they should manage or lead their households and children.

So what we have in actuality is Paul describing a gift of grace which God imparts to the body: the gift of leadership. Just as we know that teaching and prophecy and exhortation are necessary—and also serving and giving—we know that without leadership there cannot be a proper functioning of the Body. For when leadership is absent, a need cannot be met. There are problems which are unsolved. And the body of Christ disintegrates into frustration and incapability of doing that task which God has called it to do.

Today I'm going to look at three phases of leadership from the Scripture—one in Exodus 18, another in Luke 22, and a third in the Book of Nehemiah. We'll just briefly highlight each area to show the importance of leadership.

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I. When we look at Exodus 18 we see how, in God’s ancient people—His covenant people Israel—how much the gift of leadership was necessary in the formation of these people so they could accomplish the tasks which God had called them to do.

When we look at Exodus 18:13–27, we see a leader over a people that maybe numbers some two million plus. We know that they had at least 603,000 men, according to the Numbers account and that didn’t include women and children. So if we want to pose a guess, we would say a multitude of some two million. We have, in effect, a dictatorial sort of leadership, a one-man kind of leadership over a whole group of people. That man is Moses, whom God called to be a leader. But when his father-in-law, Jethro, sees Moses bringing this multitude out of Egypt and camped at Sinai, Jethro sits down to observe some leadership-administrative habits of Moses. And he sees that there are two fundamental problems in the style of leadership that was being offered.

The first problem in leadership that Jethro noticed was that Moses sat. He sat listening to the people as they brought to him their problems. I got to figuring that if Moses was a really sharp counselor and had supernatural ability from the Holy Spirit to read everybody’s problems—listen for a minute or two, give a diagnosis, work out a psychodrama for them and send them on their way—it would take him about ten minutes a person. So let’s say he was that super counselor who could solve all the problems in ten minutes. That gave him the opportunity of seeing sixty people a day, working ten-hour days, after which he returned to his tent—fatigued out, unable to rise until the next morning, when he confronted sixty people with their sixty problems again. At the end of ten days, he’d managed to go through six hundred people this way. At the end of a month, he had managed to cover 1,800 people. And at the end of one year, without a day off (as was instructed in the Law—to take a rest on the Sabbath—but suppose he hadn’t taken a day off) at ten minutes per person—super counselor that he was a solving all their problems—he was able

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to cover 22,000 people, approximately. Meaning at the end of one hundred years, he'd finally gotten to the two million people with all of their problems, the good leader that he was. The only problem was that at the end of one hundred years, he had a whole new generation to cope with. And while sitting listening to all of these problems, Jethro knew—common sense—that he couldn't give time to broad leadership direction. That he had no time to think or pray. And that he had no criteria for separating the important situations from the unimportant situations. And Jethro simply said, "Moses, a basic problem of your leadership is that you'll wear out if you keep doing this. Perhaps Moses here had a leadership complex that, "Unless I am participating in every decision, unless I am calling the shots on everything, no one else has the wisdom I have." Leaders can easily fall into this sort of temptation trap—to feel that unless the problem comes to them and they solve it, no one else could quite look at it the same way.

Jethro noticed a second problem with Moses. That is, the people stood. Moses was sitting, but the people were standing. They were standing with important problems, many of them. Someone was standing in line ready to bring to Moses the complaint that was important to them: "There's too much noise in the next tent. Every night, two o'clock in the morning, they wake me up arguing over there." Another person is waiting to bring Moses their problem: "He stole my goat. I really believe that's my goat he has." Another person might say: "They won't keep their children in their tent. They're always coming over to my tent." All of these problems are important. They're vital to the people involved. The question is, "Are they important enough to bring to Moses?"

So Jethro's diagnosis is if the people of Israel are going to be successful in the resolution of problems and the meeting of needs and the ongoing direction which God needs to bring to them, Moses is going to have to implement a system of administration. So what Jethro tells Moses is he should do four things as the leader of all the people.

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A. His fundamental task is to represent the people to God. He needs God's perspective on the people. And if he doesn't get up to Sinai and spend some time with the Lord—and really spend some time alone in meditation with overall direction and leadership principles in mind—this whole enterprise is going to collapse. So he needs to represent, be a priest of the people before God.

B. The second thing Moses needed to do, Jethro said, is to teach the principles and practices of living. Jethro says, "You must teach them the way in which they must walk and you must teach them what they must do" (Exodus 18:20).

C. A third thing Jethro said is, "You must delegate responsibility and authority [see verse 21]. No delegating just responsibility without authority. Because if you delegate responsibility without authority and let people skip over the delegated, responsive person and jump back up to you, then you've ripped out the responsibility from under them. Delegate responsibility and authority." Here is where two things must happen. The people—and there were leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifty, leaders of tens, four levels of leadership in this group—each leader must be willing to accept the responsibility of leadership that is given to them. Because if they shirk that responsibility then it just gets kicked up to the next level, and ultimately back up to Moses, and compounds the problem.

So in the body of Christ—if God calls you with the gift of leadership to function in a special place in the body of Christ—what a leader is is a person who sees that other people are needed to get the work done. Moses' basic problem was that he thought if he didn't do it all, the work wouldn't get done. So God puts leaders into position, but if they don't assume responsibility then things go back to their original state.

Another thing which must happen: The people must regard the appointed leaders as called of God and important. So that if it's a problem of a goat getting into the next tent, they don't feel

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that they're cheated if they call on the leader of the ten instead of being able to get all the way to Moses with the problem. They feel there's a delegated responsibility that is there.

D. Moses, finally, is told to be a court of appeal. When the problems become too big even for the leaders of thousands, they're to come to him.

I mention the example of Moses because I feel there's a lot of wisdom for how even a church should function. I must confess that I feel my gifts primarily lie in the field of teaching and preaching—that, primarily, God did not call me to be an administrator. It happens that with a pastor, that role sometimes seems to come with it. So if things are not as organized as they should be within this Body, then maybe God is saying to you, "There's a need for more leadership coming from the Body in that particular direction."

I was preparing, recently, a welcome. We're designing a new visitor's brochure that we hope will really be attractive and will let a newcomer to the church sort of know what the opportunities are in the church service. But I had the assignment of writing the pastor's letter of welcome. I didn't want to do a letter like that but wanted to somehow get across what the Lord may want to accomplish in our church body. So I prayed, "Lord, give me some insight as to what should be written here." All of a sudden, Psalm 1 came to mind: "Blessed is the man who's planted like the tree...who's planted by the waters...whose leaf shall not wither. It shall bring forth in due season..." I thought, "In this terribly mobile, changing culture, that's what we need—planted people." So I got to thinking of this beautiful, big oak tree that had been there for years and years. Then I thought of the tumbleweed that grows across the desert. I started writing about the tumbleweed: "Consider the tumbleweed. It does not bring forth any life. It's not green. It does not flourish. It doesn't bring forth flowers. It's just driven. Wherever the wind drives it, there it goes." What I was trying to say is, "Don't be a tumbleweed." Then I wanted to use as an illustration the oak, the mighty oak. When it's planted, it's there years and years. And it grows. I

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got to thinking how our church keeps changing, with people moving in and moving out. That's not southern California. Generally, most people don't stay here long enough to be an oak tree. So what would be a fitting contrast with the tumbleweed. The Lord popped into my mind: a vine. A vine is easily transferred, but wherever it's transferred it sinks in its roots. It quickly makes attachment. It keeps on growing so it's bigger, better, flourishing, flowering. So the Lord said, "We, as a church, seek not to be a fence against which tumbleweeds are driven and collect, but a vineyard in which vines grow and flourish." If vines are to grow and flourish then it must mean that there is a kind of a ministry within the body of Christ where we are (not just in times of worship) where we're just front and center, and our attention is on God and the word.

But there needs to be moments when we interface in our relationship and our association with one another. One of my dreams which has never yet come true is to somehow geographically quadrant off all of our congregation so there are fellowship groups in each geographical district, with leaders in each so there is time for fellowship periodically, time for prayer, and the like. And that would kind of be organized. There's an awful lot of unorganized fellowship which has got to be part of the body of Christ. There's got to be a lot of spontaneous things happening. But I think that would be great. So I want to plug in Acts 18 to put a theological base on what I really believe would be pleasing to the Lord if we could do.

II. Having looked at Exodus 18 in ten minutes, let's jump to another situation to look, from Jesus' perspective, at what leadership is not.

In Luke 22:24–27 the setting is the communion, the Last Supper of the Lord with the disciples. In Luke's Gospel, he notes that there was a dispute that arose after the taking of the supper. We know that, from John's Gospel, that there was a dispute before they ate. In Luke's Gospel, we see it arising after. There may be just an editorial rearrangement on Luke's part here in the text, but the situation in the room of the Last Supper is this: "Also a dispute arose among them as to

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which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:24–27, NIV).

Here, the Lord is recognizing the need for leadership in His body, even as there was a need for leadership in the Old Testament community. But He’s telling us what leadership is not.

That reminds me of a story I ran across this week from the fable teller Aesop, who tells the story of the frogs down at the pond who wanted a king. They bothered Jupiter so much about their request that he finally threw a log in the pond, and for a while the frogs were happy with their new leader. Soon, however, they discovered that they could jump up and down on their new leader, run all over him, and he offered no resistance. Not only that he had no direction or purpose in his own behavior, but floated from place to place across the pond, a practice which exasperated the frogs who were wanting strong leadership. So back to Jupiter they went. They complained about their log leader and appealed for much stronger administrative oversight.

Jupiter was weary of the complaining frogs, so he gave them a stork who stood tall above the members of the group and gave all the appearance of being a great leader. The frogs were happy with their new situation and their leader stork. Their leader stalked around the pond, making great noises and attracting much attention. But the frogs’ joy soon turned to sorrow and they began to panic, for in a short time they learned that this new leader ate up all his subordinates.

That doesn’t have too much to do with Luke 22:24, but I thought it was an interesting example of the wrong kind of leadership.

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Three categories of leadership Jesus rules out, in addition to Aesop's, too—the drifting leader and the eating-your-subordinate leader. The three kinds of leadership Jesus rules out in His body are leadership that is based upon political power play.

A. In verse 24, “A dispute arose among them over which of them was to be the greatest.” No doubt there were reasons for this. Three of the disciples appear, from time to time, to be especially singled out by Jesus for additional learning and responsibility. Peter, James, and John in the room of Jairus, for example. Peter, James, and John taken up to the Mount of Transfiguration. They would have a tendency to come back and tell the other disciples that they must be more spiritual than them, so they must be going to get a greater share of the kingdom which is coming. Peter would say, “Yeah, but I’m the only one that was sent to catch the fish that had the temple tax coin in its mouth. I knew the Lord’s miracles in a special manifestation that none of you know. I must be the greatest.” They were having a dispute with one another, which literally means rivalry. When the word is used, it describes not an accidental falling into a dispute from time to time, but a habitually contentious spirit. So they were going at this for some time. “Who’s the greatest?” And they were arguing right at the very first communion. Before the Church ever had its first organized membership, before the first deacon board was ever appointed, and before the first building committee ever sat to work. Before the Church knew any of these things, they knew how to fight. And these disciples knew how to fight with one another. Why is it they were fighting? Because they were looking on a job as a position—a tag to go with their name—rather than as a medium through which they could serve. So it became a political contention as to who would be the greatest. This is a subtle trap of Christian organizations because it’s so easy to fall into the standards of the world and lapse into the trap. To think that if you’re a little bit higher on the administrative scale, you’re a little bit more spiritual and you’re

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entitled to the finer accretions of life. Like other people stay in second-class hotels, but you stay in first-class hotels if you're the leader of the group and that kind of thing.

I remember once reading a book called, *How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious*. It's a classic satire on the ecclesiastical trap that people get into in Christian circles when they're engaging in this political power play.

Does it bother you to see that there are carnal believers even in leadership roles? It bothers me tremendously. But I recognize that that's part of life. And when the New Testament speaks to us, it never gives this glossy view of the saints—that they're all perfect and never make mistakes.

This is why we need to be so candid about our own lives. The New Testament writers and people who follow Christ didn't hide their shortcomings or the shortcomings in the Church. So to our shame, we make this confession that we see it from time to time. You get in this trap of competing as to who is going to be the highest and the best—power plays.

John, when he's writing the third epistle of John—a short little letter—talks about a leader in the church in Asia Minor by the name of Demetrius who, the King James Version says, “liked to have preeminence among them.” The RSV says, “who liked to put himself first,” and the Living Bible says, “who liked to push himself forward as the leader of the Christians there.” Jesus rejects this as a whole method and style of leadership. If your goal in leadership is to have a political power play so that the Lord can look down from heaven or other saints can look at you and say, “He's the greatest,” Jesus says, “Watch out!” That kind of leadership is not doing any good in the Body.

B. The second kind of leadership which the Lord rejects is leadership which is authoritarian control. There is a difference between being authoritarian and functioning with authority. The disciples functioned with authority, but never as authoritarians: “My word is law, and I don't need to give any answers for it to you or anybody else. I'm above other believers. I'm a step, or a

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pedestal, beyond.” Jesus says in Luke 22:25: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.” This word “lordship” is often used of Christ to describe His lordship. But whenever the term “lordship” is used in reference to Christian leaders in the New Testament, it is used in a derogative or negative sense. Like Peter, in writing the elders in 1 Peter 5:3, tells them not to domineer over the flock in which God has put them in charge. Jesus says, “You’re not to be like the pagan rulers who exercise such iron-handedness over subordinates. Nor are you to have a style of leadership which is authoritarian and does things for people in order to put them in your debt. You’re not to be called benefactors.” That’s the idea. I do something for you, and you’re in my debt. So, therefore, the next time I need something, you pay off the debt that you owe. This is strictly what’s being done in the world of politics. What the Lord is saying is, “Don’t be like this as a leader.”

I’ve come across a phrase I like that’s a constant reminder to me because there are moments when we all tend to get puffed up. “If God would not endure a proud angel in heaven, you may be sure He won’t endure a proud preacher either.” Or a proud saint. We slip into a subtle trap. Even as a pastor, I try to consciously keep away from my language the phrase “my church.” This is not my church. This is God’s church. And it’s not your church. It’s the church which the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased with His own blood. Therefore, He owns it. It is His—lock, stock, and barrel. If I even lapse into the subtle thinking that it’s my church or our church, we’re taking away something or trying to take away something which legitimately belongs to Jesus Christ.

We hold very loosely all of that which the Lord has entrusted to us because we’re stewards and not owners. Therefore, we cannot operate in authoritarian control. But we can act with authority.

C. A third thing which the Lord dismisses as a style of leadership in His body is leadership which is status symbol type of leadership (verse 27). Jesus acknowledges that the greater person, from the worldly point of view, is the person who sits at the table. If you don’t believe this, go

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into Coco's for lunch, and you have a feeling of superiority to the gal who's serving you. At least in that role you're the served, and the gal or guy who's serving you is the server. You have a dominant position in that moment. But Jesus says in His kingdom, "I'm among you as one who serves." He didn't look at His leadership role as one which accorded Him a status symbol so that when they put the place cards on the dinner table, the Lord got the first place. He said, "If you go to a banquet, instead of going to the head of the table, go to the foot of the table." He links together privilege with responsibility. The greater leader you are, the less status you should feel around you and the more of a servant you should be.

I think in regard to that, the chain of command is very popular. It goes from top to bottom. What Jesus does in verse 27, however, of Luke 22 is He flips it. He has himself as the servant. Then He is supporting the husband, who is supporting the wife, who is supporting the children. I think with a lot of our leadership diagrams and the like, if we really want to understand how New Testament ministry functions we ought to note that it is not the purpose of New Testament leadership to rise to the top of the Body, or the top of the pyramid, so that everybody down below is supporting them and contributing to what they're doing. But it's the purpose to flip it, if you will, so that the apex is down and it's the function of leadership to get underneath, supportive of everyone so that the goals of the body of Christ are being fulfilled. Then it becomes oriented toward ministry of the Body at large, rather than the puffing up or the leadership of an individual in particular.

So the Lord, in looking at leadership styles within His body, rejects this kind of notion that there is to be within His body political power play or authoritarian, iron-fisted control of people or status symbol type of leadership.

In the Book of Acts, it's very fascinating that when the deacons are being chosen to serve tables, the apostles in Acts 6 didn't use the phrase, "We're too good to wait on tables." But they simply

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said, “There’s got to be a division of responsibility in the Body. It seems that God has called us to preach and to perform healings. We just don’t have enough time for these other ministries. You serve tables, and we’ll serve the Word.” And the word that’s used for “serve” is the same in both instances. You serve tables, and we’ll serve the Word. They saw their role, even though they were ministers of the Word, as servants. And waiting on tables was not beneath their dignity to do. It was simply a practical division of time, that God had given them the gift of grace in a particular area in which now they must function.

Having looked at Exodus’ example of leadership and the kinds of leadership styles which Jesus rejects, I want to do one additional thing in regard to leadership and just momentarily look at what the gift of leadership involves. How do you know that you’re a leader? And if you are called with the gift of leadership, what kinds of elements are involved in the functioning of that gift?

We have sought, through this series on motivational gifts in Romans 12, to select an example from the Scriptures, of personalities which finely and best expresses the functioning of this gift. I would have to think that in all the Scriptures—and I’m deliberately using concrete examples other than the Lord, because the Lord shows to the highest degree all of these gifts. He is the Preacher. He is the Teacher. He is the Exhorter. He is the Server. He is the Leader. He is the Giver. He is the Giver of Mercy. All of these things, He finely demonstrates. What I’ve tried to do is anchor the illustrations, also, in persons throughout the Scripture, skipping through both the Old and New Testament.

III. An example of leadership style which beautifully manifests having the gift of leadership is the Old Testament example of Nehemiah.

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There are five qualities of Nehemiah's leadership which seems to me is a paradigm, or an example, of how New Testament leadership is meant to function. How do you know that you're a leader?

A. One thing that occurs right away as you read Nehemiah is that Nehemiah, as the leader, had the awareness of need in the Body. An awareness of a need. Nehemiah himself was comfortable. He was high up in the King of Persia's administration. He could have lived the rest of his life comfortable. He didn't need to lead, as such, for his own motivation. But when he looked at the body of believers, in this case the old saints, he saw that the city of Jerusalem was in ruin and he was gripped in his spirit about this need. In fact, he was so gripped that he sat down and wept for days. He had an overwhelming sense of need.

I really believe that leadership must start at that point. If leadership starts from a point of, "What honor can I get from doing this?" or, "What new title will this allow me to have so I can put it in my resume?" or something like this, it is an invalid type of leadership because it's rising from the flesh. It's carnal by its very outset. But true leadership finds a need. And the Spirit begins to talk and say, "There's a need!"

And there are all kinds of needs in a Body such as this. There are needs in the Sunday School department. There are needs in the children's department. You may see in the bulletin a need today for ministry to three- and four-year-olds. That requires the gift of leadership. If you've ever led a group of three- and four-year-olds, you're going to need the gift of leadership.

Somewhere in your spiritual consciousness, if the gift of leadership is to develop, God is going to put within you that sensitivity to need. And you're going to begin reaching out to that need and saying, "How can that need be met?"

I like a phrase that has been used by a person who had a great deal of impact on my life spiritually who said, "You are often part of the answer to your prayers." God uses you. The need

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that is laid upon your heart, God will often use you as a channel to reach. You're praying, for example, for the salvation of someone whom you dearly love. God may then speak to you and say, "I want to use you! Write a letter. Take over a cake! Do something that will be a ministry to that person." There's an awareness of need in the Body.

B. The second quality of leadership that Nehemiah exhibited is he began to develop a solution to the need. Until the time we see a solution, we're just really intercessors. We just continue to wait and intercede. Nehemiah does not appear to have a fully-formed idea right at the outset of what all the solution involved. What he did, though, was he started moving. He said to the king, when the king asked him what he needed, "Give me a pass to the keeper of the forest. I'm going to need some trees. I've got to rebuild the walls and the gates" (Nehemiah 2:8). At least he knew that he needed trees. That's, at the outset, how much he'd gotten on the solution. He waits for a further revelation of the solution when he gets to Jerusalem. Then, at night, when nobody's around, he kind of sneaks out and rides around the city on his donkey with few trusted people and surveys what is needed.

After his survey, he begins to find the solution. He's going to have to organize everybody into small groups and put them to work on various parts of the walls and have different families build different gates, and the like. But the solution came to him as he got moving. He got one clear glimpse of what he should do, then the other began to unravel.

I really feel this is another tremendous quality of leadership: that if you just simply wait for all the solution that you may know from beginning to end, you may never get there. You cannot guide a bicycle when it's standing still. The bicycle has got to get moving. And Nehemiah started to get moving through the king's forest, got the trees. Then other solutions began coming to him as he was moving.

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As he began to develop as a leader, he's, of course, exercising confidence. He finds he does have the solution. Good leadership has a confidence from the Lord. "This can be done!" A good leader is not pessimistic. Nehemiah doesn't look over the city walls and say, "There's so much here to do with this little scrabble of people. I'm not sure it can get done."

"Those three-year-old kids are going to run over me if I go into the three-year-old class," or whatever. You're not going to get a whole lot done if your basic attitude is, "It can't be done, but I'm willing to throw myself on the altar and try." God doesn't want you to throw yourself on the altar and try. He wants to give you the solution to get whatever need that you can address done. A leader must, with the solution, have the confidence that the solution is there and the job's going to get done.

C. The third thing which Nehemiah did is as a leader, once he saw the need and once he had the solution, he began to mobilize resources to meet the need. This is a fundamental difference between a leader and a server. Both gifts have been employed in Romans 12.

We looked previously at the gift of serving. I think when we looked at the gift of serving, we used Martha as an illustration. Martha was not a good leader. She was a good server. She couldn't get her kitchen organized, so she tried to get other people to help her. She didn't have good tact with people. She came to the Lord and said, "Lord, make Mary help me." That is a lousy way to get somebody to help you, when you've got them under the threat of guilt and condemnation and everything. "Lord, this sister of mine is so lazy! Would you get her off her duff and have her help me?" Very poor leadership.

But Nehemiah comes along, and what does he do? He's not a server. He doesn't say, "I'm just going to go get a pick and shovel, and I'm going to work on the walls myself." If he's going to have to work on the walls by himself, it's going to take forever to get the walls built back up. He's going to have to mobilize and organize. So he does this. He finds men and women and

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materials. And while it would be easier sometimes for a leader to do things himself or herself, the leader must not fall into that trap, but continue to exploit the resources of other persons.

Of course, involved in the role of leadership is the whole thing of, “To him who has, more will be given.” As you exercise any gift, you’re given more capability for exercising the gift.

D. A fourth quality of a leader from the example of Nehemiah is that the leader learns to take pressure and to persevere under opposition and through problems. There is no thing that is ever going to be done which is significant in the world, or certainly significant in the kingdom of God, that can be done without going through trial and severity. When you’re tested, you wonder, “Can this really be brought off?” Nehemiah was tempted without and within. He was tested by the jeers of the Ammonites and the Samaritans, who were trying to trick him and discourage him and threaten him and bring all kinds of things against him. On occasion, he was even fouled up by people in the city. He had some very wealthy merchants in the city that were taking advantage of the fact that the poor work people were coming in from the countryside and they didn’t have enough to get their daily bread. So what they were doing was selling their own children as a mortgage, a guarantee, a first trust deed on the loan which they owned. They were the guarantee. These people were taking advantage of other people. Nehemiah had to straighten that mess out. A leader, as God gives a person the gift of leadership, says, “I’m not going to dry up at the first outbreak of the sun coming down with its fierce heat on me. God is going to give me the ability to persevere.”

You can almost begin to separate the gifted leaders of the Spirit from the non-gifted leaders because when the opposition and the temptation really comes in strong, then the person who is not a leader just really wants to get out, bail out of the situation. “I didn’t ask for this. I wanted to be a leader. I don’t want to go through this.”

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It's striking to me that every time we go through a rough spot in the church where something isn't falling together as I like, and I really believe that God has blessed our Body with a great deal of love, so when I say rough spot I'm not talking about enmity between the saints (that I really haven't seen; but just discouraging things happen), that is the precise moment when my temptation not to persevere comes in. "Maybe there's something else I could do. I could teach on television, or I could write a book." I'm glad that we have spouses in our circles of ministry—most ministers are married—because you can resign to your wife much easier than you can resign to a congregation. She never takes you seriously, and she knows that you're going to bounce back the next day. A leader has to persevere through it.

E. That brings us to a fifth quality in Nehemiah. As a leader, he finishes what he begins. With God's help, we're going to get this done and we're not going to let up until the job is done.

We're not going to leave it half-finished, three-quarters finished, only partly begun. It's going to be done.

Paul has this same thing going on with him. He says at the end of his life, "I have finished the race" (2 Timothy 4:7). He never said that in any of his letters before that. Even when he writes the Philippians in his first imprisonment he's not saying, "I have finished." He's ready to go if that's necessary, but he has that sense of completeness and finality in 2 Timothy. "I have finished the assignment that God has given to me. And I know that thereafter there is laid up for me a crown of reward."

If I take these five qualities in Nehemiah and relate them to Jesus, I find all the qualities which are exhibited in God's great saints are, in their finest example, exhibited in Christ. When Christ comes beginning as a babe in Bethlehem, He finds in the human race the walls broken down. He finds a need. That's what motivates Him to come. Not because He needs some new title. In fact, in John 17, when He's praying to the Father, He simply says, "Glorify Thou Me with the glory

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which I had with Thee before the world began.” The striking thing about that is that Jesus is not asking for any more than He had before He came to earth. Just restore the glory I had before I came. He gets nothing out of being our Savior except us. We are His reward.

So He comes from the standpoint of need. He sees in our lives, individually, the walls broken down. You may be here today and the walls are broken down in your life. Walls of relationship. Walls which have been broken down through habits and bondage which are not of God. Jesus looks at your need, and that’s why He came. He came to minister to your need and to mine. If there is a need, certainly we see in Jesus that He has a solution. His solution is to die in our place. To pay the penalty that we would be paying so that we can be changed from bondage unto liberty. So that we who don’t have life and don’t have freedom can have life and can have freedom. He has the solution. His solution is His own blood. His solution is the cross. His solution is His resurrection. He has confidence that this is going to work. That He does lay down His life for His sheep. And that He’s going to have many children, younger brothers and sisters who will acknowledge the Fatherhood of God and himself as Savior.

Jesus mobilized resources to meet the need of the world. What was one of the things He was doing continually in His ministry? Drawing persons to himself that He might train a committed core of leadership that it might go to the ends of the world and proclaim the gospel. He was materializing resources to meet the need which He saw and proclaim the solution which He brought.

And He had the strength to persevere under great trouble and affliction. The strength to win our salvation. And the strength to finish. “It is finished!” He cried on the cross, and He meant it (John 19:30). Not that He said, “*I* am finished,” but “*It* is finished!” the work which He came to do was accomplished. The walls had been rebuilt and through faith as Jesus cries out on the cross He is able to see the broken-down walls in your life before you came to Him and He’s able to see

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by faith the completed walls of your personality and the restored nature of your life which He will bring into existence through His solution to our problems. He sees this through faith. That's why even in the New Testament perspective we can be described as justified, holy righteous in God's presence even though we look around and see a gate or two that is ajar. Jesus says, I've got the design. It's right here on the blueprint. We're just taking time building it. The process has started.

If you've never turned your life over to the leader whom Hebrews calls the pioneer of our faith, you should do that. He has taken the lead. As you follow in His lead the Lord then begins at some point in your journey to call you to not just follow Him but to be sent out. To do something in His name. This sent out may include the gift of leadership. If God has called you to be a leader in the body at whatever level, Paul is saying in Romans 12:8 do it with diligence. Persevere. Get at it. Quit sitting down. Move. Accomplish what I've called you to do. That the body might be well functioned as I have intended.