

Building and Battling for the Lord

Lessons from the Book of Nehemiah

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A book of personal revival and restoration

A book of building for the Lord

A book of victory and service

**A book of success and meaningful
leadership**

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Introduction

Before we get into the detailed study of the book of Nehemiah, let's consider some general facts about this wonderful book. If you keep these facts in mind as you study Nehemiah, they will help make this book live for you.

A Book of Victory

This book gives us many keys to victorious Christian service. It is a book of revival, of working for God.

A Key Word

One of the key words of Nehemiah is the word "so." It is used thirty-two times, and shows that Nehemiah, the chief character of the book was a man of action and leadership. Nehemiah was a layman who had a heart for God. He was a man of great vision, a man of honesty, integrity, and loyalty.

Key Verses

The key verses are verse one of chapter one, and verse three of chapter six. These verses set forth the way of service and victory. The book opens with prayer and closes with prayer. The other great emphasis is upon work. In God's economy of things, prayer and work constitute what we need to be doing in order that the will of God is done in our outreach for the souls of men.

There are many wonderful keys in this book that reveal so marvelously why this is a book of revival and victory. The following phrases show why Nehemiah was so greatly used of God: "*The people had a mind to work.*" "*To every man his work.*" "*Make our recourse to God.*" "*Set a watch over our enemies.*" "*I am doing a great work.*" "*The work was wrought of our God.*" "*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*"

In the midst of blessings, Satan did all he could to stop the work and will of God. He used ridicule, physical force, discouraged laborers, crafty diplomacy, troubles within and without, and every person he could stir up against the work of God.

The Setting of the Book

This is the last book of the section of historical books of the Old Testament. It covers the same historical period as the prophetic book of Malachi. With the book of Nehemiah the Old Testament historical account ceased. This is one of the last three books of the Post-exilic period. The other two are Ezra and Esther. It has to do with a crisis for those Jews who had returned during the time of the captivity. The walls needed to be rebuilt. Nehemiah's heart was with God's people and with God's program even though as a layman he was in a very important position in Artaxerxes' court.

Character Building Truths

There are some tremendous character building truths in this book. No other book of the Old Testament sets forth in a clearer way the need of great faith and courage. There are many lessons on prayer and confidence in the midst of trials. It teaches united cooperation, the unity of people in vision, goal, desire, willingness, and unselfishness.

The Need of a Vision

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Introduction

Nehemiah was a builder for God. He was a man unafraid of work. As a layman he was faithful in the place of service where God had placed him. "Blessed are the builders for God for theirs shall be the joy of construction."

There are too many wreckers and destroyers in life today. So much of life is consumed in tearing down. If Christians spent as much energy and time in building up the work of God as they do in tearing it down, the work of God would go forward in a tremendous way. We are called to be builders for God. To build for God necessitates a vision. For without a "vision the people perish." We have a Christian life to build; we have Christian character to build; we have many walls to build. Walls of faith, walls of prayer, walls of defense need to be built up in our lives and in the work of the church. So few Christians live with any constructive plans in life. They never have a vision, a plan, or a goal to excel for God. Nehemiah did.

Nehemiah, the Man -- Nehemiah 1:1-11

His background. Nehemiah was a son of Hachaliah, apparently of the tribe of Judah (Nehemiah 2:5). He was reared in exile in Syria. Early in manhood he was attached to the Persian Court. He rose to the high position of a royal cupbearer before the king.

His position as cupbearer. This was an office of great honor. It was a confidential position. It was a position that he had earned. To be so entrusted would have demanded consistent devotion, loyalty, integrity, and strict honesty.

Jerusalem, the Need -- Nehemiah 1:1-3

About 50,000 Jews had returned to Jerusalem a short time earlier under Ezra. They had returned to rebuild the temple and had been greatly discouraged by opposition and the immensity of the task. It was finished after a great struggle. The walls and gates of the city were still in ruins. The people of God, Israel's remnant, lived in affliction and shame. God's Name was in reproach because His people were in such straits. Without walls they were in constant danger from the people who hated them. They were open to attack and plunder by all their vicious neighbors. This was the condition for about 150 years.

Nehemiah, The Burdened Servant -- Nehemiah 1:4-11

The saddening report—1:2,3. Some relatives of Nehemiah returned to Syria from Jerusalem, and reported to Nehemiah the terrible situation there. God's name was at stake. His blessed name is always involved with His own and their spiritual and physical condition. When we are less in testimony than we ought to be, as bearers of His name, His very reputation is also at stake.

The serious response—1:4. Though Nehemiah was in a high position in the king's palace in Syria (Persian Empire), yet his heart was centered around the needs of God's people. He was stricken with grief, and mourned, wept, and fasted for about four months.

After receiving this information, Nehemiah's whole outlook on life was transformed. His priorities were changed from self aggrandizement to a burden for others. He truly was burdened for his people in Jerusalem. This is the kind of burden we need for the lost, for missionaries, and for their labors, if we would see God's power manifested.

There must be weeping and a burden before there can be service. There must be a vision of the need before we will be able to help to meet that need. We must see our

homes as God sees them. We must see the church and its work as God sees it. We must have the inner vision of spiritual understanding, seeing with the "eye of faith" so we can be used of God.

God's work is much more than a hobby, a profession, or a duty. It is a burden given by God for fruit in the life (John 15:16). Before we can ever do any work for God there must first be a consideration of the needs, and a willingness to weep over the ruins. We need to consider the ruins in our own souls—the ruin of the neglected lost, the neglected Word of God, and the neglected separation from sin.

The sure recourse of prayer—1:5-11. Time may elapse before the burden is lifted and the answer comes. Nehemiah carried his burden of intercession, supplication, and fasting for four months before God worked out all the details. This is seen from the dates in 1:1 and 2:1. Prayer is always the recourse of the Christian. We must not just "say" prayers, but learn how to really pray.

Nehemiah prayed earnestly (v. 4). No one could be more in earnest than Nehemiah. His prayer of supplication, pleading with God, continued day after day (Ephesians 6:18).

He prayed with humility and awe (v. 5). Here he reminded God of His covenants and His promises. He adored God for His greatness.

He prayed in humble confession (vv. 6,7). He thoroughly confessed not only his own sins, but the sins of God's people. He prayed for mercy (vv. 8,9). He pled for that mercy that removes sin, pardons, and keeps covenants.

He prayed about the relationship his people had with God (v. 10). He mentioned the glorious redemption of God's power and might.

He prayed for a prosperous undertaking (v. 11) because he had a vision and burden of what God could do. He asked for God's hand of blessing upon him.

Conclusion

My, what a vision Nehemiah had! A vision of the need, of God, of what God could do, and of his own place in that vision. We need to ask God for a vision of His work, of the needs about us, of Him, and then of His power through us to meet those needs.

God's Preparation for His Work

Nehemiah 2:1-11

Introduction

With God's call there is always God's power and enabling. When God laid a burden upon Nehemiah's heart, He also was at work to open the way for Nehemiah to follow His direction. When God lays a burden upon our hearts, He will bring to pass His will and His way in our lives (Philippians 2:13). "Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

Nehemiah is a book that shows the victorious way of service. We must rise up to build for God. In every way His work must be built up for His glory. Every broken down wall of service must be built back up for the glory of God.

God's Preparation of Nehemiah -- Nehemiah 2:1-5

God uses people to bring about His will and work. He prepared Nehemiah's heart by sending the messengers to him. Nehemiah's burden grew as he prayed, fasted, and pled with God for four months. God was preparing Nehemiah's heart to be willing to fit into His future plans.

His service before the king—2:1. Nehemiah was faithful to his task and careful in his work. The king recognized the faithful qualities of his servant. We also need to be consistent and faithful in our service to our King (Titus 2:14; Titus 3:8,14; Colossians 3:22-25).

His acceptance before the king—2:2-4. To be in sorrow before the king could have resulted in death, imprisonment, or banishment. The king began to notice the sorrow of Nehemiah, although he surely tried to carry out his responsibilities with the same attitude. The king valued his servant so much that he was concerned and questioned Nehemiah about his sorrow. Nehemiah had a spiritual sorrow, a burden and pressure from the Holy Spirit that finally brought him to the attention of the king.

There must be weeping before there can be fruit or service (Psalm 126:5,6; Luke 19:41; Matthew 9:36). There must be a burden before there can be victorious service. We need to weep over the world's ruin and the needs of souls around us.

His prayer for God's will—2:4b. Nehemiah had been very afraid of the king's reaction, but God was at work in the king's heart. When the king questioned him, he prayed immediately, asking God to help him give an answer to the king. He then related the problem in Jerusalem to the king.

It is thrilling to see how God worked first in Nehemiah's heart and then in this pagan king's heart to bring about His will and the fulfillment of the work He had planned for Nehemiah.

God's Preparation of the King -- Nehemiah 2:2-4

An emotional preparation—2:2. Although Nehemiah was his slave, his servant, the king felt a sympathy for him. God had softened his heart. He was concerned not for himself, but for Nehemiah's welfare.

A preparation of will—2:4. The king asked, *"What do you request? I will do it."* He just wanted Nehemiah to name his desire. This reminds us of what Christ would say to us about our needs. He promises to provide for us and answer the requests that we ask (Mark 9:23; Psalm 37:4,5; I Peter 5:7).

God moved on the king's heart and he immediately began making plans to help Nehemiah. He freed him from his duties, supplied men and provisions, and sent him out to do the job.

In our daily life, as we walk with the Lord in complete submission, we can be assured that God will move not only on our hearts, but on the hearts of the unsaved around us to bring about His will in our lives.

God's Preparation of the Way -- Nehemiah 2:5-9

Praise the Lord, "*The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way*" (Psalm 37:23). God was at work in a miraculous way. We often see Him working through the circumstances of our lives.

Nehemiah wanted to know he was sent—2:5-6. It is a dominating factor in service to know that we are sent. God has a right to send His own (John 20:21). He wants to order our steps and our stops. He will give us a challenge, give us assurance of His leading, and then prepare the way before us. God promises that He will use us in the place He puts us (John 10:3,4; John 15:16). Every Christian ought to experience that compulsion within to take the challenge of service that God places before us (Matthew 9:26-28).

Nehemiah wanted to know that he was sent with the king's permission and blessing. He knew he would be gone a long time, and desired to have the good will of his king.

Nehemiah wanted to know he was safe 2:7,9. Through the king, God provided letters to bear him safely over the many miles. He had an army of horsemen for safety on the road. God provided wonderful protection along the way.

God will keep us safe in a spiritual sense, too (I Peter 1:5; Philippians 1:6). When we serve Him with all our hearts in total submission, He will protect us (Hebrews 13:5,6; Matthew 28:18-20). He will fulfill His will in and through us (Philippians 2:13).

God kept Nehemiah safe from temptations, from loneliness, and disillusionment. He spoke often of the "*good hand of God upon him*" (Nehemiah 2:8).

Nehemiah wanted to know he had supplies—2:8. It takes resources to build for God. God provided the materials to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He was given timber for the beams of the gates of the city and for the walls. God moved upon the king to give all that was needed.

Nehemiah had enemies along the way—2:10,11. There will always be enemies who are against the work of God. There will always be a battle to fight (I Corinthians 16:13; II Corinthians 2:11). Satan will always resist someone who is seeking to help those in need.

Facing the Challenge

Nehemiah 2:11-20

Introduction

The challenge to serve the Lord is always before us. In this chapter we will see three important ingredients for success in facing that challenge.

Nehemiah had been sent, and supplied by the king. As we study Nehemiah's character and godliness of life, we can gain insight into the correct methods of serving the Lord. Nehemiah was victorious and successful in his service. We need to grow in character as we seek to serve God, too.

Investigation -- Nehemiah 2:11-16

"So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days." It had taken him about three months to arrive there after his interview with the king. We can well imagine that these three days were days of rest. But more than that, they were days alone with God, waiting on the Lord, praying for guidance and wisdom.

There is no evidence that he was with other people. Often it is only when we are truly alone with God that we can hear His voice. Elijah was alone on the mountain when God spoke to him with a "still small voice." Moses was alone caring for his sheep when God called him. Alone in the desert, Paul learned many spiritual truths from God. When we are alone, God can speak to us and deal with things in our lives.

He went to inspect the need—2:12-15. At night, Nehemiah went out to determine the magnitude of the need. He did not just confer with others but with God. He was seeking God's will, God's direction and purpose. In the course of the night, he viewed the walls, evaluated the need, surveyed the situation. This was a sad journey for him. Such desolation, such debris and rubbish. No one cared (Philippians 2:20-21).

We need to know the worst around us. We need to know the true state of the hearts around us. Until we grasp the enormous problem of sin, we can not be stirred within about it. The degradation of sin, the spiritual dearth around us must make an impact on our heart. We must have a burden from the Lord for the backslidden, the indifferent, the wayward, and the depraved.

He kept the burden to himself—2:16. Nehemiah was looking for God to lead and direct the step by step process of the work. He did not have any personal ambitions. He humbly waited for God to give a burden to the people there so they could work together to rebuild the wall.

The wall speaks to us of the "wall of protection" that Christ puts in our lives. In what state is this wall? Does it keep out Satan, the world, and sin? Does it build a devotion for God and a concern for the lost?

Cooperation -- Nehemiah 2:17,18

The people needed a unity of burden and concern, a unity of determination to get the job done.

Nehemiah called them in meekness. Nehemiah called the people together to discuss the situation. He did not reproach them for their indifference, unfaithfulness, and neglect. Instead, he identified himself with them. He spoke of the *"distress that we are in."*

He didn't mention the accomplishments of his own life, nor that the king had favored him with supplies and help. He didn't tell them of the lonely hours of fasting and praying. He gave God all the glory: *"The good hand of God is upon me."* His message was that God was acting on their behalf.

Nehemiah called attention to the need—2:18. He was concerned about the reproach upon the name of God. He brought their thoughts to the waste of the city, to the burned gates, to the terrible, deplorable condition of God's holy city.

Nehemiah called them to cooperation. *"Let us rise up, and build."* was his cry. They could work together to repair and restore Jerusalem to its former glory. He called for unity of vision and labor. He called for unity of burden. So they strengthened their hands to the good work.

The people did not react in anger. They didn't show an independent spirit. They united their hearts and strength to get the job done with God's help. Today we are challenged to unite and with God's power, meet and solve the problems that face us.

Determination -- Nehemiah 2:19,20

They were determined to rise up and work together. Their determination also showed before their enemies.

They faced opposition—2:19. Some of the most bitter enemies of the Israelites began to oppose this work. The two leaders of the opposition were Sanballat, which means, "hate in disguise," and Tobiah. Sanballat was of the Moabites and Tobiah of the Ammonites, blood-relatives, offspring of Lot in his sin after his deliverance from Sodom. These two men represent those who profess to be children of God and are not. They were spurious enemies of the Lord's people, just as many religionists are enemies of the Cross of Christ (Titus 1:10-16).

They believed God—2:20. The enemies knew they were going to rebuild the wall and bring Israel back to their God given separation. Nehemiah's answer to this opposition was magnificent, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us." He put God first and his utter confidence in God inspired the people to trust Him too. He believed that God would intervene because it was God's work. Nehemiah spoke with courage, boldness, and authority to the enemy.

Building and Repairing the Gates

Nehemiah 3:1-32

Introduction

This whole chapter of Nehemiah reminds us of I Corinthians 3:11-12. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

This chapter tell us of building for God. Jerusalem was built with twelve gates, ten of which are mentioned. Beginning at the sheep gate of Jerusalem, these verses take us on a tour clockwise from the west to the north, to the east, and back again south to the sheep gate.

The Sheep Gate -- Nehemiah 3:1,32

At the sheep gate the work started. Through this gate, the sacrificial animals were led to the altar in the temple. This gate would have given constant witness to the fact that *"without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22).

This gate is a type of Christ who was led as a *"lamb to the slaughter."* It pictures the blessed work of the Lamb of God for sin (John 1:29; Hebrews 12:1,2). All that we have and are begins at the sheep gate, for the person and work of Christ is the starting point of true restoration. This must be guarded above all else (Ephesians 2:8-10).

At the close of Nehemiah three, this gate is mentioned again. It is with the great truth of the blood of Jesus Christ applied to sin that all repairing of the inroads of the flesh and the world must start and end (John 10:9). This is the gate that leads to life and into His very presence (Titus 2:11-14; John 14:6).

The Fish Gate -- Nehemiah 3:3-5

We do not know why this gate was called a fish gate. Perhaps there was a fish market nearby, or perhaps this was the gate through which the fisherman returned home. This gate does remind us of the words of Christ, *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Mark 1:17).

After we have passed through the sheep gate of salvation, we must go through the fish gate. First, salvation in the Lamb of God, and then we are called to be fishers of souls for Him. In this way the work of God is built up, the church is built up and Christ is lifted up. It is interesting that Hassenaah's name means "lifted up." He was the chief builder at this gate. We must lift up Christ before others (John 3:14).

The Old Gate -- Nehemiah 3:6

The old gate was also called the "corner gate." This old gate reminds us of Christ, the corner stone (I Peter 2:6-7). *"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, who is the cornerstone upon whom all rests."* (John 5:39; Luke 24:27; Revelation 1:8,13-18).

The Valley Gate -- Nehemiah 3:13

The valley gate was repaired by Hanun, meaning "gracious," and the inhabitants of Zanoah, which meant "broken." It pictures the low place of humility (I Peter 5:6; James 4:6,7).

The Dung Gate -- Nehemiah 3:14

The dung gate was used to carry refuse and filth out of the city. This gate reminds us of the exhortation to us today *"to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"* (II Corinthians 7:1; I Thessalonians 4:7).

The Gate of the Fountain -- Nehemiah 3:15 The fountain ever flowing is a blessed type or picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to fill us with overflowing blessing (John 7:37-39). The "wells of water" springing up like a fountain can be ours only when we have put away all sin. Sin defiles; sin hinders the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill and use clean vessels.

The Water Gate -- Nehemiah 3:2,6,27

The water gate is mentioned and the Nethinim, servants who dwelt in Ophel, the high place, were connected with this gate.

This gate speaks of the Word of God as water (Ephesians 5:2,26; John 3:5; 13:1-16; 15:1-3; 17:17). Water is often a symbol of the blessed Word of God. The water of the Word is used by the Holy Spirit to build up our lives as we apply it daily (Acts 20:32).

The Horse Gate -- Nehemiah 3:28; II Kings 11:6; Jeremiah 31:40

The horse gate suggests warfare and victory. In a world of evil, the people of God wage a warfare. We wrestle against Satan, against principalities of the air (Ephesians 6:10-18). Paul exhorts us to be soldiers of Christ. Victory is on our side, but we must battle for Christ in that victory. Christ is coming one day on a great white horse. He will come triumphantly (Revelation 19:11).

The East Gate -- Nehemiah 3:29

From Ezekiel's prophecy we learn that the Shekina glory of God left Jerusalem through the east gate. When the glory of God returns to dwell once more in the Temple, the great temple of the Millennium, it will return through the east gate.

The east gate faces the rising of the sun. It suggests the coming of the Lord for His people. We wait for the rising (coming) of the Son.

The names of those who worked on this gate fit wonderfully. Shemaiah means *"heard of the Lord"* and Shechaniah means *"habitation of the Lord."* Those who "hear" (Matthew 24:44) in the hour of His coming will be in the habitation with Him.

The Miphkad Gate -- Nehemiah 3:31

This gate means the *"appointed place."* It also means the place of *"visitation."* This was probably the gate in which the Judges sat to settle disputes and controversies. It suggests the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10).

5

The Starting Place for All Nehemiah 3

Introduction

This third chapter of Nehemiah is a remarkable one. Here we see God's people at work building and repairing. God gives a record of the names of the people, where they worked and how they labored. God keeps such a record of all His servants and their labors. When all His people appear one day before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the books will be opened and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (I Corinthians 3:8;11 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12).

Rebuilding the wall pictures the guarding of the place of privilege and blessing. A wall of separation is needed to keep out that which is undesirable and that which would hinder and mar the true worship and service for the Lord. We must be protected from the world, from all that is contrary to sound doctrine, and from every aspect of sin (Titus 2:11-14).

It is thrilling to see how they labored to rebuild the wall. They strengthened their hands for that great task. Our attention is drawn to a phrase which is found four times in this chapter: "He repaired over against his house." That is where the real work for God must begin, at home.

The Walls of Prayer -- Nehemiah 3:10

Jedaiah repaired near his home. His name means "*invoker of God.*" His life was founded by prayer, and doubtless as he worked, he prayed that God would use him. He was determined to repair the wall near his home.

We must repair the walls of our prayer life. Our homes should be homes of prayer. Do we have a family devotional time? Are we teaching our children to pray? Or does the wall of your family prayer life lie in ruin? (I Samuel 2:12,17; 3:11-14). Consider the prayer life of Joshua and Abraham (Joshua 24:15; Genesis 18:17-33).

The Walls of Protection -- Nehemiah 3:23

Benjamin and Bashub repaired near home. Bashub's name meant "*associate.*" He was a helper in the labors. Benjamin's name meant "*the son of my right hand.*" Literally the "*one who is there to protect me.*"

We must build up the walls of protection. Do we do our part in building up the home? What about being protected from worry, fear, friction, and unhappiness in the home? (Ephesians 4:30-32; Colossians 3:8-17). How precious is the home where all dwell in love, in peace, and in joy. The Lord Jesus taught us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and then every need will be met (Matthew 6:33).

The father in the home is responsible before God to lead his family in obedience to God. When the children obey their parents, the wife is submissive to her husband, and the husband leads as he should, then the walls of protection will be built up (Ephesians 5:21-33).

The Walls of Integrity -- Nehemiah 3:29

Zadok built up the walls against his home. Zadok's name means "*justice.*" He was a father who practiced being just, right, and honest. He walked in integrity. He was the son of Immer, whose name meant "*talkative.*" When we consider the characteristic "*talkative*" we are reminded that the tongue is a destroyer. What destroys homes more than the tongue? As Christian we must be careful to use our tongue wisely, to speak words of kindness and love (James 3:1-18).

We must build up the walls of integrity. To walk in integrity means to walk honestly, and faithfully. One of the worst blights in America today is the blight of the

broken home. Homes are ruined because people break their promises, their marriage vows. Because they use their tongue evilly. Because they do not honor and cherish one another. Often the wall of integrity is broken down because of gossip, a mean tongue, cursing, slander, anger, and hatred.

In your home do you criticize the preacher, the deacons, your church, or your fellow Christians? Do you carelessly pull apart God's work by the flippant, critical, and gossiping use of your tongue. Are you building up or tearing down the walls of integrity?

The Walls of Dedication -- Nehemiah 3:30

We read of Meshullam building over against his chamber. He may have had a very small home, maybe only one room. But God gives an account of his work.

He was devoted. Meshullam's name meant "*one who is devoted*" and his father's name meant "*the Lord blessed him.*" The Lord brings riches and blessings to our lives, and He blessed Meshullam. Meshullam's life speaks of complete dedication, of full surrender. He probably lived a sacrificial life in service for the Lord.

We must build up the walls of dedication. A home set apart for God in every way is what God demands. He wants nothing but our best, our all. What kind of dedication is there in your life and home?

What does dedication mean?

Dedication is a fundamental fact of the faith for all those who accept Christ as Savior. Dedication begins with a specific decision and act. It is a glorious privilege.

- a. The Call to Dedication (Romans 6:13; 12:1) It is a call to all who are His. It is God's call to every saved person. Dedication is a duty, a responsibility of every individual and family unit.
- b. The Reason for Dedication (Romans 12:1-2). We should dedicate ourselves to God because we are under grace (Romans 6:14). His mercy and grace are shown to us in the sacrificial death of Christ (Romans 12:1).
- c. The Nature of Dedication. Dedication is a yielding of the will and life to the Lord. It is presenting the body as a living sacrifice (II Corinthians 5:15).
- d. The Measure of Dedication is based upon our willingness to do His will (Colossians 2:6).
- e. The Product of Dedication is fruitfulness (John 15:16). Joy and satisfaction become part of our life as we serve Him in His victory.
- f. The Product of Dedication is fruitfulness (John 15:16). Joy and satisfaction become part of our life as we serve Him in His victory.

Overcoming For God Nehemiah 4:1-9

Introduction

Being an "overcomer" is God's will for every saved person. The book of Nehemiah is an account of a godly layman "overcoming" for the glory of God.

The New Testament has much to say about our "overcoming" for the Lord. Note particularly the following verses: Revelation 2:7; 2:17; 2:26; 3:12; 3:21; John 16:3; Romans 12:21; 1 John 5:4,5. As we study the life work of one of the great Bible characters of the Old Testament, it is evident that he knew how to overcome. God's will for us is that we might overcome the power of sin, the world, and its pull toward sin, and the old nature that we received at birth (Romans 6:6-14).

It was Nehemiah's courage and determination, his faith and passion to serve the Lord that made all the difference. The work was going forward and the victory being won because he dared to believe God in the midst of terrible opposition. We need to learn well and apply the lessons we see in this chapter.

Ridicule of the Enemy -- Nehemiah 4:1-3

The enemy did all they could to heap scorn and contempt upon Nehemiah and the people of the Jerusalem area.

Severe and crushing ridicule. The enemy said, "You are nothing; you are weak and your task is impossible. God isn't going to notice what you're doing. God won't help you." They tried to crush the spirit of the Israelites, to discourage them from the task that God had given them to do.

Ridicule in our lives today. Often husbands ridicule and criticize their wives because they seek to serve the Lord and love Christ. Why? because the husband doesn't have the same walk with the Lord and is convicted about it. Many parents scorn and ridicule their children, even for their service for the Lord. Young people desire to serve the Lord, but parents sometimes discourage and ridicule their children for this desire.

Satan often uses professing Christians to discourage and ridicule others. The backslidden, carnal Christian may lead in contempt and scorn (Psalm 1:1). They scorn those who are on fire for Christ as "fanatics." They scorn those who speak plainly for Christ and the emphasis upon serving Christ with our all.

In a similar manner the religious world derided Christ, smote Him, mocked Him, and opposed Him (Hebrews 12:1-4, 12-15). The servant is not greater than his Lord. We need to realize that Satan will always attack those who are wholeheartedly serving Christ. He never bothers the half-hearted, the indifferent or backslidden (II Corinthians 2:11; I Peter 5:8,9; Ephesians 4:27; Romans 8:37).

Recourse by Prayer and Work -- Nehemiah 4:4-6

The word "**recourse**" means to "*run back, to resort, or make application for, source of aid, or access.*" Nehemiah knew the place of aid. When the troubles came, he returned to seek God's help. He knew the way to "overcome" every opposition of the enemy. If we would be victorious for God, Satan will do his uttermost to defeat us. Victory is ours only through Christ (Romans 8:37).

First he prayed—4:4,5. He did not meet the scorn of the enemy with scorn. He did not answer back. He did not worry how to face this onslaught of hatred. Instead he "*thanked God, and took courage*" (Philippians 4:4-7). Prayer will bring encouragement.

It serves to clear the air and drive off the cloud of despair. It brings joy and peace to endure. When Nehemiah prayed, he saw the enemies in their true light. He considered the source of their hatred and took heart.

Then they worked—4:6. Although the enemy sought to dishearten them, they took courage and concentrated on the task before them (Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 20:28). They were like Christ, "among you, as one that serveth." "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." They had a mind to labor and strive for God's glory.

The work of the enemy of our souls is to cause us to cease laboring for Christ. The devil seeks to divert our energies into revenge, fault-finding, gossip, and discouragement. If we have no heart to pray, we will have no heart to work.

Reaction of the Enemy -- Nehemiah 4:7-8

You can mark it down, when God is blessing, Satan is also at work. Now Satan was leading the enemies of God to forcibly withstand the Israelites.

An alliance of enemies. The Arabians, Ammonites, and the Ashdodites were warring factions who joined together in unity against Nehemiah and the work. Mutual enemies became friends in their determination to stamp out the work of God. (Christ faced the same thing when Pilate and Herod became friends in their enmity to Christ (Luke 22:63; 23:25-37).

A reaction of enemies today. The world will always be angry at a message that exposes sin (Acts 7:54-60). The world will be full of wrath as they were to Paul who openly, aggressively stood for Christ (I Corinthians 4:9-13). Satan is our arch-enemy and we wrestle against him (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Recourse By Prayer and Watching -- Nehemiah 4:9

As there will always be opposition, so there is constant, perfect access to God, and victory in Him (I John 5:1-5). Prayer to God is a blessed privilege (Mark 11 :22-24) and a personal blessing (John 14:13,14).

As we watch the enemy, we will be ready for the battles against sin. The New Testament teaches us much about the war we are in against principalities and powers (I Timothy 6:12; II Timothy 4:7; I Corinthians 16:13). Prayer is never an excuse for carelessness, for we must watch and pray (Luke 22:46; Matthew 26:41).

The Removal of Every Hindrance

Nehemiah 4:10

Introduction

And Judah said, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

We shall see that Nehemiah 4:10 is wonderfully illustrative of New Testament truth. To see the building go forward in that day they had to get rid of all rubbish. The New Testament teaches the saved to "put off" (mortify or put to death) many things of the sinful, carnal, or fleshly nature (Colossians 3:5-14).

Everything seemingly was going well for Nehemiah and the workers. The king had gladly equipped them, the people had gone forth to work, they had met opposition with a mind to work, a heart to pray, and an eye to watch.

But now something very serious comes to light. Something that universally has hindered the work of God. They had faced the external foes, but now the problem that surfaced was internal.

Judah, of all people, complained and threatened to revolt in discouragement. "We're getting weak, feeble—there's too much rubbish; it's too hard a job."

The Rubbish Must Go

In order to build a strong solid foundation, the rubbish had to be cleared away. Before the walls could go up, they had to clear out the old foundation, the broken pieces of the former wall, and lay a solid foundation.

The Church today has always had to contend with a certain amount of rubbish. There are things that hinder and defile the church, such as traditions of men, false doctrines and philosophies, prejudice, paganism, heathenism, and false theories and interpretations of Scripture. God has had His warriors throughout history to deal with the rubbish. Paul battles carnality (I Corinthians 3:1-4), and false doctrines (Titus 1:9-16). John battles false doctrine (I John 4:1-6).

When the church is hindered by some worldly philosophy or teaching, the mission of the church to bring people to Christ is also hindered. These hindrances must be overcome before the work of the church can go forward.

There may be rubbish in the personal life. There is a "building" going up in each one of us today, and often there is much "rubbish." That building is the *"new nature, the new creation in us"* (II Corinthians 5:17; I Corinthians 6:9-20). When we read Philippians 1:6 and 2:13 we are made aware that God is working in us, and that He will continue to do so. But we must cooperate by removing every hindering sin within.

Think of the shed blood (I John 1:5-7), the blessed Holy Spirit (John 14:16-21,26) and the presence of God on our behalf. God wants to manifest Himself in us so that we might become *"his peculiar people, zealous unto good works"* (Titus 2:14).

We must face the "rubbish" in our lives. Daily we will find new things within that are sin (Psalm 139:23,24). We often think of ourselves as strong, but in reality, in our flesh we are weak. We must take heed lest we fall (I Corinthians 10:11-13). We must face the sins of pride, anger, self-pity, evil desires, indifference and unbelief.

We must find and remove the "foul" heap of sin. We must see our sin as God sees it, the sins of the thought life, of word, and of deed.

Rubbish Can Be Successfully Removed

I remember a family in Denver telling of the many truck loads of rubbish they had to remove from a house they had rented. Finally the rubbish was successfully removed. Sin can be put away in our lives also, completely and fully.

By having a firm foundation—I Corinthians 3:11. It is a foundation that we build upon. Nehemiah and the people of Israel had to build upon a foundation when they built the wall. We must build upon the foundation which is Christ. There is no place where we can remain secure and strong except at the foot of the cross. There at the cross there is victory (II Corinthians 12:9; I Corinthians 10:13). Christ is the "Rock" upon whom we must build. He is the Solid Rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

By judging the flesh—Romans 7:18; I Corinthians 11-15. Put no confidence in the flesh. That which we do in the power of our self effort will be wood, hay, and stubble at the Judgment Seat of Christ (John 15:1-8; Ephesians 6:10). Never depend upon your self-effort. Judge the self-life, reckon it dead. And then learn to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-13; 6:11-14).

By yielding to the Holy Spirit -- Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:1-4. The Holy Spirit will search out the heart, He will reveal sin. He will use the Word of God in our hearts and lives as we read it and seek to follow its commandments. The Holy Spirit will lead and guide in each step of life and cause Christ to be formed in us (Romans 8:5-14,29).

By building godly character in our lives—II Peter 1:3-10. We must apply the precious promises of God (II Peter 1:3,4). We must appropriate the divine nature (v. 4). We must grow in Christian disciplines (vv. 5-7). We must admit our sin and put it away so that we will not be unfruitful (vv. 8,9). As we admit our sin, and grow in Christ, we will realize an abundance in our lives (vv. 10-11).

Conclusion

Whatever rubbish there is in our lives, the Holy Spirit is there to conquer it. The blood of Christ is there to answer for cleansing and the Father will strengthen us. Let us never be satisfied until we mirror daily His likeness.

On To Victory Nehemiah 4:11-23

Introduction

By this time much had been done to the walls of Jerusalem. Forty groups of people are mentioned in chapter three who had been laboring faithfully. But always with God's blessings comes Satan's onslaughts. If we are not troubled with the work of the enemy, if Satan is leaving us alone, we should doubt if we truly are saved, or admit that we are backslidden.

The walls were now half up. In order to finish the job well, they now had to face the most difficult time of opposition. Satan actively resists even more when he sees a job near completion. In the personal Christian life, people often give up just short of victory. When they have a problem half conquered, then they give up. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. used to say, "The test of a man's character is what it takes to stop him."

Victory is something very important in our lives. Victory for the Christian personally (Romans 8:37; I John 5:4) and for His work is especially what God wants (Acts 9:31; 11:23-26).

The Timely Onslaught of the Enemy -- Nehemiah 4:11.12

When the walls were half up and the people were weary of the burdens, then the enemy renewed their attack. The people were disheartened and discouraged, their interest was at a low ebb, and then the enemy put on a new offensive.

The new attack came in the form of ruthless speech. The enemy threatened to close in and kill the people of God. They threatened to halt the work at whatever cost. Nehemiah and the leaders of the people were warned of the plan of the enemy ten times. Various people went to them with their reasons for quitting, with their fears of the enemy's power.

Satan did all he could to frighten the people and bring God's work to a standstill. He will bring many things to press in upon us as Christians today too. He will bring demands on our time, drudgeries, negative comments, and criticism, even threats from others (Isaiah 40:28,30; Luke 18:1).

Typical Reaction to Such Opposition -- Nehemiah 4:14

The immediate reaction is usually fear. Nehemiah had to urge the people to trust in God and not be afraid of the enemy. Even the nobles, the rulers, had to be encouraged. Fear is the great enemy of the Christian (Exodus 14:13; Joshua 1:5-7,9). This is one of the reasons that the Lord says "Fear not..." over three hundred times in the Bible. Satan uses fear as one of his chief weapons (I Peter 5:8-9). Nothing is more paralyzing than fear and dread.

From all sides the people voiced their fears until Nehemiah could have felt that it was hopeless to continue. Pessimism and fear can bring feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (II Timothy 4:16,17). We fear when we live too close to the enemy and pay attention to the circumstances we find ourselves in. We can overcome fear when we live close to the Lord and make His promises ours. We fear when we lack the spiritual strength of a close walk to God. We will have spiritual power when we rely upon the Holy Spirit's power within us (Acts 18:9-11; 27:21-25).

True Reason for the Enemies' Opposition -- Nehemiah 4:7

Why all the fury, hate, and trouble? Had Nehemiah threatened them? Had the

Israelites wronged these tribes? No! Satan had concentrated his energies to hinder the work of God through these tribes. Satan will never bring opposition to dead orthodoxy, but when the Holy Spirit is blessing, then Satan is there to stir up the enemies of God (Ephesians 6: 11-13).

Satan desired to bring an end to the work, to defeat the testimony of God's people. Does your life and testimony for Christ arouse the opposition of Satan? Does your victory in Christ show forth in your life as it did in Nehemiah's life? Are you so close to the world that you are never a threat to the enemy? Consider your life and testimony.

Three-Fold Battle Cry of Victory -- Nehemiah 4:14-23

Remember the Lord—4:14. It is immediately evident that Nehemiah looked up. He spread his griefs and doubts before the Lord. He realized that this was the Lord's cause and that only He could prosper it. Nehemiah encouraged the people to wait upon the Lord (compare with Isaiah 40:28-31).

Fight for your brethren—4:14. Everything was at stake— their lives and their homes. Nehemiah set them in array for the battle and challenged them to fight. There are times in life when we must battle, just as the Israelites faced a battle with the enemy of God (I Corinthians 16:9,13).

Resist the enemy 4:14. They were fully armed, ready to resist the enemy. When the enemy heard that the Israelites were prepared to meet them they realized that they could not take the Israelites by surprise.

Nehemiah wisely devised a way for victory. Half were to be building each day, and the other half were to watch for the enemy. As they worked, they always had a weapon at hand in case they might need it. They did what they could to protect themselves while trusting the Lord for victory (v. 20).

We must be armed for warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). We must know how to wield the Sword of the Spirit, the prayer life, the shield of faith, and yet be actively laboring at the same time. Although we should be resisting the enemy, Satan, we must also offensively go forward for God in service.

The strategy of the enemy is to get us to stop praying and stop working. He would have us answering the enemy, spending time in defense and neglecting the work. We must answer all the enemies' attacks with good conscience, strong convictions, and continued labors (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8,9).

The battle is constant, but the victory is ours in Christ. Let's "go on to victory" in battling and building for God. The Israelites gave their all and we should do likewise (Nehemiah 4:22-23).

The Conquest of Internal Dissension

Nehemiah 5:1-19

Introduction

The people of Israel had faced external foes of scorn, ridicule, pressure, threats, and outward readiness of war against them, and the internal foes of rubbish and fear. These had been faced victoriously, courageously, and wonderfully as they prayed, worked, and watched.

Now the worst problem came upon them, a problem of internal dissension. This was the most difficult problem Nehemiah ever faced. This problem nearly wrecked the work and will of God in that hour. The lack of unity, the disruption of divisions and a party spirit, and the misunderstandings and sin almost brought God's work to a stand-still. The same kind of internal dissensions can ruin a church today.

Factor's Involved -- Nehemiah 5:1-5

Material lack. There was a food crisis, a famine. This was caused because all of the energies of the people had gone into the work on the wall and little planting was done. The population had increased as people arrived from Persia to help with this project. They were living in the midst of a very unsettled state, with heavy taxation from the Persian government. Some people in their poverty were forced to sell all they had and even sold their children into slavery.

Desire for personal gain. Some people took advantage of the situation. The rich were looking to gain more wealth. They granted loans and charged high interest rates. They took the sons of the debtors and sold them into slavery. There were many misunderstandings, much suspicion and friction between the people. Hatred and division began to build.

The people had been united in objective, but became divided as the famine increased. Dissension grew and harmed God's work. Dissension in churches today is caused by division of interests and goals, a spirit of criticism and suspicion. There can be no victory, no blessing, no revival when Christians are divided. We must do what is right. God commands us to do right (I Corinthians 10:31,32; James 4:17; Judges 21:25; Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 6:18; I Kings 15:5; Proverbs 16:25).

Forthright Action -- Nehemiah 5:6

Nehemiah challenged the offenders—5:7-9. There was prompt, drastic action. Nehemiah called all the assembly together, the nobles, priests, and the common men. He exhorted them about their sin (v. 9; II Timothy 4:2; I Timothy 5:20,24).

Nehemiah appealed to them by personal example 5:8,11,15. He did not exact usury, or taxes although he was governor. Although he had a right to demand fees, he didn't. He labored like the rest, and had even redeemed some of the brethren who had been sold into the hands of the enemy (v. 8).

The leaders admitted their sin—5:11-13. Restitution was demanded and the leaders admitted their blame and wrong. They took an oath to give back lands and vineyard that they had gained through trickery and deceit.

Nehemiah gave his personal testimony—5:15. His attitude was that he feared the Lord and refused to comply with custom or follow the crowds. Because of his reverence for God, he had not indulged in taking taxes from the people, nor defrauding them in the time of need (II Corinthian 10:12). His motive was a fear of the Lord and a trust in the Lord. He had the power of God to resist these types of sins (II Corinthians 5:11; I Peter 4:17).

So very often the world places a higher standard upon our Christianity than many Christians do. Too many Christians are very anxious that everybody recognize they are as different as chalk from cheese in matters of doctrine, but that they are not a bit different in matters of practice. But Nehemiah could say, "So did I." Far too many saved follow the crowd into sin (Psalm 1:1-6; . Titus 2:14). It ought to be "so did not I, because of my love for Jesus."

Further Need

Unity of purpose. The people needed to get back to their true purpose, to bring glory to God. They needed to renew their first vision and love (Revelation 2:4-5; 3:15). They needed to get back to their first unity and goal (Nehemiah 2:18-20).

Cleansing of heart. A clean heart, and renewed right spirit were needed. (Psalm 51:10). When their spirit and attitudes were wrong, God could not bless them. They needed to put away the secret sins and begin to serve God (Psalm 19:12-14).

Renewed faithfulness. They were stewards and they needed to be faithful (I Corinthians 4:2). One of the great needs today is a renewed determination to be faithful. Nehemiah had been faithful in every way and he was calling the people to be faithful to God, too.

Conclusion

There is an attitude to maintain for the cause of Christ (Galatians 6:14,17). To bring glory to God is the motive that should inspire us to serve God (I Corinthians 10:31,32; Ephesians 1:12; Colossians 3:17). The power of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, will enable us to do right (II Timothy 1:7-9). Every internal problem between Christians can be put away and God can have the victory in our lives if we are jealous for the honor and glory of God.

The Final Stand of Opposition Nehemiah 6:-16

Introduction

We find a most important word in verse 15: "So the wall was finished." This was a real note of victory that in fifty-two days, the wall was finished. They had endured conflict until the end. They had met all the opposition in the name of the Lord, "with a heart to pray, a mind to work, and a will to watch."

There is a two-fold reason why they were successful. "**The work was wrought by our God.**" This was the divine side. "**They worked unitedly.**" This was the human side. Success for God always includes these two parts, divine and human. In salvation, in dedication, in the Spirit-filled life, there is always the divine part, and the human part. The human part is our action of will to surrender to God and do His will.

Nehemiah triumphed because he was doing a work which God had initiated, empowered, and brought to a successful end. God worked in Nehemiah's heart, gave the burden, and the ability to lead. Likewise He works in our hearts, burdens us to do His will and then gives us the power and ability to accomplish that will. God's great desire today is to complete His work in the hearts of man. God took Nehemiah, a man through whom He could work, and made him a clear channel through which He could work His purposes.

Although the Lord had empowered them to do the work, and it was accomplished in record time, there was still opposition to come. There were deceitful attacks by the enemy who still sought to defeat God's work.

Facing the Snare of the World's Friendship -- Nehemiah 6:1-4

When the work was in the earliest stages the enemy used ridicule, scorn, abuse, and threats. They wanted to attack and fight. Now that the work was finished, they tried a more subtle tactic. Now they came as "*angels of light*" rather than "*roaring lions*." This tactic was really more dangerous than the open opposition (I Peter 5:7-9; II Corinthians 11:13-18; II Corinthians 2:1 1).

Repeated requests. "*Come, let us meet together...*" Plainly, this was a deceitful enticement (I Peter 1:22; I Timothy 1:5). These tribes wanted to make an alliance of friendship with the Israelites. They pretended to be friendly, desiring to fool Nehemiah (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Real truth. The truth was that they desired Nehemiah to come down to their level. They wanted him to compromise. Perhaps they urged him not to be extreme, fanatical, or narrow. Nehemiah had an answer to their friendly pleas. He said that the work would cease, and that the work was a high priority to him. He didn't want to leave the work to meet with the enemy.

Why should we leave the work of God to meet the enemy halfway? Why do we as Christians often compromise? To compromise is to be diverted from God's work by Satan's strategy of deceit as we enter into the world's interests and desires. If we become occupied with the things of the world, we will be unable to give strength to the primary task of building God's work (I John 2:15-17).

Facing the World's Slander -- Nehemiah 6:5-9

The slander did not come from the heathen, but from some of God's own people. These people did not walk in love, although they professed to be saved (I John 3:17-16). They spread rumors and misrepresentations. They sought to defeat the Lord's work by gossiping.

God forbid that we should be tools in Satan's hands and be tempted to talk

scandalously about another. We must pray that the Lord will set a watch over our lips (Psalm 141:3).

Facing Treachery in the Name of Religion -- Nehemiah 6:10-14

Friendship with the enemy, and slander by God's people had both failed, so Satan tried another tactic. Now the enemy went to Nehemiah in "*sheep's clothing*." Here the enemy was manifest as an "*angel of light*" as never before.

Wrong invitation. The enemy schemed to get Nehemiah to act in advisedly to bring reproach upon his person. They paid Shemaiah to "reveal" a plot against Nehemiah's life. Shemaiah suggested that the Holy Place in the temple was the only safe place for him to hide. This suggestion showed Nehemiah that Shemaiah was treacherous because only the priests could go into the Holy Place. If Nehemiah had done this, his reputation would have been discredited, and confidence in his leadership would have been undermined.

It is strange, but there are those in churches today who find a strange pleasure in the fall of a Christian leader. To his face they are friendly, saintly, and helpful, but behind his back they are in mischief, and they are back-biting and complaining. They profess loyalty, but if leadership fails, they love to gossip it everywhere.

Positive reaction, 6:11-13. Nehemiah did not believe that he was so important that he should flee from those who would kill him. He would not go into the temple to hide. He knew that God had sent him there and that God would care for him (Romans 8:31,37). He did not need to fear man (Psalm 27:111). Fear would have shown he was guilty of a lack of faith. It is very important that we trust the Lord. Walking by faith is something we talk about but probably we don't understand what it means to fully, truly trust the Lord about everything in life. That hinges on our giving ourselves totally to Him in surrender and dedication. (II Cor. 8:5; Rom 14:9; II Cor. 5:14-15)

Facing Compromising Brethren -- Nehemiah 6:17-19

Wherever one would live, there are Christians who are willing to compromise morals and principles for the sake of others, for the sake of union and "love" (II Corinthians 10:12). They are willing to measure themselves among themselves, and they are not wise. Some of the Israelites followed Tobiah and were interrelated with the families of the enemies. They constantly reported to Tobiah what Nehemiah was doing, and aided Tobiah in intimidating Nehemiah.

It is possible to be "*married*" to the devil, to have an alliance with him and yield to the pressure of unsaved relatives. We should not compromise with those who are in alliance with Satan and the world.

God's Interest in the Details of Life

Nehemiah 7

Introduction

The Word of God reveals in many ways that the Heavenly Father is interested in every detail of the existence of the saved, even to the most insignificant areas of life. He who watches the sparrow fall, who keeps a record of even the hairs of one's head, is also interested in everything else that concerns us.

This chapter reveals that God is interested in us. The Holy Spirit led Nehemiah to write such detail in this chapter (II Peter 1:20,21). We can learn some important lessons from this chapter.

Protection Needed -- Nehemiah 7:1-14

The people of God needed protection. This is partly why the walls were rebuilt. God is interested in protecting us daily from the inroads of sin into our lives. Part of the Lord's prayer speaks of this: *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* I like Psalm 18 which speaks of the Lord as our deliverer, our defense, our strength, and our high-tower.

The walls were finished and the gates were set up. Porters, singers, and spiritual leaders were appointed, and now the charge of Jerusalem was given to Hanani and Hananiah.

The gate keepers were provided— 7:45; Ezra 2:42. They were to open the gates each morning and bar them at night. They were to guard the city carefully. In Christ's day, the Jews still had the custom of having four night watches each night (Mark 13:35). This was a wise precaution that brought safety and security.

The gates to the city were the only means of entrance into Jerusalem and they were heavily protected. God's people were safe within. Men were appointed as guards of the gates and within the city at their own houses. Just as God protected His people then, He protects his people today.

The door to salvation is provided. Christ is the door of salvation (John 10:9-11). He is the only way (Acts 4:12). The Church is His body, the assembly of His own. He is the "gate" into salvation.

The door to the church protected— II John 10,11; Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 4. Unsaved persons have no right to become members of a local church because they are not saved and do not belong to God. Those who do not believe the true doctrines of the Word of God have no right in the church. Many churches today do not care who enters in. They are quick to take members on the basis of their desire to have numbers. To be "in" the church is important, but that is only for the saved. The Scriptures teach us much about the importance of the Church for which Christ died. (Eph. 5:25)

People Counted -- Nehemiah 7:5-62; 66-67

Nehemiah gathered the people together and made a registration of each family. They were registered according to their genealogy. The list of the families is given. God made note of them. Each individual person in that population was important to God.

God takes note of you. He knows that you are His if you are saved, and He has written your name down in the Lamb's Book of Life. Someday your name will be read in Glory. You will only be there because your name is in that register.

The Book will be opened—Revelation 20:12,15. This important book of registration of God's chosen people will be opened, the Lamb's Book of Life.

The New Jerusalem will be the place of protection. God is preparing the New Jerusalem for the saved for all eternity (Revelation 21,22). It will be a pure place with

inhabitants whose names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27; Philippians 4:13; Revelation 13:8). The unsaved will not have their names in the Book of Life (Psalm 69:28; Revelation 17:8). The Christian's robes will be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and they will have all the rights that God will give them (Revelation 22:14).

Jerusalem of old was often a type or picture of the "*New Jerusalem*" that God is preparing (John 14:1-3). Just as they had their register and record of the people who were to live within the city, so God keeps the record of those who will be in that city, the New Jerusalem. We must be sure that we are saved.

People Rejected -- Nehemiah 7:61,63,64

Some could not show that they were of Israel. Some among the priests who were reckoned by genealogy, were not accepted because they were deemed polluted, and were expelled from the priesthood.

Proof of right was not theirs—7:61. The Israelites had no right to be in Israel if they could not prove they were descended from Abraham. We have no right to be in the family of God if we are not truly saved (Galatians 3:6-9). Proof of being born again would be the following things: proof based upon decision (John 1:12; Romans 10:9,10; I John 5:13); proof based upon change of life (II Corinthians 5:17); proof based upon the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16; I John 4:13); proof based upon our love to the brethren (John 13:34,35; I John 3:14); and proof from an obedient life (I John 2:3-6).

Proof of position was not theirs either —7:63-64. Some were rejected because they had married into heathen families, and were considered polluted. The saved today are "*priests*" unto God. As priests they should be very concerned about a pure, holy, separated life (I Peter 2:2,5,9; I Peter 1:14-17). God hates everything that comes from the flesh and the sinful nature (Romans 8:5-8).

Provision Recognized -- Nehemiah 7:68-73

It is wonderful how God makes note of how the people gave unto the Lord. Here He gives the record of their gifts. God is always interested in how we give, and in what we give. In this connection note the story in Mark 12:41-44. He beholds how we give; He is watching (II Corinthians 9:6-8). He beholds sacrificial giving and superficial giving. When we give for His glory, God will take note, and we will be rewarded in heaven.

The Source of Strength and Victory

Nehemiah 8:1-18

Introduction

The book of Nehemiah could be divided into two main parts. Chapters 1-6 deal with rebuilding the walls. Chapters 7-13 are a renewal of instruction for the people of God. Just as the walls were broken down, the people were in great spiritual need. Nehemiah now fades out of the picture and Ezra, the scribe steps on the scene in chapter 8. He had been in Jerusalem about thirteen years longer than Nehemiah, and had been working alongside Nehemiah all this time.

There is no experience in our Christian life, no matter how triumphant, which imparts to us strength for the future. Although they had the victory of accomplishment and the walls were now finished, they still had many spiritual needs. Only the grace of God and the victory in the Lord could cause them to go on for God.

At the moment of achievement, there is nothing more necessary than that the people of God be brought under the sound of the Word of God. We want to see the source of strength and victory which was theirs and is ours today.

Victory Through the Power of the Word -- Nehemiah 8:1-8

The Word was brought—8:1-2. The people met together at the Water Gate. They brought their children who were old enough to understand God's Word. They called for the Word of God, "*bring the book,*" was their cry. Ezra brought the Law, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Word was read and taught—8:3-4,7-8. Ezra read God's Word and explained the meaning. He wanted to be sure that they all understood what was read.

The people wonderfully responded—8:3 4-6,9. The people stood for hours and as they listened, they thrilled and worshipped the Lord. They wept for joy at the giving of the Word of God. This is a tremendous scene of hunger for the Scriptures.

The importance of God's Word for us. We are saved by hearing, and applying the Word of God to our hearts and lives (I Peter 1:23). We are given faith by hearing (Romans 10:17). We are made clean by applying and heeding the Word of God (John 17:17; 15:3). We are edified by the Word (Acts 20:32). We are led by the Word (Psalm 119:105). We are successful in our lives through the power of the Word in our lives (Joshua 1:8,9). We are fruitful as God uses His Word in our lives and through our lives to touch others (Psalm 1:2,3).

The place the Bible must have in our lives. We have the blessings of the purpose of God's Word for it is for our instruction, reproof, doctrine, and correction (II Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible must have first place in our affections (Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119:121). It must have a place of faith as we trust God's Word (Hebrews 3:8-13,19; 11:6). It must be in a place of rule, as we allow God's Word to rule us (John 15:10; 1 4:23,24). We should have a great love for God's Word, (Job 23:12; Psalm 19:9,10). And it must have a permanent place of honor in our lives (John 15:1-8; Colossians 3:16).

There is never any victory for us as Christians except to the extent that the Word of God abides in us, and we walk in the direction of His Word. Psalm 32:8 becomes a reality when the Word of God is studied, loved, and applied.

Victory Through Rejoicing in the Lord -- Nehemiah 8:10-12

It is interesting to note how often the Word of God tells us to rejoice. The "*joy of the Lord*" is indeed our strength. It is the joyful, overcoming Christian who has victory and is also the advertisement of what a Christian ought to be. He becomes a blessing in every area of life.

Joy is based upon forgiveness. The Israelites were grieved because of their sin (vv. 10,11). They had worshiped God and the Word of God had been heard and applied. They had thrilled and rejoiced in hearing the Word read (Psalm 51:10-12).

Joy is commanded -- 8:10; Philippians 4:4; I Thessalonians 5:16. We control our emotions by what we meditate upon. When we think about the things of God, the blessings He has given us, and the wonderful aspects of life, we will have true joy. We can control our fears and anxieties, our depressions and discouragements by thinking upon that which is pure, holy, and lovely (Philippians 4:8). Rejoicing in the Lord can become a habit of life.

Joy is to be in the Lord -- 8:10. We should rejoice in the person and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should rejoice in His promises and provisions for our lives.

Joy brings strength—Isaiah 26:3. Joy will affect the whole person. Gladness affects our efficiency. If we think about discouragements, and become despondent, we will walk in self-pity and not rejoice in the Lord.

When we rejoice in Him, our hearts become light, our soul is at rest, and the work for the Lord becomes easier (Matthew 11:28-30). Such joy is independent of outward circumstances (Acts 16:25). Joy in the Lord should be a natural fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22,23). Joy is an important ingredient in the Christian's life.

God's Prescription for Revival Nehemiah 9:-38; 10:-39

Introduction

God's will is that His people might be in a constant state of revival. Revival is literally "having the blessing, and power of God upon us." Revival is evidenced in one's life by the manifestation of the power of God, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit in character and in soul winning.

Acts chapter four sets forth a church in a state of revival. It was a praying church, a powerful church, and a soul winning church. Evangelism and revival are not identical. Evangelism will be the result of being in a state of revival.

*The Jews needed a gracious out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. They needed the glorious results of revival in their midst at this time. In this chapter we see the basic ingredients of revival -- **the "prescription" for revival**. Any person, and any church that will apply these truths will naturally be in a state of revival. To introduce new converts into a dead church, into a church of backslidden Christians is a great wrong. The church needs to be constantly exercised about being on "**fire**" for God. When we apply the four principles we want to look at now, we will have revival (II Chronicles 7:14).*

A Broken Heart, a Humble Spirit -- Nehemiah 9;1,2

The walls had been rebuilt. The Law of God had again been taught. God's people had the gladness of the joy of the Lord. But now we see them in fasting, and self-humiliation.

God calls us to humble ourselves (Psalm 51:17; Luke 14:11; Psalm 34:18). God wants us to deny ourselves (Matthew 16:24). We should have a contrite and tender heart. We should put away pride, (James 4:7-10) and break up the fallow ground of pride (Hosea 10:12).

The result of being joyful in the Lord and applying the Word of God is seen in Nehemiah chapter eight as they put away a hard, unbroken spirit. The soil of the heart was watered with the tears of repentance as well as with tears of joy. Humility brings the blessing of God (I Peter 5:5,6).

Meditation on the Greatness of God -- Nehemiah 9:4-38

Most of chapter nine is made up of the utterance of prayer and praise. It contains the glorious recounting of the power, provision, and protection of God for the Israelites in days before. Here we see a constant repetition of God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, and glory in their midst!

They recounted all that God had done for them.

- a. Praise for who God is (9:6; 10-15).
- b. Praise for God's covenant (9:7,8,32).
- c. Praise for God's guidance (9:19,20).
- d. Praise for God's provision (9:20-25).

The Recognition of Sin -- Nehemiah 9:16-18; 26-31

"But we have dealt proudly, but we rebelled, nevertheless they were disobedient..." It is easy to see that intermingled with the blessed story of God's faithfulness is the sad story of sin. Don't we often hear stories of rebellion, indifference, and coldness to God in the lives of Christians?

The Israelites had spent three hours in prayer and worship; three hours in heart searching and confession of sin. It takes time for that spirit of prayer and submission to bring about a full confession of sin and wrong. (9:1-4)

Psalms 32 and 51 so clearly set forth the need of thorough confession (Psalm 51:1-6), thorough repentance, and wondrous cleansing (Psalm 51:2,7-10; Psalm 32:1-5; II Corinthians 7:1; I John 1:7-9).

The Renewal of Obedience -- Nehemiah 9:30; 10:29-39

One of the greatest responsibilities set forth in the New Testament is that of obedience on the part of God's own (John 14:21-34; 15:10; I John 2:1-5).

In the Old Testament the obedience of God's people was a compelling duty, but ours today should be the result of love. Revival always leads one to obey God (Nehemiah 10:29,30).

Revival in our lives will bring us to obedience in every aspect of God's will for us. We will naturally restore the family altar. We will put discipline in our lives. We will begin to walk with the Lord in daily study of His Word and prayer. We will become faithful in our church attendance (Nehemiah 10:39).

We will manifest:

- a. A walk in obedience.
- b. A walk after Christ—I John 2:6; Nehemiah 10:29.
- c. A walk in surrender—Romans 6:13,22.
- d. A walk in submission—Romans 12:1,2
- e. A walk in service—Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 10:25; Nehemiah 9:38-39.

Conclusion

It should be our desire to walk in constant revival. If we will meet the requirements daily, we can have the constant blessing of a revived state. Without that we will become cold, backslidden, and like a fruitless vine that needs purging (John 15:1-8).

Secrets of Success in Service

Nehemiah 11:1-36; 12:1-47

Introduction

To walk in the secrets which God reveals is to have much joy and fruitfulness in service. I am sure that Psalm 1:1-3 gives us some precious secrets for service. Also Colossians 3:15-17 gives us a three-fold secret in service.

These secrets are not hidden. They are revealed in the Word of God. But they appear to be secrets in that they seem to be known by so few. If we would make truths like the above portions our very own we would have a far greater joy and victory in our service.

At this time about 50,000 were dwelling in the city of Jerusalem. They were in danger of attack. They were numerically at a disadvantage (Nehemiah 7:4). Nehemiah was deeply concerned about the people, and about their spiritual needs, too. We will now see that three words sum up the secrets of success.

Occupation

It was the part of wisdom for Nehemiah to have Jerusalem manned by the best warriors. It was planned that the princes should live there and that ten percent of the people, selected by lot, should take up their residence there also. Each one was to do his part in the occupation for the glory of God.

There is a New Testament truth in this. *"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:7).

We are to occupy for Christ— Luke 19:13.

We are to serve faithfully— I Corinthians 15:58.

We are to use God-given talents — Romans 12:3-15.

We are to buy up present opportunities -- Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:14-17.

Every parable which Christ gave about talents or pounds had to do with faithful occupation for His glory until He comes again. As they were to occupy Jerusalem and keep it safe, so we are to give ourselves freely in service to God.

Delegation -- Nehemiah 11:22-24; 12:44-47

A thorough study of Nehemiah chapter eleven shows that many were delegated certain tasks of ministry and service so that the work might be cared for.

Overseers - 11:14,22; 12:44,45. The overseers remind us of pastors (Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-4).

Oversight—11:16. The men who had oversight were in charge of the outward business of the house of God. They cared for finances, and for the grounds and buildings.

Musicians - 11:22,23; 12:46. A prominent place was reserved for the singers. They led in praise during the worship time. Their ministry was esteemed by all.

Praise and worship—11:17; 12:24. Some led in the praise and worship of the congregation of the people.

Every task was important and precious in God's sight. Nothing is obscure in God's sight if it is in His will and done for His glory. There should need be no strife, envy, contempt, ill will, or jealousy in God's work. When we study I Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-27, it is very evident that all who labor for the Lord are equally important, no matter the task. The important thing is that we apply I Corinthians 10:31-33 and Colossians 3:17.

Dedication -- Nehemiah 12:27-43

This portion gives us a study of the dedication of the wall which they had rebuilt. What a glorious day of dedication when they gave God the glory for His ministry among them! What a sight that must have been!

Dedication of goals and motives—12:27. The people dedicated their lives with gladness and with music (v. 28).

Dedication in purity and holiness -- 12:30. Their joy was not just skin deep. Their dedication was not just an empty, superficial thing. It had been with depth of heart and being. They first sanctified themselves. They set themselves apart with absolute sincerity and with intensity of purpose (II Thessalonians 5:23).

God demands holiness and a complete dedication of body, soul, and spirit. God must have our best. He cannot and will not use a dirty vessel (II Timothy 2:19-21).

Divided into two large companies -- 12:31-37; 12:38-42. They were divided into two large companies as they went forth together to bring glory to God in that great day of dedication and praise.

Dedication unto God—12:43. The wall had been built in fear and trembling and with great sacrifice. Now was an occasion to dedicate it to God with joy and in victory (Psalm 126:5,6). They had sown in tears and were now reaping in joy.

They were putting the city under God's care, acknowledging Him as Lord. They acknowledged that "*they labor in vain,*" unless God blessed.

So great was the joy of that day that their sound was heard abroad, among the heathen lost. It was a sound of great testimony (I Thessalonians 1:7-9). Their sacrifice was great that day. It must have been that they gave sacrificially of their belongings for the glory of God.

Conclusion

Full dedication and surrender is what God wants. Not the "leftovers" of our lives, but our all. To be a man of God, a youth for God, you must be like David (Acts 13:22). He was a man after God's own heart, who did all the will of God. Our consecration must be complete, holding back in nothing. Our dedication must be in four areas—our personal lives day by day, our homes, our business, and our church, yes, our all. Too often our dedication is half-hearted, and incomplete— giving God just a little here, a little there. No, our dedication must be with complete abandonment to God and His will. This is what Paul did and he could say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." (Acts 26:19)

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Vigilance Forever

Nehemiah 13:1-31

Introduction

Here we share an outline of the book which gives us the truths of the book:

- I. Vision in Prayer Chapter I**
- II. Valiant in Fight Chapters 2-7**
- III. Victory in Revival Chapters 8-12**
- IV. Vigilance Forever Chapter 13**

It was because of a vision that everything we have studied came to pass. Nehemiah had a vision of great need which God had laid upon his heart. Through prayer, fasting, and crying unto God the vision became a fulfillment of God's will. Then for some time they were as valiant in fight as the people had a "mind to work." As they labored, prayed, and sacrificed, until the walls were built as God blessed. Revival victory was a great need of the hour. A revival which took them into the Word of God, and brought about a confession of sin and a dedication unto God that was a great blessing to the nation of Israel.

Now we will note that "vigilance" was so necessary if they were to stand against the inroads of sin and wrong. The New Testament teaches that for us in this age and time (I Peter 5:8; I Thessalonians 5:6) God wants us to be vigilant. This means to be "alertly watchful; to keep vigil; to be circumspect, alert." We must be vigilant forever, or we will slip into sin.

Nehemiah had returned to the Persian court as he had told the king in chapter 2. Twelve years had lapsed since the dedication of chapter twelve. During the long absence of Nehemiah, the people had slipped grievously from the covenant made in chapters 10 and 11. Nehemiah had to face them with their transgressions in no uncertain terms.

Vigilance and Separation -- Nehemiah 13:1-3

Separation from sin is set forth in so many various ways in the Word of God. It is seen by example innumerable times in the Old Testament. God called the Israelites to be a separated people. They were to be His peculiar, particular treasure (Exodus 10:4-6). We are also called unto separation from sin and the world. (Titus 2:11-14)

Based upon God's command—13:1. God's commands from the Pentateuch were read by Nehemiah. He declared that the Ammonites, and the Moabites had no part in the congregation of Israel. Under a curse because of their treatment of Israel they could not have God's blessing (v. 2). The Israelite people responded by separating from the mixed multitude that they had allowed.

Our separation is based upon God's command. God commands us to be separated from the world because we are not of the world (John 15:16-21), because we are a chosen people (I Peter 2:9), because we are indwelt by God and are His own (II Corinthians 6:14-18), and because we are to "love not" the world (I John 2:15,16).

Vigilance About Judging Sin -- Nehemiah 13:4-5

Sin brought about by compromise -- 13:4-5. Eliahib, who had oversight of the house of God, was guilty of alliance with Tobiah. He had given Tobiah special honor and provision including part of the area in the temple set aside for the Levites, and others who led in spiritual things.

Compromise discovered by Nehemiah—13:6-7. Nehemiah had been on leave from the court, and had returned to the Persian king as had been planned. After twelve years he returned to Jerusalem and there encountered a problem with Tobiah. He was grieved and made a quick judgment of the problem. Tobiah was cast out of the courts of

the Lord. Then they cleansed the chambers, and again restored the vessels of the house of God (vv. 8-9).

You recall that the people had met with God in a great time of revival, dedication, and making of covenant. This was recorded in chapters 9 and 10. The stage had been set for blessing, but now the same sins that had ruined their national life were upon them again. The very enemy who had opposed their building the wall was comfortably housed in the courts of the temple. What an alliance with evil! The enemy was strongly entrenched in Jerusalem. No wonder Nehemiah was deeply grieved.

We must judge sin. Sin must be put away (Colossians 3:8-10). Sin must be put to death (Colossians 3:5). Sin must be judged in the life of a Christian (I Corinthians 11:31,32).

Vigilance about the House of God -- Nehemiah 13:10-22

The glaring failure about the house of God—13:10-14. The Levites, and others of the spiritual leaders had fled to other parts of the country because their needs were not being taken care of. The house of God was forsaken, its offices forsaken, and worship was forsaken. Nehemiah called the people back to God. He contended with the rulers, and set them in their place. He restored giving, and the regular practice of worship.

The glaring failure to observe the day of the Lord—13:15-22. They were treading grapes on the Sabbath, buying, selling, and working. They were generally "*profaning*" the Sabbath day (10::31). Nehemiah faced them with it, contended with them, and judged them for it.

He commanded that the gates be shut and told the merchants to flee before he laid hands on them (vv. 19-21). Then he charged the Levites to cleanse themselves and to keep the gates, and to sanctify the day of the Lord.

The glaring lack today. Many Christians do not heed the examples set before us (Acts 2:41-42). Many do not obey the commands of God (Hebrews 10:25). Many do not obey the teaching of the Scripture (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

Vigilance about Unholy Alliances -- Nehemiah 13:23-30

The Israelites had married women of Ashodod, Ammon, and Moab. This was strictly forbidden, and they had earlier made covenant with God against such alliances (Nehemiah 10:28-30).

God is greatly grieved with His own, the saved when they intermarry with the unsaved. This is the worst kind of all unholy alliances. Marriage is to be in the Lord. It is a sacred bond before a holy God.