

Maintaining Spiritual Strength

Text: Nehemiah 7:1-73

Introduction:

1. The walls have been completed (6:15) but the work is not over! Steps must be taken to maintain and build upon the victories won.
2. The first section of the Book primarily had to do with the rebuilding of the walls (Chapter 1-6). Now the focus is upon reviving the people (Chapter 7-13)

I. The Appointment of Rulers (Vs. 1-3)

A. Their Credentials (Vs. 2)

1. Hanani
 - a. A brother of Nehemiah
 - b. A man whose spiritual caliber is highlighted in chapter 1 in his concern for the condition of Jerusalem
2. Hananiah
 - a. A responsible man – “ruler of the palace”
 - i. ‘palace’ = likely the temple fortress/castle located north of the temple
 - ii. He was obviously a man who had proved himself in his sphere of responsibility, thus qualifying him for the privilege of greater responsibility. Faithfulness in the small things is what prepares and qualifies us for the bigger things. Illustration: David
 - b. A faithful man
 - i. He was trustworthy and reliable.
 - ii. Faithful men are rare! Prov. 20:6 *“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?”*
 - iii. Unfaithful men are an injury! Prov. 25:19 *“Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.”*
 - iv. Faithful men are blessed! Prov. 28:20 *“A faithful man shall abound with blessings.”*
 - c. A godly man
 - i. The secret behind his faithfulness. He was a man possessed of awe, reverence and respect for His God.
 - ii. His reverence for God is said to be “above many” revealing that amongst God’s people, there are varying degrees of the fear of God.
3. Summary: With both of these men, we can clearly see that they were appointed to places of leadership on the basis of their spiritual qualifications.

B. Their Charge (Vs. 1, 3)

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1. Porters (gatekeepers) had been assigned to the oversight of the gates (Vs. 1)
2. These men were responsible to oversee two main things:
 - a. The operation of the gates
 - i. The gates were not to be opened until dawn had passed. The grey of early dawn presented a time of vulnerability to incursion by the enemy.
 - ii. The gates were to be carefully watched during the closing up process for two reasons: 1. In case an enemy slipped past 2. In case the gates were not properly shut
 - iii. Principle: As believers, we need to learn to be on the alert for potential points of weakness in our lives where the enemy might get a foothold, and prayerfully preempt the enemy with wise decisions.
 - iv. Butler: “The rules given here especially emphasize caution...There are times when evil is especially strong – such as when our circumstances strengthen temptations and when evil is accepted and encouraged by nearly everyone. In such times we need to take extra caution against evil lest it overcome us. Extra caution is not appreciated by most people, however. They are likely to view extra caution as being too strict and too legalistic. But the fact that so many are falling so quickly to evil today, even among Christian ranks, justifies taking the extra caution even if it seems too strict and too legalistic to some.”
 - v. Note: Carelessness rather than caution seems to be the prevailing attitude amongst believers today
 - b. The watching of the city
 - i. Particularly important at night after the sun has gone down and the gates have been shut. Much evil transpires during the night seasons.
 - ii. Note: The presence of the walls did not mean the people of God could relax in their vigilance towards the enemy. The presence of godly standards of doctrine and separation in my life do not automatically make me immune from the enemy! Many a soldier has fallen due to such an attitude of complacency.
 - iii. The watchmen were apportioned watch care of the part of the city where their homes were located. “Nehemiah understood that the strength and security of the city depended on the spiritual condition of its individual households. If the enemies gained a foothold there, it meant danger for the future of the city as a whole”

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(Lacey) If we leave the doors open to the enemy at home, you endanger the rest of God's people! Sadly today, most Christian men are asleep and don't want to be woken up either! They sleep while Satan rocks their cradle.

II. The Assembling of the Remnant (Vs. 4-5)

A. Nehemiah's Dilemma (Vs. 4)

1. The city was sparsely populated
2. The city was still largely in ruins
3. There is safety in the people of God being in "one accord and one place" So long as the people of God remained scattered without the walls, they would be vulnerable to the enemy. An isolated Christian experience is not the will of God.
4. Hebrews 10:24-25 *"And let us **consider one another** to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking **the assembling of ourselves together**, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

B. Nehemiah's Desire (Vs. 5)

1. The prompting of the desire – God put it on his heart
 - a. "my God" = highlights Nehemiah's close relationship with God.
 - b. A man who walks with God is the man God will use to accomplish His plan. Nehemiah was a channel through which God could work.
 - c. Note: If you have a leader who is in touch with God, follow him as he follows God.
2. The providential aiding of the desire
 - a. The discovery of the register was Providential confirmation that Nehemiah's burden was of God.
 - b. This teaches us something on how the will of God is discerned. There is the burden God lays on the heart followed by the open doors of God's providence.

III. The Assessment of the Records (Vs. 6-73)

A. Record of the Saints (Vs. 6-67) (S. Ezra 2)

1. Leaders (Vs. 6-7)
2. Families (Vs. 8-25)
3. Towns (Vs. 26-38)
4. Priests (Vs. 39-42)
5. Levites (Vs. 43)
6. Singers (Vs. 44) There are at least 17 references to singers and singing in the Book of Nehemiah
7. Porters (Vs. 45)
8. Nethinims (Vs. 46-56) 'Nethinim' = those given. They were given to the Levites to assist them in the service of the tabernacle.

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9. Servants of Solomon (Vs. 57-60)
10. Non-certified people (Vs. 61-65)
 - a. God's standards for the priesthood were not to be compromised.
 - b. These men were purged out from serving as priests due to their disqualification
11. Totals (Vs. 66-67): 42,360 + 7,337 (servants) + 254 (singing men & women) = 49,951

B. Record of the Supplies (Vs. 68-69)

1. Horses: 736
2. Mules: 245
3. Camels: 435
4. Asses: 6,720

C. Record of the Sacrifices (Vs. 70-73)

1. God takes note of the giving of his saints. Even a cup of cold water given for the Lord is noted for reward in heaven (Matt. 10:42)
2. Giving of the leadership (Vs. 70-71)
 - a. dram' = a coin. Word of Persian origin.
 - b. 'some' = not all gave!
 - c. 'Tirshatha' = the governor (Zerubbabel)
3. Giving of the laymen (Vs. 72)
4. Principles to learn from their giving
 - a. They "offered freely" (Ezra 2:68)
 - i. 2 Cor. 9:7 *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*
 - ii. 1 Chr. 29:9 *"Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."*
 - iii. "freewill offerings" mentioned 26 times in the Old Testament
 - b. They gave "after their ability" (Ezra 2:69)
 - i. 1 Cor 16:2 *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."*
 - ii. Their giving was both to the work of God in general (gold) and also to specific needs within the work of God (the priests garments)
5. Maxim: God's work is funded through the freewill tithes and offerings of God's people.

Conclusion: Are we being watchful in our Christian walk? Are we supporting the work of God sacrificially? LAUNCH OF NEHEMIAH FUND