

## ***Nehemiah: The Task To Build Where We Live***

The Scripture records men who had one specific task to do for the Lord and they did it with all their hearts. Noah had one job to do, and that was to build an ark. Solomon had one job to do and that was to build the temple. And, Nehemiah was another man who had one specific job to do for the Lord, and that was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was a Jewish leader who lived during the 5th century B.C. His name means “The Comfort of Jehovah.” Nehemiah lived up to his name. He was a comfort and blessing to the people of God after the Babylonian captivity.

Providentially, Nehemiah held an important position in the royal court of the Persian ruler Artaxerxes I. He was the royal cupbearer. A cup-bearer was an officer of high rank in royal courts, whose duty it was to serve the drinks at the royal table. On account of the constant fear of plots and intrigues, a person must be regarded as thoroughly trustworthy to hold this position. He must guard against poison in the king's cup, and was sometimes required to swallow some of the wine before serving it.

His confidential relations with the king often gave him a position of great influence. The position of cup bearer is greatly valued and given to only a select few throughout history. Qualifications for the job were not held lightly but of high esteem valued for their beauty and even more for their modesty, industry, and courage.

Therefore, as the king's cupbearer, Nehemiah was in a good position to obtain permission from the king to go back, and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

In addition to being a cupbearer, Nehemiah was an extraordinary leader. He led and organized the rebuilding and revitalization of Jerusalem. He was also a religious reformer. He revived adherence to Mosaic law and forbade intermarriage with non-Jews. His work as a reformer was later continued by Ezra. Clearly, Nehemiah was equipped and called by the Lord for the task of building the walls of Jerusalem.

Indeed, this was a daunting and difficult task to accomplish. After the devastating attack by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. the city of Jerusalem laid in ruins. Some of the questions that must have weighed heavily on the mind of Nehemiah were, How would the Jews accomplish the task of rebuilding the wall? How would Nehemiah motivate the people to persevere in the work? Did he have enough help and supplies for the task?

Like Nehemiah and the Jews of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., we as God's people are called to the task of rebuilding the walls in Prince George. The same questions that Nehemiah asked, we ask, How are we going to accomplish this task when we have so little resources and people? How are we going to overcome so many things that are against us? The story of Nehemiah encourages God's people to the task of building for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. God's work will succeed. God's work must take precedent over all other work.

Therefore, the title of my message is, *The Task to Build Where We Live*. The Lord has planted us in a certain part of his vineyard, and we are to flourish where we are planted. At work. At home. At church. We have the task of building where we live for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. There are four points I would like to consider from the life of Nehemiah.

### **1. The task to build is humbly dependent upon God's gracious intervention.**

Things looked hopeless and bleak in Jerusalem. The walls lay ruined. The Jews lacked leadership. The resources and people were scarce. What could Nehemiah do with so little? Nehemiah did what he could-**he prayed** that the Lord would intervene in the affairs of his people.

We read in Ezekiel 36:37, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock."

Being dependent upon God's gracious intervention does not mean that we sit around passively and do nothing. Nehemiah enquired after the Lord for help and intervention for the task that needed to be done.

## Nehemiah prays in chapter one verse 5,

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: 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. 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. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my 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. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

Nehemiah prayed that the Lord would intervene in the heart of the king.

We read in Proverbs 21:1, “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

If Nehemiah didn't get permission from the king to go to Jerusalem then the task to rebuild the walls would be impossible. Nehemiah asked the Lord to bless him and give him **favor among men**.

The favor of man is something that is seemingly hard to gain. People are so fickle, loving you one moment and ready to rip you apart the next. But, having man's favor is still important in the work of the Lord, especially as we navigate through this life.

Christ had man's favor not because He told them what they wanted to hear but because He spoke truthfully and with authority. As Christians, we're to model that pattern in our own lives, demonstrating to the world who we are and what we believe.

Nehemiah ask the Lord to intervene when he went to speak with the king. He requested favor before men. How we need the Lord's help and wisdom when we speak to co-workers, family members, and friends about eternity and spiritual matters.

We read in Luke 2:52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

This is ideal manhood to have the favour of God and men.

Albert Barnes writes, “In favour with God. That is, in proportion to his advance in wisdom. This does not imply that he ever lacked the favour of God, but that God regarded him with favour in proportion as he showed an understanding and spirit like his own. Happy are those children who imitate the example of Jesus--who are obedient to parents--who increase in wisdom--who are sober, temperate, and industrious, and who thus increase in favour with God and men.”

Nehemiah needed God’s intervention in order to accomplish the task to build, and the Lord intervened. We must have God’s help if we are going to build where we live. The task to build starts with an humble dependence upon God’s gracious intervention.

## **2. The task to build is led by godly leadership**

In the old testament we read of great leaders such as Joseph. He was a tremendous example of leadership skill and organization, but he had to grow in his leadership abilities.

We read about Moses in Hebrews 11:24-29. Paul gives a commentary on the outstanding leadership qualities that Moses possessed, enabling him to succeed. In 2 Samuel 5:1-3 David was approached by the elders of Israel. They recognized his strong leadership traits.

In the life of Nehemiah so much was accomplished in so little time. For a long time the walls at Jerusalem lay in waste. But in just 52 days, Nehemiah reestablished the work, and the people's hearts were encouraged. The Lord moved suddenly and powerfully under circumstances that seemed to be impossible.

Leadership qualities evident in the life of Nehemiah were:

His concern for the people and God's work  
(Nehemiah 1:1-3)

His complete dependence on God. Prayer, fasting and waiting on God (Nehemiah 1:4-11)

He waited and looked for, then took an opportunity when it arose (Nehemiah 2:1-5)



He was willing to sacrifice a good position as the King's cupbearer to see God's kingdom built and people helped (Nehemiah 2:6-10)

He viewed the condition of the city and of the people to get the facts for himself before giving constructive advise (Nehemiah 2:11-16)

He had an aggressive, progressive attitude, a victory spirit. His advise was to "rise up and build." He was a great encourager (Nehemiah 2:17,18).

He knew how to handle opposition.

Nehemiah set the tone and vision for the work. Similarly, it is the leadership that determines the spiritual health and welfare of the church. Pray for the leaders in the church, that they might have wisdom and power from God to lead in the task of building for the glory of Christ.

The task to build is led by godly leadership.

### **3. The task to build is resisted by evil forces.**

During the work of rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem, Nehemiah encountered a clear and present danger.

We read in Nehemiah 4:7, “But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth and conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”

As soon as Nehemiah and his escort arrived in Jerusalem the enmity of Sanballat and his allies was aroused. They were enraged that the welfare of the Jews should be desired.

When Nehemiah actually disclosed his intention of building the walls of Jerusalem they laughed him to scorn, and said "Will ye rebel against the king?" Nehemiah resented their insinuation, and gave them to understand that they had no right in Jerusalem, nor any interest in its affairs.

As soon as Sanballat and his associates heard that Nehemiah and the Jews were actually building the walls, they plotted an attack.

Sanballat addressed the army of Samaria with a contemptuous reference to "these feeble Jews." Tobiah appeased him by saying that a jackal climbing on the wall they were building would break it down. Nehemiah and his builders vigorously hurried the work, while Sanballat and his associates organized their forces to fight against Jerusalem. Nehemiah prepared to meet the opposition and continued the work on the walls. Five different times Sanballat and his confederates challenged Nehemiah and the Jews to meet them in battle in the plain of Ono. Nehemiah was equal to the emergency and attended strictly to his work.

Then Sanballat, with Jews in Jerusalem who were his allies, attempted to entrap Nehemiah in the Temple. But the scheme failed. Sanballat's Jewish friends, however, kept Sanballat and Tobiah informed as to the progress of the work in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah faced a persistent foe in Sanballat. He wouldn't go away and leave them alone. When work is being done in the name of Jesus Christ there will be a steady opposition by the devil.

We read in I Thessalonians 2:18 of how Satan hindered Paul in the work of the gospel, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once again: but Satan hindered us."

1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

Nehemiah was sober and vigilant against his adversaries and so must we be in the work of the Lord.

The task to build is resisted by evil forces.

#### **4. The task to build is accomplished by working together for the glory of Christ.**

We read in Nehemiah 4:6, "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

The people had a mind to work together. They were united for a godly purpose, and this brought them closer together as a body.

We read in Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Unity is a good and pleasant thing because work can get done in the name of the Lord. Progress can be made. Growth can take place.

Philippians 2:3, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

James 3:16, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem led to something bigger. It led to the rebuilding of the city. That led to the rebuilding of the second Temple. Then the Temple was where, 400 years later, the Lord Jesus Christ came to teach and preach during His earthly ministry.

The work Nehemiah and the people of God performed led ultimately to the coming of the Messiah who would usher in a new age.

We read in Revelation 21:22, “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

The glory in the work of the church is Christ  
Psalm 21:5 “His glory is great in thy salvation:  
honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.”

The task to build is accomplished by working together for the glory of Christ.

In closing, Nehemiah teaches us that we must be about doing the task to build where we live. The place where we live is Prince George. The task to build is humbly dependent upon God’s gracious intervention. It is led by godly leadership. It is resisted by evil forces. It is accomplished by working together for the glory of Christ. May God help us as a church with the task to build for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Let us pray!