

The Work Is Begun **Nehemiah 3:1-32**

INTRO:

When the Lord designed His church, He designed it in a unique way. He designed it so that everyone who is a part of the church has a part of the ministry. Some have lost sight of that original blueprint. They see church as a spectator sport. The blueprint the Lord Jesus drew for us in His word is that of a body. This body is a well-conditioned, well-functioning body, in which each member or part functions the way it was designed and the result is blessing and increase.

Too often, the burden of function is placed on the few. Because of this the few are overworked and the body is injured and cannot function as it should. What has all of this to do with Nehemiah? Plenty. In **Nehemiah 3** the work on the walls was begun. We also find a list of names which are unfamiliar to us. I am convinced God included this chapter in His word so we might find two principles illustrated here to show us how His work is to be done.

I. The Importance of Everyone Working

II. The Importance Of Everybody To God

I. The Importance of Everyone Working

A. When we begin reading **Nehemiah 3** we can almost hear the groans and grunts of hard work going on here. There are many a sore back and a sweaty brow in the verses of this chapter. Everybody is working.

B. While it is true God's work does begin with prayer and preparation, it doesn't end there. At times, God's work is hard physical work.

1. When the Lord Jesus called us to salvation He also called us to service. Some folks mistakenly think that if they pray and give they have discharged their responsibility in the realm of spiritual things. This is not true. Effort is also involved.

2. Consider the Lord's invitation to us in

Matthew 11:28-30 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”*

The sole purpose for the existence of a yoke is so that work can be done. He saved us in order that we may serve Him.

C. The second thing which arrests our attention is who is doing the work.

1. Virtually everybody did the work. In **verse 1**, we read how even the High Priest joined in the work. Some Pastors think manual labor is beneath them. Evidently

Eliashib didn't agree. However, in **verse 5** we read of one group who wouldn't lower themselves to do manual labor.

“Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.”

The nobles of Tekoa refused to work. Outside of these hard-headed nobles, everybody else got involved. Priests and rulers, craftsmen and common laborers, garbage collectors and nobles, everybody worked together with one purpose in mind to do the LORD's work.

2. Not only did everybody do the work, everybody had his own part of the job to do. Eliashib, the High Priest, did not work on the Tekoites part of the wall. He had his own part to do in the overall job. Sounds a little like the church doesn't it? We are all part of the body. Yet, we are different parts with different functions. Some are noses and some are toes. Some are eyes and some are mouths. All are important and all are vital for the work to be accomplished.

D. Let me show you this picture through a little different lens. First we need to read **1 Corinthians 12:7** ***“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”***

This verse places us somewhere in the spectrum of workers. Everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus has a spiritual gift. The question is: what are we doing with our gift?

1. This is where **Ephesians 4:11-16** fits. In **verses 11-12** we find the Lord's overall plan.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

The Lord Jesus gave gifted men to His church. The gifted men equip the gifted people, preparing them to minister to others in the body! The equipping is in teaching the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 ***“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; in order that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”***

2. **Verses 13-14** record the purpose of the ministry.

“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In order that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”

Our Lord's purpose is the building up, of the body of Christ. This purpose is expanded in three statements which serve as standards to measure our growth. We are to minister until: **(1)** we come to a unity produced by our faith and a full knowledge of Christ; **(2)** we come to be complete and fulfilled people; and **(3)** we come to the standard of the fullness of Christ. (This is until the Lord controls all

we are and all we do). All of this should be seen in our stability and steadfastness in the truth.

3. **Verse 15** is the means by which this ministry is accomplished.

“Speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

As we speak the truth in love to ourselves, our neighbors, our friends, and our brothers and sisters in the Lord, we grow up into Him. We grow in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Himself.

4. Finally, **verse 16** provides a snapshot of the whole thing as it should look in action.

“From Christ the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Jesus is the head. We are the body functioning in perfect coordination to accomplish His will in this place.

E. In this picture, both in Nehemiah and in Ephesians, we see how it is vital everyone do his part in the work. If we do not build our part, then we are responsible for the breach that the enemy could come through.

II. The Importance of Everybody To God

A. Not only was everyone working, everybody who worked was important to the LORD.

B. I remember the first time I read this chapter in preparing to preach from it. I thought, *“Why in the world did God put this chapter of names in the Bible?”*

1. Then it occurred to me this was not just a list of names. There are faces, feelings, entire lives, and families attached to these names. These were real people who lived and put their backs and their hearts into the work of God.

2. These folks were people like you and me. They weren't very important to a historian, yet, they were very important to the LORD of glory.

C. Consider with me, some folks some people would consider nobodies who were, in fact, somebodies to God.

1. In **John 11:1-2**, we meet Mary from Bethany.

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.”

She did something the disciples thought rash and foolish, but Jesus said that wherever the Gospel was preached they would hear of Mary's gift to her Savior!

2. Remember a guy named Philip in **John 1**?

“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’”

Who was Philip? What did he ever do that was great? Not much, but it was Philip, not John or Peter that Jesus went seeking.

3. I think of two men who no history book will ever record as great. Don Kowbel and Clarence Binder were two ordinary guys. Both Clarence and Don drove transit buses. Clarence had been a farmer, Don an auto parts manager. These two men worked beside me in the work at Bad Axe. The Bad Axe church never was great in size. Still, it was and is a great work. And somewhere there is a Nehemiah chapter three in one of God's books and Don and Clarence's names are written down there. I know this because of a verse in

1 Corinthians 15:58 ***“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”***

Doing God's work may not be glamorous work, but it is glorious.

How about you and me? Will you join me in this great work? Will you use your gift and get involved in building the wall. Your part may be to teach a Sunday school class. It may be teaching your kids about the Lord at home, or talking to your friend about the Lord. It may even be cleaning some part of the church or cooking breakfast for the men's fellowship. Whatever it is, It is important. And as we work when the going gets rough the bricks are heavy, remember what Paul said, your toil, your aching muscles and stiff back are not in vain in the Lord. The Lord knows your name and someday He will say, ***“Well done thou good and faithful servant.”*** Then it will be worth it all.

Hymn #293 Rise Up O Church of God