

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 8ST, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

REBUILDING (NEHEMIAH 3:1-32)

DIVERSITY

The list of workers and what they accomplished is made up of people of differing ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Yet, they put aside their differences to work toward a greater good.

- **This is a great model of how the Church should look and how the church should operate.**

ALMOST EVERYONE WORKED

(v5) "The Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not lift a finger to help their supervisors."

Whatever the reason, the nobles felt they were above the hard work, so they did not join in.

- The idea in the Hebrew is that they would not submit. They would not submit (would not bend their necks) to Nehemiah's leadership in what the Lord wanted them to do.

LET US BUILD UP NOT TEAR DOWN

While the job of the modern church is not to rebuild a wall in Jerusalem, we are to be building up God's eternal kingdom through sharing Jesus Christ throughout the world.

- Some will refuse to participate just like they did in Nehemiah's project. While others simply watch and even criticize those that are working.

BURN (NEHEMIAH 4:1-5)

MAKING PROGRESS

Once there was visual evidence of Nehemiah's progress, Sanballat's contempt also progressed.

- First, he was displeased to hear there was a man who wanted to help Jerusalem (2:10), then he led a small group to ridicule Nehemiah in hopes of preventing work (2:19). Now that work had begun, he became furious.

ATTACKS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Sanballat asks a series of rhetorical questions all dependent on his view that the Jews were inferior and the task they were trying to accomplish was too great.

- His attacks of discouragement may have had a little truth in it, but it failed to recognize that **God was with them and had promised to see them through.**

First, he asks, "What are these pathetic (feeble) Jews doing?" In front of "his colleagues and powerful men of Samaria," he set a tone that the Jews were "foolish."

- 1 Cor. 1:18-31 says, that "God has chosen "what is foolish...to shame the wise" and "what is weak...to shame the strong." "The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."

Then he asks, "Can they restore it by themselves? "Will they offer sacrifices?"

- Sanballat made the mistake of not seeing that God was with them to strengthen them to complete the task, even going so far as to mock God. He questioned if God would miraculously help them if they offered sacrifices.

The last questions centered around the idea that they had no idea what they were taking on. "Will they finish it?" How can they rebuild with a "mound of rubble?"

- Armed with a certainty in what God told Nehemiah to do, a plan revealed through prayer, and clarity through inspection, He knew exactly what they were taking on.

Nehemiah led to build up God's work, while Sanballat led in a way that tore down God's work!

Tobiah follows lead and interjects his own insult.

- Tobiah insults the finished product saying that a fox's paw could destroy their wall when in warfare it should take a concentrated effort to breach.

NEHEMIAH'S RESPONSE

Nehemiah responded to the ridicule with prayer, asking God to fight the enemy for him.

- While his prayer may seem harsh, he is simply asking God to "turn their insults on their heads," meaning allow them to receive what they give (reap what you sow). He prays, "vengeance belongs to you God who was wronged."

MOVING FORWARD (NEHEMIAH 4:6-14)

TAKING IT UP A NOTCH

Now that "gaps were being closed" in the wall and Sanballat sees that his efforts to stop progress were failing, he steps it up to threats of violence.

- While Nehemiah took the threat seriously, he did not allow the fear of attack paralyze him and stop what God had intended to accomplish.

PRAYER AND PREPARE

They prayed to God for protection then set up a guard to keep watch day and night. Though they fully trusted God for their protection, they also knew that prayer didn't mean they were to do nothing.

- Prayers do not replace our actions, instead **our prayers make our actions effective for God's work!**

CHALLENGE FROM THE INSIDE

Discouragement among the people working on the walls started to build. They were halfway done with a lot of work remaining and their strength was failing.

- Prayer and preparation does not remove the need to persevere. When we feel discouraged and our strength fails us, we should depend on God even more.

There was so much rubble that had to be removed for the rebuilding to continue, and the task seemed overwhelming.

- It's the same in our lives. If there is any "rubble" (remnant of destruction) **we must address it and allow it to be cleaned up before a work of God can be completed within us.**

CHALLENGE FROM THE OUTSIDE

The men leading the attacks may have not known the extent of discouragement the workers were feeling, but certainty the rulers of spiritual darkness knew and strategically planned an attack.

- When we are weak and discouraged, we are to be "strengthened by the Lord and his vast strength." Putting on the full armor God so we can stand against attacks. (Eph 6:10-17)

A MUCH-NEEDED REMINDER

Nehemiah shifts their perspective. He tells them not to fear because He who is in them is greater than he who is in the world. He also reminds them who they fighting for.

- Our fight for Lord is most effective when we keep in mind how much there is to lose ("your brothers, your children, your spouse, and your house")

KEEPING WATCH (NEHEMIAH 4:15-23)

"GOD HAD FRUSTRATED IT..."

Once their enemies see the defenses of the people of God, they shrink back. They didn't really want a fight but through empty threats and discouragement hoped to be handed a victory.

- Victory would belong to Jerusalem. Everyone "returning to his own work" would be the victory given by the grace of God.

SWORD AND TROWEL

While half worked, the other half kept watch so that the work could continue uninterrupted.

- The workers "who carried the loads worked with one hand and held a weapon with other." Meaning that the load they were carrying could be used as a weapon during an attack. Since the work required both hands, each had a sword at their waist.

Since "the work was enormous and spread out," there was a man with a ram's horn patrolling with Nehemiah to rally everyone if under attack.

- This continued day and night with some working to build while others defended. Even staying within the walls dedicating themselves to the work even more.

There was never a moment that Nehemiah could be caught unaware. He and his guard never took their clothes off and always had their weapon when showering.

- As believers, we need to be of the same mindset. Always clothed in the righteousness of Christ. On alert, because our enemy is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

In 1865, Charles Spurgeon started a church magazine named The Sword and Trowel based on this section of Nehemiah. He said it was "**a record of combat with sin and labor for the Lord.**"

- If we are a faithful disciple, building and battling are a normal part of a Christians life. **Christ has won the victory, we just have to walk in it!**

CRITICS TO GOD'S WORK

- There will always be those who are opposed to God's work. Critics will come from outside the Church as well as within.
- **Is our criticism meant to correct and build up or tear down with discouragement?**
- **Those who bring discouragement will often miss what God is doing.**

DON'T STOP

- **Do not give up! Push through the discouragement! (Gal. 6:9 NIV) Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**
- **The same way that Nehemiah operated under permission a king, we too operate as ambassadors of THE KING!**

WHO IS INFLUENCING YOU

- In this chapter we see two examples of leadership and those that fall under that leadership.
- **Whether we realize it or not, we all give something or someone ultimate authority over us.**
- **Where is it that your ultimate authority is leading you?**

A LIFE OF PRAYER

- Prayer for Nehemiah was a first resource, not a last resort.
- **Can the same be said for us?**
- **Do we realize that prayer never removes responsibility from us? Instead, they operate in tandem with one another. Our responsibility to act is made effective through prayer.**