

Nehemiah Part 2 – Study Notes

Introduction

Nehemiah 2:11-18 *So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³ And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." ¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.*

Nehemiah had now arrived in Jerusalem and now faced the challenge of rebuilding the wall. He faced three difficulties.

1. The task was overwhelming. The circumference of the city was approximately one and a half to two miles. The destruction was great and the stones to be reassembled were massive. These had been tumbled down into the valley below and they needed to be hauled up and reassembled. This required many workers with diverse skills and lifting machinery.
2. A history of defeat. Not only was the task itself overwhelming, but also it had been attempted before and people had given up. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC, but the work had been started in 538BC more than ninety years before. It took these Jews 15 years to get the temple finished. Then when they started to rebuild the walls the governors stopped the work.
3. A discouraged group of workers. The only people Nehemiah had to work with were discouraged people. Nehemiah approached the matter carefully with the people; otherwise they would have said *we cannot do it*. Nehemiah was confronted with a situation filled with apathy, and his first step was to formulate a plan to carry out his vision. (Redditch is an apathetic town as are so many people in our churches.)

Nehemiah took three days to gather the information he needed before he shared his plan with anyone. His timing of sharing the information was vitally important. Too soon, without having the correct facts would have been dismissed as unformed and impractical, too long and he would have lost the initiative that his prestige as the newly appointed governor gave him. After three days his presence had aroused considerable curiosity. It was the right time to reveal why he left Susa for the fifteen hundred mile trip to Jerusalem.

Verse 17 *Then I said to them, You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.* Nehemiah called all the people together and took the opportunity to speak to them directly. When he spoke to the citizens he challenged them. No one could misinterpret his words to others. *Come and let us build the walls of Jerusalem so that we shall no longer be a reproach.* Nehemiah said to the people we can do this together. He identified with the people. He did not say look at the trouble *you* are in, but *we* are in.

Nehemiah challenged the people to rebuild so that *we would no longer be in reproach (disgrace)*. There was work to be done, walls to be rebuilt. Friends, today there is work for us to be done. Nehemiah informed the people of the progress already attained; he took them into his confidence. Verse 18 *And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me.* He told them how the king had altered his policy to permit the rebuilding *and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.* So the people said Nehemiah 2:18 *Let us rise up and build. Then they set their hands to this good work.* There was a lot to do, but the work was started. This is what our response needs to be *Let us rise up and build and set our hands to this good work.*

Nehemiah 2:19 *But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"* Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem despised Nehemiah. But this was more than a physical thing; the opposition to Judah was a spiritual thing.

This is profoundly true for us as we try to serve God faithfully. Ephesians 6:10-18 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against*

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the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

Most people in the Bible faced opposition in their work. We cannot expect the evil one to let us build the kingdom of God without challenge. He will always try to frustrate and spoil the work of God. **This year we need to be prepared for this.**

As we come to chapter 3 we have the detailed account of the way the seven gates of the city wall were rebuilt, focusing on the names of those who were involved in the construction. This could seem unimportant to many but it is a record of remarkable achievement. It is an incredible feat of organization. The entire community, with different trades, crafts and social classes were mobilized and worked together on all parts of the city wall, which was divided into forty sections. **The work force dedicated them selves to complete the task before anyone could stop the Jews or destroy their work.**

Nehemiah divided the work into manageable sections. If the whole work was assigned to one group of people it would have seemed impossible and probably never done; divided amongst the people this two-mile project became manageable. Remarkably he managed to get most people involved. There were 40 groups of people who worked simultaneously on this tremendous challenge. This new wall was eight feet thick and somewhere between one and a half and two miles long. There were the:

- ✓ priests, they could have said that it was not their calling;
- ✓ residents of other cities, they could have said it was not their city;
- ✓ craftsmen, they could have said that construction was not their line of work;
- ✓ city officials were not above working along side the poorer people;
- ✓ women, they were not expected to do construction work;
- ✓ temple servants, this was their area of the city, and they took responsibility for it;
- ✓ city guards, the equivalent of a security official or policeman;
- ✓ merchants, most merchants in normal terms would have wanted to profit by the situation, they certainly would not have worked with the lower classes, but this cooperation was remarkable they worked with others and they made no profit.

What a remarkable achievement.

But there were people according to Chapter 3:5 *who would not put their shoulders to the work*. The reason being: they didn't like Nehemiah. There are always people who will not get involved, but it didn't put the others off. We read that the people of Tekoa were not put off by their leaders. In fact, not only did they build their section of the wall, they also build another section of the wall after the first was finished Nehemiah 3:27 *After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.*

The truth is that in the church everyone is to be involved. Ephesians 4:11-13 says this *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ 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;*

Sadly today, it is said that the churches resemble more than anything else a football game played in a stadium. There are eighty thousand spectators who need some exercise, and there are twenty-two men on the field who need a rest. Usually in a church setting 20 percent of the Christians do 80 percent of the work; often the 20 percent experience burnout. One of the hallmarks of a growing church is that more than 20 percent of the church does the work. Oasis Christian Centre is an every member ministry. It is **vitaly important** that every person plays their part. Each of us needs to consider our ministry and role within this fellowship. **Each of us needs rise up and to put our shoulders to the work** to fulfill the vision at Oasis Christian Centre. It is going to require hard work, sweat, tears, it is going to be sacrificial.

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Let jump to Nehemiah 6:16 *This work has been done with the help of our God.*