

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



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**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that proceeded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)**

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *"Meremoth, son of Uriah"* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *"Meshullum son of Berekiah"* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *"Tobiah"* means *"the Lord is good."*

3:5 *"Tekoa"* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *"The nobles would not"* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

"My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind."

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the "battered age." It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *"had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . ."* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *"The hand of the Lord was upon him."* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

"Seventh month" - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
 “*Benjamin*” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
 “*Hassub*” - It means “*considerate.*”
 “*Azariah*” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

- 9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

*“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”*

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- *“The city”* a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- *“Father's tombs”* - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out. This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. “*Scorn*” - means “*irreligiously deride*”(lit.). It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - Look once again at the action of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
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Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
 “*Benjamin*” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
 “*Hassub*” - It means “*considerate.*”
 “*Azariah*” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day”- Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . . v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . . v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . . v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . . v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . . v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . . v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . . v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . . v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . . v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . . v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . . v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . . v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . . v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . . v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . . v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . . v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . . v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . . v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . . v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. "Prayer" (1:4) 2. "Work" (6:3)
Key Phrase:	"Arise & Build" or "Start rebuilding" NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4**I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT**

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 “*who was shut in at his house*” - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 “*should a man like me run away*” - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 “*I realized that God had not sent him*” - We need to have “*the gift of discernment of spirits*” in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 “*He had been hired to intimidate me*” - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *"had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . ."* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *"The hand of the Lord was upon him."* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

"Seventh month" - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

... But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 ... They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 ... they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 ... they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 ... as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means “you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. ***“Wine was before him,”*** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- ***“I had not been sad”*** - ***“depressed”*** KJV., ***“bad”*** - Hebrew

- ***“Nisan”*** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- *“The city”* a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- *“Father's tombs”* - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out. This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“segal”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“Set a time” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL
CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. “*Scorn*” - means “*irreligiously deride*”(lit.). It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16).**

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the **action** that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
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Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

*“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”*

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- *“The city”* a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- *“Father's tombs”* - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out. This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

*** *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* ***

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

- 9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing*."

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. "Prayer" (1:4) 2. "Work" (6:3)
Key Phrase:	"Arise & Build" or "Start rebuilding" NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

- 9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . . v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . . v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . . v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . . v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . . v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . . v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . . v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . . v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . . v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . . v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . . v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . . v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . . v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . . v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . . v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . . v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . . v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . . v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . . v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They’ve got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .”*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism.** It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ...and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing*."

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- *“The city”* a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- *“Father's tombs”* - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out. This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “*Queen*” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
 What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. "Prayer" (1:4) 2. "Work" (6:3)
Key Phrase:	"Arise & Build" or "Start rebuilding" NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)**

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a "*good work.*"

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . . v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . . v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . . v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . . v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . . v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . . v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . . v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . . v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . . v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . . v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . . v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . . v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . . v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . . v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . . v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . . v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . . v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . . v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . . v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - *“Hand Me Another Brick”* - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day”- Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . . v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . . v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . . v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . . v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . . v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . . v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . . v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . . v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . . v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . . v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . . v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . . v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . . v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . . v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

... But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . . v 16
 ... They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . . v. 17
 ... they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . . v. 18
 ... they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . . v. 26
 ... as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . . v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
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Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They’ve got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one > 1,000
two > 10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. “*Scorn*” - means “*irreligiously deride*”(lit.). It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 **A. Do not Look to the World for Standards**

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 “*who was shut in at his house*” - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 “*should a man like me run away*” - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 “*I realized that God had not sent him*” - We need to have “*the gift of discernment of spirits*” in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 “*He had been hired to intimidate me*” - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

- 9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
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Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops**.

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

*** *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* ***

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .”

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

Alan Redpath

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)**

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)**

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *"had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . ."* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *"The hand of the Lord was upon him."* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

"Seventh month" - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [½ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4**I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT**

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. “*Scorn*” - means “*irreligiously deride*”(lit.). It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 “*Ezer*” - It means “*help.*” Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 “*Baruch*” - It means “*blessed.*” He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 “*Meremoth*” - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 “*Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means “*son of the right hand.*”
“Hassub” - It means “*considerate.*”
“Azariah” - It means “*Jehovah has helped.*”

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 “*Binnui*” - It means “*a building up.*” He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 “*Palal*” - It means “*judge.*” This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“*upper house of the king (or palace)*” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The “*tower projecting*” was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“*Pedaiah*” - It means “*Jehovah redeems.*” The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 “*Ophel*” - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean “*a fortified hill or stronghold.*” This is believed to be “*Zion*” or “*the City of David*”.

“*Nethinim*” - These were the temple servants - “*the given ones.*” (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy. Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . . v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . . v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . . v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . . v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . . v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . . v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . . v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . . v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . . v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . . v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . . v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . . v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . . v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . . v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . . v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . . v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . . v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . . v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . . v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a “**literary stake**” or a “**rallying point.**” We would probably call it their “*philosophy of life*” or their “*declaration of distinction*” from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to "*occupy*" till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
stand in his Holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
Fountaingate Christian Assembly
Cornwall, Ontario
Beginning Sept 14/2016

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name “**Jews**” is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple’s golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem’s Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon’s Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,” said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, “that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.” ********

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)

2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a *"good work."*

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- **“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”*

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - literally. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig’s movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier’s attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It’s usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah’s heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God’s Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *"had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . ."* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *"The hand of the Lord was upon him."* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

"Seventh month" - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the action that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



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**EZRA & NEHEMIAH
A PORTRAYAL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS OUR RESTORER**

“There is no type of service any of us can undertake which is beset with so much potential as is the service of the Master. On the one hand, there is so much that is rewarding, and on the other hand, so much that is disappointing. Many are the obstacles to be overcome and many the pitfalls to be avoided. On how many occasions we have taken up a task in the name of the Lord only to withdraw, beaten, discouraged, and baffled, and yet, somehow, baffled to fight better. For every discouragement has been allowed to come to us in order that through it we may be cast in utter helplessness at the Savior’s feet. Then we return to the battle again, no longer trusting in the false and insufficient human resources which so foolishly we have taken into the battle, but now trusting in the limitless resources of our risen Lord.”

Never was there a time when there was a greater need for men of passion, men of principle, men of the Holy Spirit vision, in the service of the Lord. It is impossible for any of us to become any of these unless first we have stood in the midst of the work which the Master has given to us and have seen the futility of everything that can ever come from our own imagined strength or weakness. These are lessons which most of us learn the hard way, and we learn them in a school from which we never graduate until we enter the very presence of the Master himself.”

*Alan Redpath
“Victorious Christian Service”*

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible. They tell of the return of God’s people to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian exile. These two books cover about 100 years of history.

Both books:

- begin in Babylon & end at Jerusalem
- center around the life of the man of God who wrote it
- begin with a decree by a Persian king
- center around a building project at Jerusalem
- contain a long prayer of humiliation & confession in the ninth chapter
- end with the purification of the people.

Ezra’s keynote is found in 7:10 while Nehemiah’s keynote is found in 6:3.

I. TIME PERIODS

1. **1st Return - 537-517 BC (20 years).** 1st year of Cyrus to the 6th year of Dairus when the people were under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest rebuilt the temple. Ezra 1-6; Zechariah, Haggai, II Chronicles last 2 verses; Psalms 126, 137; Isaiah 44:23 to 45:8 all deal with the events surrounding this time period.
2. **2nd Return - 458 - 433 BC (25 years).** Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem & restored the city. Malachi was the prophet.

538 - 537 BC	First Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem
516	BC Temple restored
479	BC Esther became queen of Persia (wife of Xerxes)
458	BC Ezra led second expedition
445	BC Nehemiah built wall of Jerusalem

II. RETURN UNDER ZERUBABEL AND REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra opens with a proclamation by Cyrus, King of Persia, permitting the Jews (first time the name "**Jews**" is used) who were captives to return to Jerusalem. This had been prophesied 200 years before (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4).

At the first call approximately 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Cyrus returned the temple's golden vessels with them. God used Babylon as a type of safety deposit box for the gold & silver vessels. The people began the 850 mile journey.

Many did not return perhaps because of:

- 1) Jerusalem's Poor Housing
- 2) They were established in Babylon
- 3) There were many dangers and hardships involving travel at that time.

Illustration. - Compare how many Jews today are not returning to their homeland.

Money was provided to build the temple; traveling expenses & other needs. Upon arriving in Jerusalem they built an altar before they began to rebuild the temple.

Hindrances came quickly. The people lost heart. Haggai & Zechariah arose to challenge and encourage the people. Within 4 years, the 2nd temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. The temple was plain & simple compared to Solomon's Temple.

III. RETURN & REFORMATION UNDER EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

At least 60 years past from the beginning of the first expedition. Ezra returned with approximately 1700 people to reinforce the struggling colonists. Ezra was recognized by King Artaxerxes as a man who loved and obeyed God's Word.

Thirteen years later this same king commissioned Nehemiah to return & rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Tradition says that Ezra founded synagogue worship during the years of his Babylonian captivity.

IV. NEHEMIAH - THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION

Nehemiah means "comforted of God". Nehemiah was a laymen and businessman. He served the king as the cupbearer. The king was Artaxerxes who was the step-son of Queen Esther who no doubt was still alive. No doubt she was influential in Nehemiah's appointment and release.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in 445 BC. Ezra had been there for 13 years laying down a foundation of God's Holy Word. This was the third return of the Jews from captivity/exile.

This book contains:	12-15 years of history.
Writer:	- Nehemiah
When & Where:	- ~ 435 BC in Jerusalem. Last of Old Testament historical books.
Key Chapter:	- Chapter 1 (Nehemiah's prayer concerning Israel)
Key verses:	- 1:8,9
Key words:	1. " Prayer " (1:4) 2. " Work " (6:3)
Key Phrase:	" Arise & Build " or " Start rebuilding " NIV (2:20)
Key Thought:	Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

V. SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

1. Rebuild God's wall of protection around His people & city
2. The people had a mind to work. God worked WITH them.

VI. NOTES OF INTEREST

In 1970 Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of the *“broad wall”* (Nehemiah 3:8; 12:38). An 80 foot stretch of wall approximately 23 feet thick was found built on bedrock about 900 feet west of the Temple.

The repairs began with the Sheep Gate (3:1) and ended with the gate Miphkad (Malkiha) which means *“assignment in a designated spot.”*

VII. APPLICATION FOR TODAY

1. God’s people can dwell safely in the midst of ruins.
2. It is often only a few (remnant) that seem to be concerned in rebuilding.
3. It only takes a few people powered by prayer to make a change.
4. Opposition will usually arise immediately.
5. God often puts you where you can be influential
(cf. Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.)
6. Isn’t it time to rebuild the walls of our city & temple that we worship in?

CHAPTER 1:1-4

I. THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

1. 445 BC Artaxerxes I had serious problems when he ascended to the throne.
2. His brother Hystaspes revolted against him at the beginning of Artaxerxes reign.
3. A nationalistic revolt broke out in 460 BC in Egypt. (which was put down in 455 BC)
4. In 448 BC there was a rebellion in Trans-Euphrates.
5. There was much instability in the Persian Empire especially toward Egypt.
6. Judah/Jerusalem formed part of the Trans-Euphrates region and therefore became an important buffer state.

II. A HISTORICAL PREVIEW

1. The restored Jewish remnant had been back in Judea for over 90 years.
2. Zerubbabel and his contemporaries had died.
3. The inferior temple was rebuilt (Haggai 1:15; Ezra 6:15)
4. The remnant had been back 21 years when it was completed (4 years and 5 months to complete).
5. Ezra had returned some 60 years after with 2000-3000 Jews.
6. Moral conditions had fallen - intermarriage.
7. 12 years later Nehemiah returns in the year 445 BC.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

1. This book is very contemporary in thought. We are struggling in much the same way.

Charles Swindoll announced his sermon title during President Richard Nixon's crisis as "*What God thinks of Watergate*" (see 8:1). Swindoll called Nehemiah "*a man from his knees down.*"

2. This book teaches that to do any service for God without regard of God's will and without a real understanding of Christian service is not only foolish but sinful.

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

3. 1st 6 chapters cover reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Last 7 chapters cover the re-instruction of the people of God.
4. There is no winning without warfare. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is not victory without vigilance.

1:1 -“*Nehemiah (NHMH)*”

- The name “*Nehemiah*” means “*the Lord consoles/comforts.*”
- Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16 speak of other Nehemiahs as well (not the same person)
- II Maccabees says Nehemiah played an important role in the Feast of Tabernacles & in founding a library.

“*Kislev*”

- Nov - Dec.

“*Twentieth year*”

1. Nehemiah had been at the citadel for 20 years?
2. Artaxerxes I was in his 20th year of reign (446 B.C.)

“*Citadel of Susa (Shushau)*”

- located in SW. Persia in a strategic position that controlled the trade routes to the Iranian plateau. It therefore, became a haven of great wealth.
- Capital of Elam
- Darius I built his palace there, the ruins which were rebuilt by Artaxerxes I & II.
- It remains today as one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5 century BC.

1:2 “*Hanani*”

- It is probably a short form of “*Hananiah*” which means “*the Lord is gracious*”

“*brother*”

- This could mean kinsmen but most probably a blood-brother
- blood is thicker than water or land
- they were 850 miles apart
- Tom Sawyer/Huckleberry Finn as blood brothers would die for one another
- N.T. (Greek -“*adelphos*”) means “*from the same womb.*”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

“Jewish remnant”

- those who had escaped (survived) the captivity.
- refers to those who escaped further captivity
- exile was considered a great shame for Jewish people
- those who had returned earlier from Babylon.

1:3 “province”

- Judah was instituted as a province under Cyrus & Darius, under the greater region of the Trans-Euphrates.

–“great trouble & disgrace”

- God’s reputation was on the line
- city without walls were considered as poor real estate.
- God’s family was in jeopardy of invasion, rape, theft, plunder, fear, etc.
- someone needed to fight for God’s family
 1. These “statistics” have come to the church.
 2. We may be sitting beside a “statistic.”

“walls broken ... gates burned”

- the temple was open for attack
- some may think its not worth saving an inferior church
- the job seems overwhelming
- its been left destroyed for too long
- others have tried and have failed
- what can I do? I’m 850 miles away
- if I do something it could jeopardize my position
- the destruction is too great to attempt to rebuild

“The believer who wants his ministry to make permanent difference must be arrested by a desperate sense of need.”

D. McCarthy
“The Agony of Caring”

III. A FEW PRACTICAL THOUGHTS (Contd.)

1:4 “*sat down and wept*”

- assessed the situation then handed it over to God
- stop, stay, pray
- don't knock on God's door & run away

Nehemiah could not . . .

- 1) Just leave his place of employment
- 2) Volunteer for public service
- 3) Show any remorse

Nehemiah did . . .

- 1) Assess the situation & pray fervently
- 2) Fast
- 3) Direct his prayer to the God of heaven
- 4) Take his directions from God.

IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We read 11 times of Nehemiah praying.

When life knocks you to your knees, you are in your greatest position for success.

We need to keep our chins up and our knees down. This time of prayer continued for 4 months. (Kislev - Nov/Dec) to Nisan (Mar/April).

We have been told not only what he prayed but also how he prayed. **These first four verses are really where the rubbish was removed and the walls began to be built.**

*“Before God deals with the problem of the individual,
He deals with the individual who has the problem.”*

CHAPTER 1:5-11

*** A strong stalwart Texan was unloading blacksmith's anvils from a ship in a Houston port. The plank broke and he fell into the ocean water. He went down the first time and then the second time. Just before he went down the third time, he yelled, "*If someone doesn't help me, I'm going to drop one of these anvils.*" ***

Nehemiah stands out as the kind of man who would risk his life for the task before him. We have today both ends of the spectrum. People who are **involved unto death or deathly involved** and those who look from the outside & wonder why people are giving up.

*** Catherine Genovese, learned the hard way that people often are spectators when you really need help. She was coming home one early morning in April when she was attacked & repeatedly stabbed. Her cries for help went on unheeded, although 38 residents of that New York neighborhood witnessed the attack. ***

Chamberlain returned to England after Hitler had been building up massive arms for 5 years. He didn't want to get involved. The results brought pure horror.

The Christian Church has often times suffered from "the Pontius Pilate syndrome." We have washed our hands of the situation. We openly declare that we are not responsible for the actions of others.

It's hard to find a courageous leader today. It is also difficult to find soldiers that are willing to march even when the band stops playing. The church is suffering from "*satellitis*" - they sit & are blessed by all the Christian programming but don't get involved in their local church.

In the midst of all that is happening, God is raising up leaders with tough (not calloused) skin. Men, women, teenagers & children are standing up as a remnant that are willing to change the tide. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of someone willing to stand for a positive change.

CUPBEARER TO THE KING

How important was Nehemiah's position as the king's cupbearer? George Rawlinson, a professor of ancient history, describes the Persian court as splendid and magnificent. The king was surrounded by hundreds of personal attendants and, within the precincts of the palace as many as 15,000 people were fed daily. The monarch, however, rarely dined with his guests but was normally served alone.

The cupbearers' special duty was to fill the royal wine cup from the flagon, hand it daintily and gracefully to their master, supporting it with three fingers, presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from their hand without any danger of spilling a single drop. Before this procedure, the cupbearer would pour a few drops onto his left hand and taste it to ensure that it was not poisoned. When not engaged in this, the cupbearer guarded the entrance to the royal apartment and allowed persons to enter, or forbid them, at their discretion. Even princes had to submit to their authority.

Moreover, the cupbearer was never to be sad in the king's presence. In fact, he was in danger of severe punishment, or even death, for demonstrating anything but a joyful countenance while on duty before the king. Nehemiah knew this. This is why before formulating an answer to Artaxerxes' question, he quickly whispered a prayer to God. Nehemiah had wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for four months and had counted the cost of getting involved with the Jews. He was totally surrendered to God's will in his life.

If servants had to be joyful before earthly kings, how much more should saints be joyful before their heavenly king? Over and over again God's Word exhorts us to rejoice as we come into His presence. We are to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving, singing and blessing His Holy Name.

Nehemiah was likely a eunuch. Men in the service of the king who came in contact with the king's harem were usually eunuchs. Nehemiah was probably one of the king's confidants and favorites. He would have wielded political power and enjoyed the benefits of royal trust.

Even though Nehemiah had a great influence in the king's palace, his interests and concerns centered around God's people & the city of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH'S PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

Nehemiah pre-figures Jesus who also sat down & mourned, prayed and sacrificed His life for Jerusalem.

“You never lighten the load unless first you feel the pressure in your soul.”

Alan Redpath

Nehemiah was called to build the walls but first he had to weep over the ruins. The walls of salvation & gates of praise were a mockery to the people of God.

What walls are ruined today?

- 1) Wall of separation from the world
- 2) Wall of prayer life/personal devotions
- 3) Wall of Bible study
- 4) Wall of consistent testimony
- 5) Wall of church's testimony
- 6) Wall of missionary giving
- 7) Wall of humility & fasting.

It was after the **despair** that a **determination** set in that something positive could be done. It also was going to take an utter **dependence** upon God. When God takes up a person for service, the first thing He does is to show him his utter **inadequacy, insufficiency and unworthiness** for the task.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

His prayer was cast in a mold of God's revelation of Himself. Nehemiah had fed upon God's Word - it showed.

1:5 He used the proper name (“*Yhwh*”) for the Lord. This shows a high respect given to God. “*Awesome*” or “*terrible God*” is used 14 x's in Nehemiah.
 - “*covenant*” - love and obedience are the two pillars on which the covenant rests.
 - Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9 (Covenant built upon Law and Love - the two pillars)

1:6 Nehemiah knew that sin would cause God not to hear him. (II Chronicles 6: 14,26,27; Isaiah 1:15; Deuteronomy 1:45; John 9:31).
 - first person singular “*I*”
 - first person plural “*We*”

- There is no record of Nehemiah ever sinning. This was not some manipulative move. Ezra 9:7 shows the same identification with the sin of the nation.

1:7 The act was seen as very wicked (perverse)
 - commandments/decrees (statutes) -comprehensive description of the law of God
 - customary laws (legal prescription) -definitely the Pentateuch

1:8 The either/or choice
 Deuteronomy 30:1-10
 There was/is a choice for a blessing or a cursing.

1:10 Nehemiah rooted his prayer in God’s past provision. He dared to remind God of the deliverance from Egypt protection, the blood, provision in the desert.
 We need to also return to our past during times of despair.

Return to . . . the cross
 the blood
 the empty tomb
 the risen Lord
 the ascended Christ.

Prayer can often require a time of pleading. *“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is battle.”*
Prayer needs to be rooted in the promises of God and His blood covenant.

Nehemiah’s prayer was grounded in the Word; founded on the Promises; rooted in God’s past dealing.

1:11 Many of God’s people joined Nehemiah in prayer for the cause of the Jews in the Holy Land. We need to come together for prayer also in times of need.

1:11c *“This man”* - king Artaxerxes
 -in the eyes of the world, Artaxerxes. was important, influential, who could decide life or death.
 - in God’s eyes he was just a man.
 - the Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah chose like Moses *“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

“May God give us hearts that bleed, eyes that are open to see, minds that are clear to interpret, wills that are obedient, and determination that is utterly unflinching as we set about to do the tasks He would have us do.”

CHAPTER 2:1-10

“Overcome” is a wonderful word in the Greek. In a conflict it means **“you have knocked the weapon out of the hand of your adversary.”**

*** Seth Joshua, a Welsh evangelist told the story of a time he was pitching the first tent on the East Moors of Cardiff, on a Saturday afternoon. A burly fellow under the influence of alcohol came to him and said, *“I say, gov ’nor, are you putting up a boxing booth?”*

“Yes,” he replied.

“When is the first contest?” the man replied.

“Tomorrow at eleven,” the preacher said.

“Who are going to have the first rounds?” “

I am one of the parties,” answered the evangelist.

“Who is the other?” “

Beelzebub” was the reply.

“Terrible name, but I’ll back you gov ’nor.”

“Come back here at eleven o’clock tomorrow and we’ll see what we can do.” The man returned and became the first convert.***

Nehemiah realized that he was about to enter the ring with Beelzebub. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but rather against principalities, rulers, powers (Ephesians 6:12).

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6)

2:1 It is believed that the king was holding a festival for many invited guests. It was a time when impressions were important. **“Wine was before him,”** literally. The cupbearer was then to carry it to the king.

- **“I had not been sad”** - **“depressed”** KJV., **“bad”** - Hebrew

- **“Nisan”** could indicate that this was Nehemiah’s first opportunity at a festal time to approach the king. The burden had been intense for 4 months. The 4 month struggle either would remove or increase the burden - it grew!

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:2 Two major questions were asked in KJV & only implied in NIV

“Why are you depressed?”
“Are you unwell?”

Fear came as a result of knowing that the king recognized the problem.

2:3 Nehemiah didn't face the problem foolishly. He angled it wisely. He avoided putting the king on the defensive.

- ***“The city”*** a master stroke of diplomacy by not naming Jerusalem.

- ***“Father's tombs”*** - Persians did not bury their dead but rather exposed them to be eaten by wild animals. Persians often held festivals for the dead. Artaxerxes, as a king, would probably be buried. Ancestral reverence permeated throughout the Middle East culture. His words were therefore carefully chosen & refined through prayer.

2:4 Probably this very quick prayer was founded on the long-term prayer that preceded it. The king (guided by God) made the opportunity.

2:5 **It was hard to get into a Persian court; it was even harder to get out.** This request was unbelievably daring.

God had prepared Nehemiah for the moment. The initiative was God's not Nehemiah's. The crushing burden was placed there by God. A deep conviction followed.

“It is only the man with a crushing sense of burden and responsibility whom God can trust with His work . . . The need never constitutes the call. . .

Recognition of the need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

“I can rebuild it.”

- The burden set the goal - the goal didn't set the burden.

I. THE BURDEN (2:1-6) (Contd.)

2:6 “Queen” (“*segal*”) in Biblical Aramaic - it meant “*a concubine.*” Perhaps to indicate a witness or that Nehemiah had favour with the Queen. The influence of women was strong during Artaxerxes’s reign.

“*Set a time*” - Probably a short period of time that was extended to 12 years WITH pay.

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9)

2:7 The first of two letters indicates a careful evaluation of his needs.
 - “*Governors of Trans-Euphrates*” one of those was Sanballat the governor of Samaria. Nehemiah never would have had safe passage to Jerusalem without the letter.

2:8 “*Asaph keeper of the king’s forest.*” Asaph is a Jewish name.
 - The forests were probably located in Lebanon.

3 needs were addressed:

- 1) “*gates of fortresses*” (*citadel - NIV*), possibly at the north of the temple (3:1)
- 2) “*city wall*” - quite often made of wood in certain low-risk areas
- 3) “*personal residence*” - literally - “*and for the house I could enter.*” Nehemiah already had a house in mind.

Nehemiah was Sent, Safe, and Supplied.

God has a right to order our **steps** as well as our **stops.**

2:9 Nehemiah became the governor of Judah. The armed guard seemed to be from the king’s initiative.

Compare Our Involvement with God’s Involvement.

God	the greatest lover
so loved	the greatest decree
the world	the greatest number
that He gave	the greatest act
His only begotten Son	the greatest gift
that whosoever	the greatest invitation
believeth	the greatest simplicity
in Him	the greatest Person

II. THE BLESSING (2:7-9) (Contd.)

should not perish	the greatest deliverance
but	the greatest difference
have	the greatest certainty
eternal Life	the greatest possession

III. THE BATTLE (2:10)

2:10 *“had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites”*

“He had no axe to grind, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory; therefore he was a marked man.

Alan Redpath

Let us arise (God’s people) & build // Let us arise (Satan) & stop him.

There were plenty of unconcerned Jews. The walls were broken down, the testimony ruined. The enemy does not like it when we retrieve ground from him. Either we **venture** or we **vegetate**. Faith in God makes a person **undaunted, unafraid and undivided**.

Where to Cast Your Net?

******* *“Did you ever notice,”* said the old lady, smiling into the troubled face before her, *“that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old place where they had caught nothing?”*

*If we could only get off to some new place when we get discouraged, trying again would be an easier thing. If we could be somebody else, or go somewhere else, or do something else, it might not be so hard to have fresh faith and courage; but it is the same old net in the same old pond for most of us. The old temptations are to be overcome, the old faults to be conquered, the old trails and discouragement’s before which we failed yesterday to be faced again today. **We must win success where we are, if we win it at all**, and it is the Master himself, who, after all these toil full, disheartening failures, bids us “try again.”* *******

Sunday School Times

PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Chapter 2:11-20

This second chapter reveals some essential principles for Christian service. A principle is something that never changes. We need to understand that our **principles** determine our **priorities**. As our principles become more God-like, we always seem to change our priorities for the better (and vice-versa).

Nehemiah was a man of Godly-principles that guided him in determining his priorities. This was definitely a time for these principles & priorities to be revealed in a practical way. God often prepares us years in advance to display His will. **He produces our character often out of our discomfort.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)

2:11 Upon arriving at Jerusalem Nehemiah rested for three days (cf.- Ezra 8:15, 32). It is interesting that Pharaoh's cupbearer had his head lifted & his position restored after 3 days as well (cf. Genesis 40:13).

After resting he secretly investigated the condition of the walls during the nighttime. He rode on a "*behema*", probably a donkey, because a snorting horse would draw attention.

Some may ask, if God had guided him, why did he need to investigate? He probably needed to insure himself that his plans would work. He did not confer his plans with these men. Nehemiah privately counted the cost.

"It is dangerous to wear your heart on your sleeve, especially if it is a short sleeved shirt."

2:13 A. The Valley Gate

Ahaz	II Chronicles 28:1-4 (notice " <i>the Valley of Ben Hinnom</i> ")
Manasseh	II Chronicles 33:1-6
Josiah	II Kings 23:10-14 (notice " <i>Topheth</i> ") Jeremiah 7:30-34; 19:1-15; 32:35

Outside the Valley Gate lay the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It became known as "*the valley of the son (or sons) of Hinnom.*" It was closely associated with the worship of Molech.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 A. The Valley Gate (Contd.)**

After Josiah destroyed the shrine & altars it began to be used to burn the corpses of criminals and animals, and indeed any refuse. The name became a synonym for **“hell.”** The Hebrew (**“Hinnom”** - valley of) becomes the word (**“genna”** - in Greek). It is pronounced **“Ghenna”** in Latin and translated in English meaning **“hell.”** The word **“Ben”** means **“son of.”**

It's interesting that Nehemiah began surveying the **“son of hell”** at the start of his evening trek. It is a picture of the condition of many Christian homes today. These homes are absorbed in idolatrous practices that are causing many couples to sacrifice their marriages and children to “hell.” As the walls come down our children will suffer.

We all want someone to take leadership to deal with the awful practices going on in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It took an honest investigation with a measuring stick of godly principles to set Nehemiah's priorities.

Have we stood long enough to survey the damage? Are we too busy to become involved? Do we use our busy schedule to keep us uninvolved? Are we losing sleep over the spiritual dearth of our families?

We need to sense the condition of our nation, province, city, church, homes, ourselves and say like John Knox in the 1500's.

“Give me Scotland or let me die.”

He died in 1572 but left the Presbyterian Church firmly rooted in Scotland. He began a tremendous reformation because he had faith in God.

2:13 B. Jackal Well (Dragon, Serpent, Fig)

There are many words used to describe this word such as **“dragon, wolf, serpent, whale, monster, wild beast.”** This well is not in existence today. One writer believes that the well came as a result of an earthquake. It probably received its name from the jackals that haunted the area consuming the dead bodies that were thrown there.

This again uncovers an interesting spiritual thought. The thief comes not but to kill, steal & destroy (John 10:10). This was the eerie side of the city - the slums - the dump. This is where Nehemiah started his investigation. **He wanted to know the condition of the pit before approaching the palace.**

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**2:13 C. Dung Gate**

This gate was located 500 yards south of the Valley Gate. This gate most probably lead to the rubbish dump or ash heap or ruin heaps. The further south you went the more degrading the area became. Many have followed this downward slope to the grave. There is nothing left but ashes when one arrives at the end.

Paul said:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (dung), that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Some people have to hit bottom before they look up. They've got to wade into the rubbish before they turn to the Fountain Gate.

2:14 D. Fountain Gate

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath the flood loose all their guilty stains.”

As soon as Nehemiah looked up north he saw the ruin of the Fountain Gate. Many churches and homes today refuse to accept the power of the blood of Jesus. You have to climb stairs to reach the gate and the City of David.

“He brought me out of the miry clay. He set my feet on the rock to stay. He puts a song in my soul today. A song of praise, Hallelujah.”

Here the rubble was so high that he had to unmount his donkey to get through. Our world has made a giant heap of rubble for the church to attempt to get over. So many things are being added before we enter our “Fountain Gate” - our gateway of refreshing. We must also walk carefully in here. Nehemiah was alone during these our initial steps.

I. 1st PRINCIPLE - INVESTIGATION (2:11-16)(Contd.)**E. The King's Pool**

The King's Pool was either the Pool of Siloam or the modern Birket-el-Hamra. The Pool of Siloam was man-made by masonries. The pool collected water from streams that trickled into it. Once the pool was full it was carefully directed through irrigation channels where it was needed. **Nehemiah saw it broken and incapable of any storage.** There are times when we can be so broken, discouraged and frustrated that we cannot receive God's blessing & therefore cannot direct it to anyone else.

Nehemiah returned in silence probably reflecting upon what he saw in comparison to what he heard from his brother Hannani.

II. 2nd PRINCIPLE - CO-OPERATION

2:17 After assessing the situation he had a better idea of the magnitude of the task. There was no way that he could do it alone. His vision now had to be birthed into the people's spirit and become their vision as well.

"Let us rise up and build,"

*Nehemiah 2:18
KJV*

There are people who hear from God but are incapable of "rallying the troops." We need not only to be spiritual but also to be efficient. This was no place for a one-man ministry when the walls are broken down and gates are burned. Co-operation increased their efficiency.

one	>	1,000
two	>	10,000

"A united church is an unconquerable church."

S.D. Gordon

The greatest menace to rebuilding is often our differences of opinion. We all need to catch the same vision. The way to leave disgrace behind is to rise up together. Then it can be called a ***"good work."***

III. 3rd PRINCIPLE - DETERMINATION

We can probably see from these verses why Nehemiah kept certain secrets to an appointed time. His adversaries seemed to become well-informed within a short time.

The weapon they used was scorn and ridicule. **“Scorn”** - means **“irreligiously deride”(lit.)**. It was used to frighten them out of their wits.

The second question (cf.- Ezra 4:12) seemed to try to repeat itself in history. But history was not about to repeat itself this time.

2:20 Nehemiah struck back not with an earthly authority but rather with his heavenly authority. The enemies of the Jews (and Jerusalem) had no legal right of authority over them.

He stood because he knew with full assurance that God was with him. No ungodly person was needed or allowed to help them build. These enemies had . . .

**no share,
no claim,
no history of right**

With this truth in place chapter 3 is ready to begin. The main principles are now clearly in place.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL CHAPTER 3:1-12

Nehemiah carefully considered those who should build and where they should build. There were about forty sections of unequal length that had to be allotted. We do not have an exhaustive list of the workers but rather we have an overall picture of the restoration of the wall. Perhaps there was no need to burden us with further details.

3:1 - Eliashib/Sheep Gate

It is important to see that Nehemiah began by recording the involvement of the high priest, Eliashab. He was the grandson of Jeshua - the high priest in Zerubbabel's day. His name means "**God restores.**" Indeed it was God who was restoring and rebuilding the wall. It would be better though to have a name "**God remains**" because too often restorations quickly fade away.

Eliashib (13:4,5) later compromised with Tobiah and allowed the enemy of God's people to dwell in the temple chamber that was normally used only to store the tithes and offerings. Also one of Eliashib's grandsons was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28) and he had to be driven away for his disobedience as well (Leviticus 21:14).

Sheep Gate

Sheep are one of the easiest animals to lead astray (Isaiah 53:6). It seems like the church is suffering because "*everyone else is doing it.*" It makes it easier to quiet our consciences. We rationalize away sin and often call it "*a sign of the times.*"

It's important to realize that not everyone is doing it or everyone has always done it. What we should do is to compare the fruit of any type of lifestyle before determining which way to go. **Sheep always follow someone.** We need shepherds (not hirelings) that will lead sheep carefully. We need positive peer pressure. Why not teach our sheep to follow the good Shepherd by our example?

We need to help our children to choose the right flock. We must be **alert** while not being **alarmed**. "And it came to pass" . . . this too, will pass.

Our children are being pressured to grow up too fast. A plant that grows too fast normally requires additional support. This is where a support group is needed.

Sheep Gate (Contd.)

The sheep gate was located close to the temple. All sheep that were sacrificed had to pass through this gate. If we don't become a living sacrifice for God, we will never . . .

“be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

If we are not careful, our children will be discarded as spotted sheep unfit for God's works.

- **“dedicated it”** - Only the priests are shown to have dedicated their section. As priests of our homes we need to also dedicate our section of rebuilding to God.

- **“Tower of the Hundred (Meah or Hammaoh)”** - It may have been 100 cubits high or had 100 steps. It was the most important point on the wall of Jerusalem heading west of the sheep gate. It was important because of its height. Guards could clearly see their enemies coming at a long distance and blow their trumpet as a warning. It would be disastrous not to heed the warning of the trumpet (cf. Ezekiel 7:14).

It could also have been the name of the military unit assigned to this tower. This tower was also sanctified or set apart for God.

3:2 *Men of Jericho*

When you think of Jericho what comes to your mind? These men would carefully consider how the wall was built. Jericho, although a strategic stronghold in the days of Moses, Aaron and Joshua, came crumbling down.

The people failed to honor the one and only God. They feared Him but would not follow Him. They were left unprepared in battle. They had no defense against the shouts of God's people.

- **“Zaccur”** - means **“remembered”**. He is first mentioned in Number 13:4 as the father of the spy sent out from the tribe of Reuben. The Bible tells us in Joshua 2:8-11 that the people of Jericho had melted hearts when the twelve spies entered Canaan.

Zaccur's name reminded the other builders that God is great even when He doesn't appear to be. The giants in the land were compared to grasshoppers in the sight of God. Zaccur is mentioned in 13:13 as the father of Hannan who was put in charge of the storehouses of God.

3:3 Fish Gate

This was the gate where the men of Tyre and/or the Sea of Galilee went through to sell their fish in the market. It was located close to what is the present day Damascus Gate.

King Manasseh restored this gate during his reign (II Chronicles 33:14). Zephaniah prophesied that a cry would go out of Jerusalem from the Fish Gate (Zephaniah 1:10). Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39:1-3 f) tells of how Jerusalem was taken during Zedekiah's reign. The Babylonians sat in the Middle Gate (Fish Gate) as Zedekiah fled.

This was a strategic place for invaders to try to capture. It's therefore important to note that this gate had bolts and crossbars.

3:4 *“Meremoth, son of Uriah”* - According to Ezra 8:33, Meremoth was the grandson of Eleazar the priest. He had been put in charge of the sacred articles silver and gold of the temple in Ezra's day. He had to be an older man. He was known by both Ezra and Nehemiah.

- *“Meshullum son of Berekiah”* - He also repaired a second section (3:30). He went the second mile. But he later gave his daughter to Tobiah (6:17,18) who ridiculed the Jews. *“Tobiah”* means *“the Lord is good.”*

3:5 *“Tekoa”* - It was the hometown of the prophet Amos located 11 miles south east of Jerusalem.

- *“The nobles would not”* . . . Not everyone was enthusiastic. They would not become yoked along with their brethren.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate)

“My glasses come in handy
My hearing aid is fine
My dentures are just dandy
But I sure do miss my mind.”

The elderly today are increasingly seen as an unwanted necessity. An article in Newsweek in the early '80's talked about the “battered age.” It estimated that 200,000 children were abused every year. This figure compares to one expert's estimation that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 aged parents were abused every year during the same period. How sad this is.

3:6 Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate) (Contd.)

Geriatric specialists have termed this assault the “*King Lear Syndrome*” after Shakespeare’s aging monarch who fell due to the scheming of his two daughters.

A recent Newsweek’s article ironically said “*a nursing home could well provide safer refuge for aged parents than the bosom of their own family.*”

God’s Word has a lot to say on the matter (Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27) but let’s consider one verse especially - I Timothy 5:3,4. We have a responsibility to rebuild the Old Gate.

3:8 “Goldsmiths” . . . perfume makers” They were probably the middle class people of this generation. Other guilds were present (i.e., - bakers, potters etc) as well. These though did very time-consuming work.

“Broad Wall” - It was reinforced as much as 22 feet thick. It was approximately 400 cubits in length. It’s interesting that the reinforcement was needed next to the Jeshanah or Old Gate.

“Gate of Ephraim” - It is not mentioned because its believed that it did not require rebuilding. It was mentioned later (cf. - 8:16).

3:9 “Rephaniah” - Means “*Jehovah is healing.*”

“Ruler of half the district” - It never seems like everyone is healed at one time. The area in mention was the adjacent countryside which would have included Beth-haccehrem, Mizpah, Beth-zur, and Keilah.

3:10 “Jedaiah” - Means “*invoker of God*” or “*Jehovah knows.*” He was a man that knew how to pray.

“Made repairs” means “*strengthened the wall next to his house.*” One of the wonderful effects of a restoration project is added strength.

“Hattush” - Was also recognized as one who signed the covenant (10:4)

3:11 “Malkijah” - Means “*my king is Jehovah*” - He was another one who signed the covenant (10:3)

“Hashub” - Means “*considerate.*”

“Tower of Ovens (furnaces)” - It was located on an extremely important corner of the wall. Ovens were used for two purposes - the baking of bread etc. and refining of metals, such as iron, silver & gold. The tower is believed to have served as a defense tower as well.

3:12 “Shallum” - Means **“the requited one.”** He built along with his daughters which was very unique for his day.

The study of the restoration of the walls and gates prior to the excavation work of K. Kenyon can be considered as antiquated. The restorations of the Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate fit with all the archeological evidence available at this time.

BUILDERS OF THE WALL (Contd.)
CHAPTER 3:13-32

The word **“build”** is used 7 times and **“rebuild”** 34 times in this chapter. It is very clear that the workers were carefully selected and appointed to work on the area that would interest them the most. Many people though, did the kind of work that they were not familiar with:

ie., Priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate
 Goldsmiths rebuilt the wall
 Perfume-makers rebuilt the wall

We need to be careful not to believe that God can only use us where we are “spiritually gifted.” God noticed the 38 individuals and 15 small groups that became involved.

Nehemiah’s means of motivation was not external (or extrinsic) - a reward for the greatest builder, but rather internal (or intrinsic) - **“we are a reproach.”**

3:13 Valley Gate

This gate was located on the West-Southwest end of the city. It symbolizes our need to build humility into our lives.

“Hanun” - He was the chief or ruler of Zanoah (a large group of people). His name means **“favoured.”**

“500 yards” - The wall in this section probably suffered less damage, and therefore needed less repair.

3:14 Dung Gate

Figuratively it meant something of worthlessness; a perishing article that no one cared for. Disobedient priests were warned that the dung (offal) of their sacrifices (Malachi 2:3) would be spread on their faces and they would be removed along with it.

“Malkijah” - see 3:11

“Beth Hakkerem” - It could easily be seen from Bethlehem since it is only a few miles south of Jerusalem. Some remarkable cairns were found that appear to have been used as beacons.

Jeremiah 6:1 notes it as a vantage site for signalling in the time of danger.

3:15 Fountain Gate

In a land where it rains for only half the year, fountains became very important. Some believe that water ran out from here continually from the mouth of the Siloam Tunnel. The pool of Siloam received its water from a subterranean conduit that was 1750 feet long. It was cut through solid rock from the “*Fountain of the Virgin.*” This is the only gate that is mentioned having a roof over it to offer protection from the elements.

“*Pool of Siloam*” - The lower and larger pool was called the “King’s Pool” because it was located southeast of the King’s garden.

“*King’s Garden*” - It is believed to have been situated at the southern end of the Kidron Valley.

“*City of David*” - It was a small city within the city that stretched from a location northwest of the Gihon Spring on the eastern hill to the southern slope of the hill.

3:16 “*Nehemiah*” - This was a different Nehemiah than the leader. He was chosen for a very important part. This Nehemiah was also deeply concerned (cf. - 2:3) of the conditions of his forefathers tombs as well as the walls around them.

“*the Tombs of David*” - These have not been discovered as of yet but are believed to be near the King’s Garden. We know that David was buried within the city limits (I Kings 2:10; II Chronicles 21:20; 32:33; Acts 2:29).

“*Artificial pool*” - This was a man-made pool.

“*House of Heroes*” - Little is known about it. Perhaps it was a house of David’s mighty men (II Samuel 23:8-39). This may have served later as a barracks or an armoury.

3:17 “*Rehum*” - He was also one who signed the covenant (10:25). He was included among the twelve heads of the Jewish community that returned from captivity with Zerrubbabel. (Ezra 2:2)

“*Hashabiah*” - He also signed the covenant (10:11; 12:24)

“*district of Keilah*” - It was located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It played an important part in David’s early life (I Samuel 23:1-13).

3:18 “*Binnui*” - It means **“*a building up.*”** He ruled the other half of Keilah and worked side-by-side with Hashabiah. This indicated a unity.

3:19 *“Ezer”* - It means *“help.”* Could be the same Ezer (12:42) that was appointed as a musician to give thanks as the wall was built.

3:20 *“Baruch”* - It means *“blessed.”* He worked zealously up to the entrance of the high priests home.

3:21 *“Meremoth”* - This is his second section of wall (cf. 3:4). Interestingly his part of the wall protected the high priest’s home. Being the grandson of Eleazar he probably recognized the type of attacks that were often directed toward his grandfather.

3:22 *“Benjamin . . . Hassub . . . Azariah . . .*
“Benjamin” - It means *“son of the right hand.”*
“Hassub” - It means *“considerate.”*
“Azariah” - It means *“Jehovah has helped.”*

These names beautifully bring out the kind of builders that are needed in our homes.

3:24 *“Binnui”* - It means *“a building up.”* He also is one who sealed the covenant (10:9).

3:25 *“Palal”* - It means *“judge.”* This area was the residences of the priests. The Old Testament priests had the duty also of becoming the final judges on certain matters. The Urim and Thummin were used to seek God’s answer on particular problems.

“upper house of the king (or palace)” - This may have been an alternative residence of the king in pre-exilic times. The *“tower projecting”* was most likely a guard house overlooking the king’s residence (Jeremiah 32:2).

“Pedaiah” - It means *“Jehovah redeems.”* The whole reason for God’s judging was to expose sin and have it redeemed. (Ezekiel 33:11).

3:26 *“Ophel”* - It was located on the eastern hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple. Its name seems to mean *“a fortified hill or stronghold.”* This is believed to be *“Zion”* or *“the City of David”*.

“Nethinim” - These were the temple servants - *“the given ones.”* (Numbers 3:9). They were believed to be descendants of Gibeonites (Joshua 9:23, 27)

3:26 Water Gate

Water in the Bible represents:

- 1) God's blessing and refreshment (Psalms 23:2;32:2;35:6-7)
- 2) Cleansing (Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:1-10)
- 3) Danger - (Psalms 18:16; 46:3)
- 4) Word of God (Ephesians 5:26)

This gate lead to the Gihon spring. This gate was most likely part of the wall (N.E).

3:27 "Projecting Tower"

There could have been up to 30 towers located around the wall. Only certain ones were listed.

3:28 Horse Gate - It did not appear to need repair. When the army marched out to battle they would pass through this gate. This became one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was probably the most Eastern gate of all. One reached the Kidron Valley through it.

3:29 "Zadok" - It means "**righteousness.**" The Zadok priesthood always stood out as the remnant during times of spiritual decline.

"Shemaiah" - It means "**Jehovah hears.**" It is a name usually given to priests. He was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

East Gate - This gate led the way to the temple (gate beautiful). It opened the access to the court of the sanctuary. This is where many cases were judged that were under the jurisdiction of the sanctuary. This is probably what is termed the "**Golden Gate**" today.

3:30 "Hananiah" - It means "**Jehovah has been gracious.**"

"Hanun" - It means "**favoured.**"

"Meshullam" - (cf. - 3:4) - It means "**resigned**" or "**devoted.**"

3:31 "Meikijah or Malchaiah" It means "**Jehovah is King**" A goldsmith was known for his concern for quality and detail. How appropriate to be working close to the temple.

"Inspection Gate" - It is also called "**Muster Gate**" or "**Watch Gate**" or "**gate Miphkad**" This is the gate that the people (or men) were mustered through when conscripted to join the army.

3:32 Sheep Gate - The building both started and ended here. Goldsmiths and merchants were involved side by side with priests.

HOW TO OVERCOME THE FOE CHAPTER 4:1-9

A marine officer, when he saw that he and his men were surrounded by the enemy said,

“Men, we are surrounded by the enemy; don't let a
one of them get away.”

How we approach difficulties can often determine the outcome. We've all had times when we've wanted to “*throw in the towel.*” Even the great prophet Elijah faced depression and discouragement when Queen Jezebel sought his life.

It has been said that in every quarrel the devil remains neutral and supplies ammunition to both sides. It is very clear from Scripture that . . .

*“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have
overcome the world”*

John 16:33

Our trouble comes in many ways. Lets look at a well-worn method that Satan has been using for millenniums of times - **Criticism**. It is the **COLD WAR** of the devil that has brought him many victories.

4:1 In the Hebrew Bible chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 are part of chapter 3.

- ***“he became angry and was greatly incensed.”*** - This is an anger of people who are uncertain what to expect or what to do. They are helpless spectators of events that they didn't approve of. The enemies of God seem to always become upset when they see God's people rebuilding. Here we begin to see the progression of the reaction of the enemies. They felt they were being blocked out. Opposition to God's work comes in two ways:

- a) From external forces
- b) From internal forces

This was a case of external opposition as Jerusalem was again becoming fortified at an incredibly short period of time. The opposition came from different cultures. They were upset that :

*“someone had come to promote the welfare of the
Israelites.”*

Nehemiah 2:10

Today we have many fights, arguments and even wars when one group of people attempt to work on behalf of others without considering how it will effect the entire group.

4:2 *“in the presence of his associates”* - **This was the beginning of a propaganda/smear campaign.** Once the church begins to build or rebuild itself, it will not only be criticized, it will also be ridiculed. This is a very subtle and powerful weapon that is used against the church.

“the army of the Samaritans” - This army was used mostly for defensive purposes in aiding the Persian king. Sanballat was attempting to turn the Samaritans against the Jews, which wouldn't have taken much persuasion.

“What are those feeble Jews doing?” - It seems that the media always looks upon us as a feeble lot. We've come to believe that greatness somehow must be sinful.

The world often sees us as:

- 1) A feeble bunch of losers
- 2) People with little intellect
- 3) Out of date
- 4) Lacking in finances
- 5) People with no status.

But the church is:

- 1) Those who win on both sides of heaven
- 2) The leader of intelligence (i.e.) Solomon
- 3) Ahead of time
- 4) Serve a great provider
- 5) We have 2 citizenship's/presently ambassadors.

“feeble Jews” - This is a poor description of construction workers. It is used elsewhere to describe the fading or withering of a plant (Isaiah 16:8; 24:7). It is also used to describe a people without hope (Isaiah 19:8; Hosea 4:3).

“restore the wall” - Yes they were going to restore the wall in spite of all the opposition.

“offer sacrifices” - Quite possibly there would be a foundation offering or an offering of thanksgiving at the completion of the task.

“finish in a day” - Rome wasn't built in a day either!

“stones...burned”- They could have been made of limestone and therefore would be used someplace else. It is believed that a stone blackened by fire was considered as cursed in many cultures and could not be reused.

4:3 “a fox will break down” At 22 feet thick it would take a mighty big fox. Most breaches in the city walls were made after repeated ramming and dislodging of rocks. This is the height of scorn and ridicule combined with contempt. It’s interesting that the devil always wants the church to think that it is weak and he is strong. But as usual, the opposite is the case.

To the worldly, the message of hope offered in the gospel of God’s redeeming grace through faith and obedience is consistently mocked. Yet it is the greatest and only wall we can build. It terrifies the devil. The world judges everything by size, by headlines, by vast advertisement. Yet Jesus came into this world, born in a manger, son of a poor carpenter and has touched the world. The Son of God didn’t need all the pomp of mankind. The heavens declare His glory.

*** Napoleon, a genius in understanding men (cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *“The Reason for Our Hope,”* Moody Press), said “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me - everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man... One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary. “ 38/37

Quoted By Josh McDowell
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict”

4:4-5 9a Nehemiah knew the importance of prayer to become and remain an overcomer. Jesus overcame with whole nights of prayer and once by sweating drops of blood. The early church in Acts 4:29,30 learned how to pray. We not only need to know how to **organize** but we also need to **agonize**.

The prayer of Nehemiah asked for a judgment upon his enemies (cf. Romans 12:20,21). Any opposition to the work was also an opposition to God. We must be careful **what we pray** not just **that we pray**.

*** A minister was watching some men repair a section of highway. His attention was especially drawn to an elderly man who knelt as he broke stones for the hole in the highway. The minister observed that this man did more work than the ones who were standing and working. He commented, *“I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones.”*

With a twinkle in his eye, the man replied *“Pastor, you could if you worked on your knees.”*

4:6 *“till all of it reached half its height”* - The Hebrew text is not clear in this area. It seems to say that the entire wall was built up to half its height as many versions suggest in their translation.

“for the people worked with all their heart” - We need more ministers patterning their lives after Jesus (Mark 10:45) who made His life’s ambition serving others. These kind of people build when others flee. They are the optimists.

*** A shoe salesman was given a new territory where no one wore shoes. He wrote his company, *“Don’t send anymore shoes because no one here wears them.”*

Another salesman sent into the same territory wrote back, *“Send all the shoes you’ve got, nobody here has any.”* ***

The people saw the opportunity and set their heart to work. They built half the wall. They didn’t stop because of the opposition.

“We must obey God rather than men.”

Acts 5:29

4:7-8 Again the enemies of God worked together to attempt to cease the rebuilding. Nehemiah was completely surrounded by his enemies. He was cut off from the caravan routes to the south as well as the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This time though, their words changed into actions. They were prepared to fight-physically.

They were there to cause trouble. Today God's enemies are again trying to fight and cause trouble. They do so by changing the old foundations.

*** A Planned Parenthood answered a young teen-ager who asked *"Why am I so eager to have premarital sex and yet at the same time find myself holding back."*

Their reply, *"Your not ready and it may help you to know that millions of others just about your age feel the same way! Maybe sex is not for you."*

Answering another question *"How will sex affect our relationship? I mean, how would I feel about myself afterward? Would I feel guilty?"*

PPH reply:

"This is pretty hard to answer in advance! But if you have real doubts about how you'll feel towards yourself because of what you've been taught at home or at church - maybe you'd better wait until you can approach sex without worrying about feeling guilty."

4:9b They Watched with their Eyes

Matthew 26:41 Watch and Pray

We need to keep an eye on the enemy in the religious, political, social, judicial, educational, etc. systems of our day while we continue to build. During times of intense prayer we need to be aware of the trappings of the enemy. There is nothing wrong with keeping our guard up when we sense danger.

Which side are we on today? **Are we building for God or helping the enemy bring discouragement and division?**

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

CHAPTER 4:10-23

When the going gets tough, we must make a choice whether we are going to **give up and give in** or **give out and go ahead**. We must realize our enemy does not give up easily, especially when the stakes are high. He tempted the Lord at least three times before surrendering to defeat.

4:10 *“the strength of the laborers is giving out”* - Those who labour in the work of the Lord often become weary in well doing (cf.- Galatians 6:9; Matthew 9:38). Propaganda campaigns (mental and emotional abuse) can drain our strength as quickly as physical abuse does (cf. - Hitler’s tactics against the POW’s). Enthusiasm can be doused through repeated attacks of the enemy.

“there was so much rubble” - The remains of the ruins from the past were becoming overwhelming to those who were burdened with its removal. A crisis was at hand. Perhaps it would only take one more rumour or verbal attack to end the rebuilding of the walls and gates.

4:11 *“before they know it or see us”* - The enemy uses fear as a main weapon to attack God’s people. Uncertainty can bring about as much destruction as can an all out war. Doubt is a tactic that often causes people to attack each other.

“we will be right there among them and kill them” - The enemy makes many boastful statements that keeps God’s people from accomplishing God’s will. Fear is a weapon that costs little to implement and yet has indebted the Church with many untold loss of victories.

4:12 *“the Jews who lived near them”* - These Jews would be able to see the preparations the enemy was making to attack the people and end the work. They were also the most susceptible of being attacked first.

“Told us ten times over” - The enemy is often relentless in his attack of God’s people. When you’ve done all - STAND! It is interesting that ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses brought back a discouraging report also (Number 13:27-33).

“wherever you turn, they will attack us” - This is definitely an exaggeration. Angry men are rarely rational. Always question the validity of the enemy. Use the time as an opportunity to examine your motives and what you truly believe God’s will is in the matter.

We must accept the fact that God’s work never goes forward without opposition. We can either look at the problems with **discouragement** and **defeat** or use its **momentum** as a means to become **motivated** to go on to the end.

4:13 *“stationed some people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places”* - The enemy most often attacks our weakest areas of defence. He will hang us out to dry (like king Saul - I Samuel 31:8-10) to be mocked if we let him.

We must both watch and pray lest we enter in temptation (Matthew 26:41)

“posting them by families” - According to I Samuel 10:21 the number of a unit or clan of a family was approximately 1,000 men.

“swords” - They were the principal weapons for close combat.

“spears” - These were used for stabbing or thrusting in close combat as well.

“bows” - These were probably composite bows with a range of about 700 yards, but they were accurate at 300 to 400 yards.

4:14 *“after I looked things over I stood up”* - It is during times of crisis that we often make hasty decisions which we will later regret. Nehemiah got his people involved emotionally having them consider their families.

4:15 *“we were aware of their plot”* - Once a plot is exposed it often loses its momentum. People are not often as brave as they appear.

“God had frustrated it” - Just as in Ezra 4:5 we can learn that *“if we keep our peace the Lord can fight the battles.”* Remember Isaiah 59:19. This does not mean that we have no part in the battles of life. God will assist us.

4:16 *“From that day on . . .”* - Just because the Lord works on our behalf doesn't mean we let our guard down toward our enemies. Even though the war may be won, we still fight the battle because the enemy doesn't always want to admit to the victory (Proverbs 25:28).

“the officers posted themselves” - There was a distinction between the men of Nehemiah and those of Judah. In any time of war we need different levels of leadership (i.e. - generals; lieutenants, sergeants, privates).

4:17 *“those who carried material”* - These workers were more vulnerable to the attack of the enemy because they most often worked outside of the wall of protection.

“did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” - The carriers of the rubble were able to have one hand free to carry a weapon. It would definitely slow the work down a little but the precaution was very wise. We can fall by attempting to advance without protection.

4:18 ***“the builders wore his sword”*** - The builders had to use both hands for their work and thus could not, like the carriers, hold a weapon in their hand.

“the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me” - (cf. - Joel 2:1,15). The trumpeter was the one who sounded the alarm for battle. He must be well-informed and alert at all times.

4:19 ***“The work is extensive and spread out”*** - It is always a danger when we spread ourselves too thin. The enemy can often be successful because we are not linked together into close unity.

4:20 ***“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there”*** - Nehemiah used this ingenious plan to make the best use of the resources he had. The trumpeter would rally the troops to the place of need to ward off the attack of the enemy. God has often used our enemies to bring us together as a fighting force against evil plots.

4:21 ***“from the first light of dawn till the stars came out”*** - They worked long hours to complete the task that God had set before them. *“There is a time for everything . . . a time to tear down and a time to build . . . a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them . . .”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,3,5). **Don’t work when you should be resting - don’t rest when you should be working (Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16)**.

4:22 ***“stay inside Jerusalem at night”*** - The people living in rural areas preferred to return to their homes at night. This created a twofold problem. First, they were more likely to be attacked by their enemies. Secondly, the enemy could sneak into the city in the morning with the returning workers.

“guards by night and workmen by day” - This does not mean that they didn’t get any sleep. They would have taken their turn in such a way that it was fair to everyone. This is what team work is all about.

4:23 ***“took off our clothes”*** - During the time of greatest danger they slept with their clothes on. Every moment counts during times of war. Many a war has been won because the enemy took advantage of the time factor.

“each had his weapon” - Nehemiah joined the people to set an example of what to do. Paul taught the church to put on their spiritual armour each day (Ephesians 6:10-19). There are many cases of those who have let down their guard and fell into sin and temptation (Cain; Samson; David and Judas etc.).

“even when he went for water”- It is unfortunate that this portion is unclear in the Hebrew text. It could mean that they kept their weapons even when going for water or that they only removed their clothes while washing them with water.

NEHEMIAH HELPS THE POOR

CHAPTER 5:1-19

Review Chapter 4

Loss of Strength 4:10

Loss of Vision 4:10

Loss of Confidence 4:10

Loss of Security 4:11

Now in Chapter 5

High Cost of Food (large families)

High Mortgage Rates

High Interest Rates

These are difficult enough problems for a government to solve let alone a single leader. External attack is one problem, internal dissension is quite another. The poverty that the nation was experiencing came from two sources. **First**, Judah was essentially cut off from its neighbours because of the hostility directed toward the Jews. **Second**, Nehemiah placed very high demands upon the people to rebuild the wall (4:22). The effect was heaviest on those living in the rural areas.

I. THE PROBLEMS

5:1 *“a great outcry”* - This loud cry was one made by those in great distress. They were in serious problems. Even their wives became involved which was quite unusual for women who normally remained in the background in this culture and time period.

5:2 High Population

The large families would normally be a blessing with all the hard work to do. But due to the work, their neighbours became hostile and their commercial ties were broken.

Second, Nehemiah expected everyone to stay in Jerusalem - farmers included. Note that they directed their outcry toward their Jewish brothers.

“In order for a football team to win it must overcome two teams - the opposing team and its own.”

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:2 High Cost of Food

They were eating to stay alive. Today, many live to eat. They were only requesting the basics of life - grain.

Half of our world is dieting while the other half is dying. If we believe “*we are what we eat,*” than we can also say “*I show you a mystery.*” North Americans spend 374 billion dollars a year on snack foods. It is now more than they spend on groceries. Its been said that we push our shopping carts through supermarkets at speeds of over \$200.00 per hour.

5:3 High Cost of Mortgage Rates

“Modern man drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas.”

Our dollar sign has been described as a capital S that has been double-crossed. We’ve come to believe that the only way to see daylight is to moonlight.

These people had mortgaged their fields, vineyards and homes just to stay alive. **Their upkeep became their downfall.** They became victims of their circumstance.

“*our fields, our vineyards and our homes*” - The “*fields*” referred to the tilled soil on which the grain was sown. Gibeon, which formed part of Judah, was well-known for its “*vineyards*” during the period known as the Iron Age II. The farmers had to borrow money to pay the royal taxes that were being levied against their “*homes.*”

5:4 High Taxes

“*the king’s tax*” - Taxes are usually brought in as a temporary measure but they often become a permanent fixture. The lands were mortgaged so they had no way to pay the taxes. Taxation on real estate “*ground tax*” was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians. Today we pay sales taxes, income tax, property tax, estate taxes, gas tax, as well as tax on taxes (carbon tax).

Failure to pay these taxes was regarded as rebellion by the Persian empire. The high cost of the wars during the time of Darius and Xerxes, especially against the Greeks, had depleted the treasury of the king. Taxes upon farmers who yielded crops on their land became a heavy burden.

I. THE PROBLEMS (Contd.)

5:5 Slavery

The only option that seemed to come to the people was to sell their children to the creditors. Their daughters often became second wives. Lord Shaftsbury and Wilberforce became incensed at the evils of slavery in the British empire during their lifetime.

“our countrymen” - They were having to sell their children to their wealthy Jewish brothers in order to pay their debts. This could easily lead to a violation of Jewish law.

Other nations not Jewish brethren	Deuteronomy 28:32 Leviticus 25
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“but we are powerless” - There was literally **“no power for our hands.”**

5:6 “I was very angry” - Nehemiah became enraged at the dangerous situation that was developing. The financial infrastructure was collapsing and the wealthy Jews were not very considerate of their brothers.

5:7 High Interest Rates

“I pondered them in my mind” - It is always best to put our mind in gear before we put of mouth in motion. It is also important to have a plan when a problem has to be confronted. Otherwise, we can easily be led into a mud slinging match which will accomplish very little.

“then accused the nobles and officials” - He decided to use drastic measures. He confronted them with a lawsuit. He could not follow the normal procedures of bringing the accused before the leaders/judges because they were the ones being accused.

“you are exacting usury” - It was not wrong to lend money to a Jewish brother but it was wrong to charge interest (for **“usury”** see Deuteronomy 23:19-20).

“called together a large meeting” - The people were wisely involved in the process and not just the problem. This placed the governing back into the hands of the people where it belonged at that critical time.

II. THE ROOT OF PROBLEMS

5:8 Selfishness/Greed

The people were innocent. They were trying to do all they could to sacrifice in order to rebuild the wall. The social injustice was clear. Our nation is also suffering from greed as God is encouraging us to arise and build. We need to be careful adopting the ways of the ungodly. The lack of response by the rich owners was essentially a confession of their guilt.

III. RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

5:9 Face the Issue

“What you are doing is not right” - There was an allowance for Hebrew slavery in the Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Deuteronomy 15:12). They had to set them free after six years of service. During the time of Zedekiah these same slaves were brought back into slavery (Jeremiah 34:8 ff).

The measuring stick became God and His Word which never changes. Our society has lost its measuring stick - it has no solid guidelines for the most part. We are guided only by *“situational ethics”* - what would the majority do? - how would the majority feel? **Nehemiah talked personally to those who were guilty and confronted them publically.**

5:10 *“I and my brothers are also lending”* - Nehemiah was admitting that he had contributed to the serious problem of loans that got the nation into debt. Honesty is a very important link to solving financial debt.

“but let the exacting of usury stop” - Loaning money was not the problem. **Loaning money with high interest was the problem.** It was time to restore the land to its rightful owner.

5:11 Act According to God’s Word

A hundred-fold had to be returned. Nothing could be held back. There had to be an immediate response to the problem. It wasn’t going to take a committee to reach a conclusion. **He attacked the problem not the people.**

5:12,13a Be Determined - Make an Oath

“Take an oath” - Their words were to be carefully considered. An oath was considered as good as a written document. A broken oath was a symbol of one who was not trustworthy.

Let your *“yea be yea”* and your *“nay be nay.”*

“I also shook out the folds of my robe” - People often kept personal belongings in the folds or pockets of their robes. Shaking of the robe became a symbol of a curse for those who failed to keep their promise. It illustrated that they would be broke if they disobeyed the vow.

IV. THE RESULT

5:13b ***“Amen - let it be so”*** - The people all agreed. A praise offering was given to God and the people kept their promise.

V. THE PRACTICAL LESSON

5:14,15 A. Do not Look to the World for Standards

“for twelve years” - Nehemiah suffered along with his people instead of enjoying the pleasure of sin for a season. He had the right to be financially secure but he chose to give instead of taking (cf. - I Corinthians 9:1-23). Sometimes our ***“rights”*** can become a ***“wrong.”***

Nehemiah could have followed other governors and demanded an added tax of forty shekels of silver (1 pound of silver). He could have become very rich.

5:16 ***“we did not acquire any land”*** - He could have also selected the choicest land for his own but refused to do so. This would have given him a higher status of respect.

5:17 ***“ate at my table”*** - He is believed to have provided enough food daily for 600-800 people. He chose to feed his guest from the ***“hand-picked”*** or choicest animals. These were not supplied by taxes.

Nehemiah did not add insult to injury by refraining from his rightful portion of taxes.

5:18 ***“because the demands were heavy upon the people”*** - The heart of God’s true leaders/shepherds will be seen in whether they drive the flock or lead the flock (cf. Jeremiah 3:15 with Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 34:1-16; Zechariah 11:15-17).

B. Do works of Grace out of Reverence for God (5:15,19)

“so did not I” - He refused to comply to ungodly practices. He avoided worldliness. Those who will ascend to the hill of God must have clean hands and a pure heart. Without holiness no one can see God.

What he did was not so much out of charity as it was to receive the favour of God. In promoting the **cause of the people**, Nehemiah was also promoting **the cause of God**.

Nehemiah
Chapter 6:1-19
Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

I feel sorry for Nehemiah at the constant barrage of attacks both from external and internal forces. It's enough to make even a good leader doubt his calling. How much can a person take? What kept him going under such strong opposition?

Perhaps he felt like Woodrow Wilson who said,

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Our enemy is an excellent hunter. He is a master at setting traps. He seldom fails to catch his prey. He caught Balaam (Number 22) and Samson in Judges 16.

*** John Huss, the Bohemian reformer (circa 1369-1415) opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. He was invited to attend the Council of Constance to answer charges against him and was promised safe travel by the emperor.

When Huss refused to recant his statements, he was seized, cast into a dungeon and later condemned by the Council. He was burned at the stake in 1415 A.D. by order of the Council.

William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale believed that scripture should be made available to the people in their language. Tyndale published two editions, each of 3,000 copies of the English New Testament at Worms in 1535. Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version.

William Tyndale suffered shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, betrayal by friends and a pirated edition in his efforts to publish the Bible in English. Tyndale was invited to have lunch with a friend. It was a trap. He was arrested near Brussels in 1535. In October 1536 he was strangled and burnt. It is reported that his last words were, “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” His goal as spoken to one clergy was, “*If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.*” ***

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church. **You can't kill the true Church by destroying its leaders.**

Nehemiah stood in a very dangerous position. To let down could mean his life. He was almost finished as the scheming blows of the enemy were coming fast and furious. They tried to lure him to a place where they could eliminate him and thereby stop the project from being completed.

6:1 *“not a gap was left in it”* - The enemy knows when the breaches (gaps) are being filled in. He realizes that a house that is NOT divided WILL stand.

“I had not set the doors in place” - We must not see this as a contradiction of chapter 3 because the work was not completed until chapter 6:15

Nehemiah kept to his goal with repeated harassments. A person who keeps to a given priority will not become sidetracked by deviant acts of the enemy. Nehemiah suspected foul play. He overcame three forms of attack.

I. SNARE OF WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP (vv. 2-4)

6:2 *“Come, let us meet together...”*

Come to where we are. Come to our level. Don't be extreme any longer. Don't be fanatical. Don't be narrow. Retain your worldly friends and interest. Be a Christian but keep it in balance – don't separate yourself from us (lions).

“on the plain of Ono” - Nehemiah was invited for a meeting at the valley of Ono (*“strong”*-lit). The name means *“lions.”* It was located 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a neutral, non-Jewish territory but also a place hostile to Jews.

6:3 *“why should the work stop”* - His priority kept him in focus. Ask yourself what priorities you've set forth for God to work out in your life! – and then keep to them!

6:4 *“Four times . . .”* - Beware of constant distractions when God calls you to do His work of restoration. The enemy is often relentless in his attacks. The repeated efforts are a sign of desperation.

The devil only needs one compromise to get a foothold into our lives.

II. SUBTLETY OF THE WORLD'S SLANDER (vs 5-7)

If the world can't persuade us to compromise, it often spreads rumors and tries to misrepresent our motives.

6:5 *"his servant"* - He was probably one of Sanballat's minor officials.

"Unsealed letter" - An opened letter could be read by anyone which is a good way of spreading a rumour. Why then did they want a private meeting? If Sanballat knew that Nehemiah was involved in a revolt, why would he (as a governor of another province) want to meet with him? Wouldn't it look suspicious? Why should a Samaritan be interested in a Jew?

"you are about to become their king" - We have no proof that Nehemiah was of the Davidic lineage. **Slander/lies are powerful tools for the enemy**. This would be considered as high treason to King Artaxerxes.

6:7 *"There is a king in Judah"* - Even false prophets were brought into the act to acknowledge this new Messiah.

"Let us confer together" - An uncontrolled tongue in the hands of Satan can and has done more damage to the kingdom of God than drugs, alcohol, T.V., adultery, love of money and sexual scandals.

*** On a windswept hillside in an old English country church yard stands a drab, gray slated tombstone. The faint etchings can barely be read. *"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay lies Arabella Young, , who on the twenty fourth of May began to hold her tongue."* ***

When slander comes into the church, the enemy's weapon becomes supercharged.

"I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle"

Psalms 39:1

6:8 *"you are just making it up"* - or *"from your heart you are fabricating [or imagining] them."* - *literally*. It was a figment of their imagination. Nehemiah simply called the report a lie and prayed that God would strengthen his hands.

6:9 *"trying to frighten us"* - Fear is a powerful weapon to hinder the work of God. Prayer and perfect love can conquer any fear.

III. The Scandal of the World's Religion (vs 10-14)

Satan is far less dangerous as a “roaring lion” than he is as an “angel of light”. This false prophet tried to lure this laymen who was not permitted to enter the temple (Numbers 18:7). A eunuch was excluded from any religious participation in the temple (Leviticus 21:17-24; Deuteronomy 23:1). This false prophet would have led Nehemiah into a ritual transgression. This would discredit him before the people and consequently stop the work (cf. vs.13).

6:10 *“who was shut in at his house”* - It was probably no more than a symbolic act to indicate that they were both in danger and needed to flee to the safety of the temple.

6:11 *“should a man like me run away”* - This false prophet tried to persuade Nehemiah into an easy-going, compromising religion that shirked persecution, carried no-cross, and was governed by the fear of others.

6:12 *“I realized that God had not sent him”* - We need to have *“the gift of discernment of spirits”* in order to be safeguarded from the deceit of this world.

This came about because Nehemiah's own followers were corresponding with the enemy by writing letters and exchanging views in alliance with the enemy. One of the ways the enemy got a foothold was through mixed marriages. Therefore, Nehemiah had to be extra careful. His enemies were carefully situated and strategically integrated into the people

6:14 *“He had been hired to intimidate me”* - Intimidation can lead us to sin and sin will discredit us before others.

Nehemiah's prayer was for his enemies to receive justice for their evil acts. The governors, prophetess and prophets were indicted in the affair.

Jesus warned our generation a number of times to be on guard against deception (Matthew 24:4,5,11, 24).

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (vs 15,16)

6:15 The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Only the Eastern wall was built from its foundation. The North, West and South walls used some of the ruins from the previous walls. The 25th Elul, was the beginning of October, 445 B.C.

According to K. Kenyon, the wall was probably 2600 metres. If the northern end of the western wall was also completed, it would have been about 4150 metres long. It was 6 months after Nehemiah heard of the plight, four months of which he prayed and fasted, that the wall was completed.

6:16 *“the surrounding nations were afraid”* It was not Nehemiah but rather the surrounding nations that were overcome with fear. Nehemiah refused to meet them on their level. He refused to meet them at the plain on Ono. These important decisions paid off.

“and lost their self-confidence” - Literally it means *“and they fell much in their own eyes.”* This caused them to lose their sense of superiority over the Jews.

“with the help of our God” - It doesn't take too long for people to acknowledge the hand of God when it is clearly evident.

V. CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOBIAH (vs 17-19)

6:17 *“replies from Tobiah kept coming”* - The enemy doesn't know enough when to quit. Jesus faced the same constant temptation from the devil in the wilderness as well as when He hung on the cross. *“If thou be the Son of God, come down,” Matthew 27:42*

cf. - *“I cannot come down; I'm doing too great a work.” 6:3*

cf. - *“Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you” 6:3*

6:18 *“were under oath to him”* - Probably through intermarriages. The measures taken in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten. It is like some revivals - their effects are short lived because the carnality quickly takes over. **The enemy is relentless in bringing God's people into bondage and open to ridicule.**

6:19 *“they kept reporting to me his good deeds”* - Comparisons will most often create problems for the Church. The intimidation continued. But the enemy had lost his self-confidence (vs 6:16).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 7:1-73
THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM and
THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNEES

This is a transition chapter. The first six chapters dealt with **the restoration of the walls.** The following six (8-13) chapters deal with **the restoration of the people.**

This order is very crucial. We cannot restore people to a permanent residency in God without providing a defence from the enemy. We have all seen the tragedy of a new convert who doesn't avail himself to the protection of the Church. We've also seen the results of the weak links or breaches in the Church's defence. War is a costly event.

*** President Eisenhower, in a speech urging world disarmament said:

"The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: A modern brick school in 30 cities. Two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. Two fine fully equipped hospitals. Some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people." ***

Warfare in the spiritual realm has been even more costly. How can we place a value on even one life? Is it worth it to even take one chance - one risk - one time of letting down our defences?

7:1 *"The walls had been rebuilt and I had set the doors (gates) in place."* The gates were made of wood and bronze and were often bound with heavy copper bands or sheathed in copper plates. In addition to the gates and walls were the towers that were often built at the gates so the defenders could throw boiling pitch or oil upon their enemy.

Nehemiah carefully chose those whom he wanted to remain at the gates. In the first three verses three appointments were made.

I. 1ST APPOINTMENT - BY THE PEOPLE

- 1) **“gatekeepers”** - (cf. 7:45) 138 gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42 says 139). They had to be descendants of the Levites to be a gatekeeper.
- 2) **“Singers”** - These were descendants of Asaph 148 had returned 7:44 (Ezra 2:41 listed the number as 128).

*** In 363 A.D. the Synod in Laodicea ruled that *“psalms composed by private men must not be used in the church.”* They also decreed that *“besides the regularly appointed singers, no other shall sing in the church.”*

Congregational singing was halted through the dark middle ages. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that the bondage was broken. Catholics who feared Luther said that *“his songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches.”* ***

Read II Chronicles 20:1-4,13-26

- 3) **“Levites”** - According to 7:43 only 74 returned from exile (same in Ezra 2:40).

They were responsible for various aspects of worship. They kept the temple clean, and prepared oil and wine for offerings. A priest was a Levite but all Levites were not priests. All priests had to be consecrated before serving (Exodus 29:1-37, Leviticus 8). Levites were also purified (Numbers 8:5-22). Only priests were allowed to minister at the altar and the holy place.

Levites became the singers and musicians in King David’s day. They were also teachers. This is the first time they are recorded working at the gates of the city. They usually were (always) close to the temple. They were only appointed to the gates of the Temple and never recorded at the gates of the city. Some writers though believe that both the singers and Levites were a glossing which crept in from vv. 43ff.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH

7:2 **“Hanani”** - Nehemiah’s brother (Hanani) and Hananiah were appointed over the city of Jerusalem. This was indeed a great honour. This is also the first time that administrators were appointed to this position. They were both chosen because of their outstanding godly character.

7:3 This verse is very important to remember. The walls were up and the gates were in place. The traffic through the gates had to be safeguarded. The only access for their enemies was through the gates.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

“The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot” - Normally the gates were opened at dawn. Nehemiah commanded the gatekeepers not to open the gates until the sun was high in the sky and close them before the sun set at night. This was to protect against any surprise attack. Nehemiah could not be certain that his enemies were going to leave them alone.

*** A soldier was posted in a forest to watch against any approach of the enemy. It was a place of extreme danger. Three different men had been surprised and killed before firing a shot.

Shortly after taking his position an object began moving among the trees. The soldier levelled his rifle but before firing noticed that it was a wild boar. A second pig arrived whom the soldier cautiously watched.

Again the leaves began to rustle and a third hog appeared. This time the soldier noticed a slight awkwardness in the pig's movements. He raised his rifle and fired. The object lifted to its feet, screamed and fell back dead. It was the enemy dressed in the skins of a wild boar.

The soldier's attentiveness not only saved his life but also prevented an attack on the garrison. ***

It's usually at the time and in the manner that we least expect it that our enemy attacks. They not only shut the doors but barred them indicating the greatest precaution and safety device. Additional guards were formed from the city residence. Notice that they were stationed near their homes.

7:4 ***“but there were few people in it”*** - The Jews that had returned settled mostly in the rural areas. Probably they could do better as farmers. The city was smaller than the pre-exiled Jerusalem so it confirmed how small the population was.

7:5 ***“So my God set it into my heart”*** - God set it upon Nehemiah's heart to search the record to see who could come into the city. They discovered a very important genealogical list. Only those registered were allowed within safety of the city walls. (i.e.. – Noah, heaven)

7:6 ***“excluded from the priesthood as unclean”*** - Those not found on the record were considered as unclean for the priesthood. He would not defile God's Law simply to appease the will of men.

II. 2ND APPOINTMENT - BY NEHEMIAH (Contd.)

7:65 They could not feast on the “*most sacred food.*” There should be a priest ministering with “*Urim and Thummin*” to determine what God’s judgement was. (i.e.. - heaven again)

7:66-69 Nothing and no one is unimportant with God. He keeps up-to-date records. God knows who belongs to Him.

Conclusion: Read Revelation 3:2-6

*** The church at Sardis had a vivid memory fresh in their minds. Sardis had been captured by the Persian king Cyrus. Herodotus, a Greek historian wrote that Sardis was considered impregnable.

Behind the city rose Mount Tmolus. A narrow ridge of rock like a pier went from the mountain to the citadel where Sardis was perched. Cyrus gave a message to his troops that a special reward waited the conqueror.

Hyeroeades, a Mardian soldier, studied the cliffs. He noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the walls, down the cliff. The soldier then carefully made his way down the steep cliff, recovered his helmet and returned the same way.

Hyeroeades, carefully marked the way of ascent in his mind. That night he marshalled a band of troops skilfully up the dangerous cliff. When they reached the top, they found the defences completely unguarded. They easily captured the city. Sardis was taken because it failed to be alert and watchful. ***

Nehemiah was not about to make a similar mistake. Being on our guard is not a sign of a lack of faith in God. The Lord expects us to be alert when it comes to the enemy of our soul (I Peter 5:8).

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 8:1-18
THE READING OF THE LAW

It's said that behind every good man is a good woman. Here we find that behind Nehemiah was Ezra. Behind every political leader there is a need for someone like Ezra:

- 1). *“had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances . . .”* (Ezra 7:10)
- 2). *“The hand of the Lord was upon him.”* (Ezra 7:6,9)
- 3). Was ashamed and embarrassed to lift his face before God because their iniquities rose above their hands, and their guilt had grown to the heavens.

If only our leaders could see their need for such an individual to be with them .

“Seventh month” - Sept./Oct. was a very important time for Israel. The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles were held during this month.

Feast of Trumpets [1st Day] (Lev: 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6)

The seventh month is kind of a sabbatical month which is full of feasts and fast days. It's exciting to see God's and man's timing of the completion of the walls.

This feast was one that was full of joyful sounds. The silver trumpets were sounded and heard all day to arouse Israel into joyful expectation. The trumpets represented the voice of God who was glad to be among them..

Day of Atonement [10th Day] (Leviticus 16; 23:16-32; Numbers 29:7-11)

This was a time when the people withdrew from earthly joys as they contemplated their guilt and God's wrath. It led them to the goal of atonement for all their sin. **Godly sorrow does not take away the sin, it simply takes away the pleasant taste of it.**

Feast of Tabernacles [15th - 21st Day](Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43; Numbers 29:12-34)

This feast was held for seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month. This was a rainy month and therefore it wasn't ideal for living in booths. It kept the memory of Israel's dwelling in tents while in the wilderness alive in their memory. (Leviticus 23:40-43)

Palm tree (Nehemiah 8:15) - It became a token of triumph. This tree most often sheltered them while they travelled in the wilderness.

Branches of thick (leafy) trees - The Myrtle tree was thickly twisted with leaves both on the bottom and top. It indicates both the height and depth of God's blessing.

Willow (Poplar) - It often grew close to a river and offered shade from the scorching heat.

Olive and Pine - (Nehemiah 8:15)

Olives served domestic uses while the pine was used for public use. Olive trees yielded berries while the pine offered massive beams.

Pine and Cedar -	noble and lofty
Myrtle -	sweet fragrance
Palm -	triumph over obstacles.
Willow -	lowly condescension (humility)

8:1 **“Water Gate”** - This gate represented God’s blessing, refreshment, cleansing, and the Word of God. This gate led to the Gihon spring. It was at this gate that Ezra instructed the people by reading from the Pentateuch.

8:2 **“The first day of the seventh month”** - It was a Sabbath day so no one could work. This assembly was held at the Water Gate so the entire family could attend. Only men were allowed past the court of the women in the temple.

8:3 He could not of read all of the Law during this time period. He probably read without commenting on the portions of Scripture.

8:4 **“High wooden platform”** - This word was used elsewhere to describe a tower. He would be visible and could be heard better. The people remained standing until he was finished. Thirteen leaders of the community stood at his right and left side indicating their support.

God's Word is Needed for Revival

A native of India, was writing to his friend about the revival they were experiencing exclaiming - *"We are having a great re-bible here."*

"There are ten men who will fight for the Bible to one who will read it"

L. R. Akers

"The reason why people are down on the Bible is that they are not up on the Bible."

Matthew Arnold

"Hold fast to the Bible as the shield, anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Ulysses S. Grant

"What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you."

Gipsy Smith

8:6 The response to the reading the Law was incredible -

They praised God
They lifted their hands to heaven
Replied - Amen - ("so be it") - Amen
Bowed their heads
Worshipped in a prostrate position.

There needs to be a transition at every revival where the altar is removed and the pulpit is restored. Consider Luther, Knox, Wesley, etc.

8:8 The Word of God comes alive with every revival. The word *“translated”* means *“to make clear, distinct”* or *“to separate it from something else so as to make it flow together in a meaningful fashion.”*

These people were Jews by birth but not by tongue (Hebrew) and culture. They had brought with them a Chaldean mentality and life-style. They had only heard their Hebrew Bible through Babylonian affected ears.

The people needed someone to explain the meaning to what had been read. This became the duty of the Levites. It was not just important to **HEAR** the Word, but also to **UNDERSTAND** it and then **APPLY** it.

8:9 There is a time to mourn and there’s a time to laugh. The Law has the tendency to make us mourn.

8:10 The Feast of Trumpets was able to induce a time of great joy. Sacredness does not always mean quietness.

This joy was quickly displayed in their generosity to the needy. God gives strength with joy. They could enjoy the best food and drink. The word *“strength”* means *“mountaintop”* or *“bulwark”*.

8:11-12 After calming the people they were sent home to celebrate a festive time - perhaps an “agape-meal.”

8:13-18 On the second day of the Feast of Trumpets they were again listening to God’s Word, (Leviticus 23). They noticed that beginning on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:33) they were to dwell in booths for seven days. It pointed to the day when *“His (God’s) tabernacle shall be with men.”* Revelation 21:3. They wisely avoided the “monument mentality” by not worshipping this brick and mortar project.

No one was allowed to live in their homes during this time. It was an excellent time for families to spend time together. It emphasized the simple life. It was a time when God supplied all their needs.

During this time God’s Word never ceased to be read by Ezra.

Six things were noted in this revival:

- 1) Reverence for Scripture (v. 5)
- 2) True Worship of God (v.6)
- 3) Comprehension of Scripture (vs. 7,8)
- 4) Remorse for sin (v. 9)
- 5) Rejoicing in God's fellowship (v. 10-12)
- 6) Obedience to the Word of God (v. 13-18)

“Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved. You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved. Revival occurs as God ignites the fire of His Word and mobilizes His people to go and win the lost.”

Charles Swindoll
“Hand Me Another Brick”
p.105

“I am distressed at the zeal of heretics and the amnesia of the believers.”

Leonard Ravenhill

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 9:1-38
PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

To understand chapter nine we must understand what took place in chapter eight and especially after 8:13 ff. After having built comfortable homes and a wall of protection, why would the people then leave such luxury to live in booths (shacks).

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, the feast of Tabernacles was the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts. During this feast, water was carried from the Pool of Siloam and poured out in a ritualistic manner at the temple. Jesus declared Himself to be the water of life during one of these times.

*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,
 out of his being shall flow rivers of living water.”*

John 7:37,38

These people had been challenged by God’s Word. The Word had taken on a real meaning to them. They just weren’t going to be hearer’s of the Word, they were going to be doers also.

The Feast of Tabernacles had not taken place with this level of spiritual fervour for a 1,000 years (cf. Nehemiah 8:17 with Ezra 3:4 and Nehemiah 9:16,17), since the time of Joshua. These booths became a public display for the enemies of God - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. I wonder what the result would be if God’s people today would humble themselves before the nations?

9:1 The preparation for this penitent prayer was indeed significant.

24th day - This would be exactly 14 days after the Day of Atonement (Oct 30, 445B.C.).

“Sackcloth fasting and ashes, dust” – Once again the humility of the people is emphasized. It was a sign of mourning and of the frailty of mankind.

9:2 **“separated themselves”** – Some would have to separate from their in-laws and spouses and children.

“Confessed” – Not only their sins were addressed but also that of their ancestors.

- 9:3 3 hours reading the Word
 3 hours confessing their sins
 3 hours worshipping

9:4 The Levites were divided into two groups of 8 each of which 5 names were the same.

First group - Petitioners
Second group - Prayers/Worshippers

The Prayer (verse 5)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 people joined together in agreement of this penitent prayer.
This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible.

It characterized the people as they were - sinful, disobedient, but it also clearly portrayed a majestic God.

God of creation	-	9:6
God of grace	-	9:7,8
God who answers prayer	-	9:9
God of deliverance/miracles	-	9:10,11
God of guidance	-	9:12
God of revelation/sanctification	-	9:13,14
God of provision	-	9:15
God of mercy	-	9:17,19,27,28,31

This Chapter Shows Us 4 Principles of Revival

I. A Return to Brokenheartedness (9:1,2)

The people began a time of fasting after only a few days of feasting had past.
Feasting (fellowship, communion and rejoicing in the Lord) and Fasting (denying ourselves) go together in our Christian walk.

If we avoid a consistent humiliation before God we will become hardhearted, cold and indifferent towards God. How often do times of discovery of God’s loveliness bring us to a point of comparison of a new corruption in our own hearts? Brokenheartedness should never be isolated to early experiences in our Christian experience.

There also needs to be a brokenheartedness in our relationship with others.

II. A Reflection upon God's Goodness (9:7-31)

Shortly after scrutinizing our own life we should compare ourselves with God. The distinctions are overwhelming.

... and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans . . .v 7
 ... You made a covenant with him . . .v 8
 ... You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt . . .v 9
 ... You heard their cry at the Red Sea . . .v 9
 ... You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh . . .v 10
 ... You divided the sea before them . . .v 11
 ... You hurled their pursuers into the depths . . .v 11
 ... You led them with a pillar of cloud . . .v 12
 ... and by night with a pillar of fire . . .v 12
 ... You spoke to them from heaven . . .v 13
 ... You made known to them your holy Sabbath . . .v 14
 ... and gave them commands, decrees and laws . . .v 14
 ... and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock . . .v 16
 ... you told them to go in and take possession of the land . . .v 15

What a contrast between God's faithfulness, goodness, grace, mercy and blessing compared to ours.

BUT

. . . But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands . . .v 16
 . . . They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked . . .v. 17
 . . . they cast for themselves an image of a calf . . .v. 18
 . . . they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets . . .v. 26
 . . . as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight . . .v. 28

It took time for the people to come to a place of admitting their wrong. *"Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before the throne I spend."*

III. A Recognition of our Sinfulness (9:33)

The people could see that sin had a lasting effect on their nation. They lived in their promised land but were still slaves - v. 36,37.

God is more ready to forgive sin than we are to confess it.

*** I had a young man call me from Edmonton many years ago concerned that he had committed the unpardonable sin. I felt that his remorse proved that he hadn't committed it. One pastor said that the unforgivable sin is the sin you won't confess.

Some time ago at an all night of prayer in church I read a list I called Self-Examination Questions, *"because I am desperately concerned in my own life on these issues. I want to give this list to you, lest you think it is a comfortable, easy sort of business, this recognition of sin."* ***

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God that I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Is the Bible alive to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time to spend time in the Bible?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I use my tongue or my knees to solve it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something that my conscience is troubled with?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him/her for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work? How do I spend my spare time?

IV. A Renewal of Obedience (cf. 9:16,17,26,29)

Obedience had to touch every area of their lives - home life, social life and church life.

“Revival is not simply an emotional upheaval - it leads to action.”

[Alan Redpath](#)

They had to restore some altars.

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 10:1-39
THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

Review of Chapter 9

Principles of Revival

- 1) A return to brokenheartedness (9:1,2)
- 2) A reflection upon God's goodness (9:7-31)
- 3) A recognition of our sinfulness (9:33)
- 4) A renewal of obedience (9:16,17,26,29)

It's been said that words are cheap. We can often make promises but do not keep them. We can also enter into commitments half-heartedly. There is a way of breaking these patterns.

It can happen when God's people enter into a covenant with their Lord. The nation of Israel was normally brought into a covenant by the sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood (Exodus 24). This covenant became a serious bond that God expected the people to maintain.

The Seal This time the covenant was established by attaching a seal and subscription to the written articles of the covenant. The seal was founded upon the preceding act of prayer (chapter 9) and repentance. A document was drawn up with all the stipulations clearly written.

A seal was an impression that bore the family name. If the conditions of the covenant were not kept it would bring a disgrace to the **entire family** - not just the father.

We need to remember that the reason we have been blessed is because of God. When we complete great victories we need to renew our covenant with God lest pride steps in.

*** Napoleon was on the deck of his ship one night enjoying the evening scenery when he overheard the discussion of two officers; one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said,

"Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" as he pointed to the beautiful display of light that were dancing across the sky. ***

10:1 Nehemiah, as their governor, set a good example by signing the document first. His act was followed by 84 others.

He was followed by:

1. 22 priests (v. 2-8)
2. 17 Levites (v. 9-13)
3. 44 leaders (v. 14-27)
4. The rest of the people (v. 28) who were of the age accountability .

10:29 They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. This became a **“literary stake”** or a **“rallying point.”** We would probably call it their *“philosophy of life”* or their *“declaration of distinction”* from the nations that surrounded them. This again emphasizes the seriousness of the people.

They agreed to follow **ALL** the **LAW of Moses**. They were willing to document their priorities. We need to also commit ourselves to certain priorities of life. Written priorities do not lose their clarity over time. Verbal priorities can become vague. The catch word is that they would **OBEY God and His Word.**

I. OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF LIVING/HOMES

10:30 Would not intermarry with heathens.

“Distinctive respectable leaders have distinctive respectable homes.”

Charles Swindoll

“When the morals of society are upset, the family is the first to suffer.”

Billy Graham

Read Ezra 9,10

Why is it always easier to follow the world’s ways than to follow God’s way?

II. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS

10:31 Respect the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

This would become difficult for a small religious community which was surrounded by a large world of heathen nations. Foreign merchants arrived at Jerusalem on the Sabbath wanting to do business. The people made a commitment to rest.

Respect of the Sabbath Year (Exodus 23:10,11; Leviticus 25:2-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Any land not given proper rest would become poor for growth. The rest extended to the 7th year when the land was not sown or reaped from in accordance with the Law.

In the “Nuts and Bolts” of daily living, we need to know that God will honour those who honour Him.

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP

In just the few verses of 10:32-39, Nehemiah mentions the “*house of the Lord or the house of God*” nine times. According to the New Testament writings, God’s people are considered as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20).

10:32 Assume their Temple Duties

1/3 shekel for the temple in this case (cf. Exodus 30:13 [$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel]). Perhaps the difference is due to the Persian monetary system (i.e.. - exchange rate). This money would be used for the proper care of the temple and its ministers. This agreement would put a heavy burden on the people because of the already high Persian tax that was placed upon them.

Other uses of the Temple tax.

- 1) Continued meat and burnt offering (Numbers 28:3-8)
- 2) Sacrifices for the Sabbath and new moons (Numbers 28:9-15)
- 3) Festivals (Numbers 28:16-29,38)
- 4) Holy gifts/thank offerings

10:33 Shewbread
(cf. – I Chronicles 9:32; 32:29; II Chronicles 13:11)

III. TO OBEY IN THEIR PLACE OF WORSHIP (Contd.)

10:34 Wood for Sacrifices/altars
(cf. – Leviticus 6:12)

The directions to procure the wood were initiated.

10:35-36 Firstfruits of crops and fruits.

- 1) **Firstborn son** - Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- 2) **Firstborn cattle** - Exodus 13:12; Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 12:6
- 3) **Firstborn donkey** - Exodus 13:13

10:37 First fruits of ground
Fruit trees - Numbers 18:13; Leviticus 19:23

10:38 The Priests/Levites were to take a “tithe of the tithe” and bring it into the chambers of the Temple’s treasury (cf. - Deuteronomy 14:22; 26:12; Genesis 28:22; Numbers 18:26; I Chronicles 31:11)

10:39 This did not become a legal obligation - it rather became a living reality. Under this **new covenant** came a **new relationship** which brought about a **new freedom**.

Along with confession and forsaking of sin must come a new obligation to God.

PRIORITIES ARE RATHER CONVICTING - AREN'T THEY!!!

Thoughts to Ponder (From - “*Hand Me Another Brick*” - by Charles Swindoll)

- 1. **Serious Thought Precedes any Serious Change**
- 2. **Written Plans Confirm Right Priorities**
- 3. **Loss of Distinction and Conformity to the World go Hand in Hand**

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTERS 11, 12
THE HEROES - SUNG AND UNSUNG

When we first glance at the names recorded in the following chapters it appears to be very impressive. They seemed to be well organized. The problem that existed though, was a lack of population for people to live in the city of Jerusalem.

11:1 Nehemiah records that the leaders set the example by *“settling in Jerusalem.”* I have concern when leadership are not *“settled in Jerusalem.”* There’s too much moving around these days. Study from a Wesleyan Seminary in 2013 found that 3/4 of their churches that were growing were led by Senior Pastors who had been with them for more than four years.

Could it be that the reason that *“Jerusalem”* is not inhabited is because of the lack of settlement on behalf of leadership. Warren Heckman, a well respected minister in our fellowship in his article titled *“The Church Triumphant”* on Feb. 1990 sadly said,

“Pastors are often one sermon away from resigning,
leaving the ministry, calling it quits.”

Because of the lack of leadership they had to cast lots to see who would have to abide in the *“Holy City.”* Only one in ten were selected - a tithe - a remnant.

11:2 Anyone who volunteered out of a sense of duty were highly commended. I wonder how many people live within the *“walls of Christianity”* out of a sense of duty or pity or . . . whatever.

Numerically the city would have been at a disadvantage if a war began. In spiritual warfare we must learn that our numbers are meaningless. The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a case in point:

*“Its not by might nor by power, but by my spirit
says the Lord of hosts.”*

Zechariah 4:6

Read all of Zechariah 4!

Three words began to surface that show us Nehemiah's strategy in overcoming the situation.

I. OCCUPATION

11:21 After the leaders set an example followed by the volunteers we find a list of the others in verses 11:4-9.

We are then informed that the temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel. This was the northern part of the hill located in the south-eastern section of Jerusalem. It was just south of the temple area. It formed the original City of David (Zion).

My family has made claim to this part of Jerusalem in our name. Mont - sion.

This is where I want to *“occupy”* till He comes. Servants are needed to occupy this strategic area.

What does Zion mean to you?

- 1) A high place
- 2) Close to God's presence
- 3) A place of victory
- 4) A place of rejoicing
- 5) A place of the remnant
- 6) A place of kings
- 7) A place of peace

II. DELEGATION

11:22,23 Everyone had an appointed task and everyone was cared for. One particular group of Levites were recognized. These were the appointed singers. They were descendants of Asaph - the writer of many Psalms.

To some people and even to themselves they perhaps wondered about their contribution to the work of the Lord. Yet they had a very important part of encouraging the praise of God throughout the city.

I wonder how many feel their part in God's kingdom is obscure and useless? Many people wonder what they can offer - they don't appear to have any gifts. They feel that they've been left on the shelf by God.

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** A number of years ago a book was written and a film produced about such an individual. She was living a nominal Christian life when tragedy struck. She dove from a dock and hit a rock. Her spinal cord was severed. She became a quadriplegic. The following months became a long nightmare.

Finally Joni came to realize that life had to go on. There was still a work to do. Her life has become an inspiration to many. She's become an actress, well-known speaker, singer and painter. She's done all this without the use of any limbs. Her husband literally had to pick up his date. The Billy Graham Association has had her share her testimony during many of his large crusades.

Here was a women who could have accepted the circumstances and stayed on the sidelines. But she recognized that although in the natural she appeared obscure and useless, she still could make a valuable contribution to the Lord - as unto the Lord.

God only knows how many servants have become prayer warriors when they are confined to their bed.

Do you know what George Mathison, Fanny Crosby, Henry Smart, Timothy Dwight and John Milton have in common? They were blind poets and musicians.

“There are different kinds of gifts. But the same Spirit.

5. And there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6. There are different kinds of working, but the same God, who works all of them in all men.”

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, **Bring its scenes before me;**
Help me work from day to day, With its shadow
o'er me.

Fanny Crosby
1820 - 1915

II. DELEGATION (Contd.)

*** Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 hymns in the 19th century. She lost her sight at six weeks old, when a warm poultice was applied to her eyes. It was not until her forty-fourth year that she composed her first sacred hymn. She never composed without a small book or Testament held open before her blind eyes.

We are still blessed by “*Safe in the Arms of Jesus*”, “*Blessed Assurance*”. “*Jesus Keep me Near the Cross*”, “*Some Day the Silver Cord will Break*”, “*And I shall see Him face to face and tell the story, saved by Grace.*” ***

Blessed Assurance

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

God is still delegating the obscure ones.

III DEDICATION

12:27-30,43 Those who were delegated now were to dedicate themselves as well as the wall. They had sown in tears and now were about to reap in joy. Here was a vivid demonstration.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain
 that build it.”*

Psalm 127:1

This dedication involved everyone.

12:27-30 It began with a gathering of all the Levites and singers. After the priests and Levites were purified, they then purified the people.

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord. Who may
 stand in his Holy place?
 4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who
 does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what
 is false.*

Psalm 24:3,4

III DEDICATION (Contd.)

12:31-42 Once they were purified it was time to have a celebration. The leaders of Judah had to ascend to God. Two groups began at the Dung Gate and made their way in opposite directions upon the top of the city wall and met at the Gate of the Guard. Nehemiah followed the group with the longest walk.

12:43 Their praise could be heard for a long distance.

12:44 They dedicated themselves anew to contributions, first fruits and tithes. There was no lacking in God's house - storeroom.

We need to dedicate our lives anew in

- 1). Our homes - not a restaurant or dormitory
- 2). Our business - conscious of opportunity
- 3). Our country - social righteousness
- 4). Our church - worship, prayer, study, fellowship, giving, serving

Remember the three main points of this chapter!

I. OCCUPATION
II. DELEGATION
III. DEDICATION

NEHEMIAH
CHAPTER 13
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Church Reformation
 Dr. Luther's "Error"

*** It has been brought to the attention of the Official Board of First Church, Wittenberg, that the Assistant Pastor, Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses to door of the sanctuary. The board wishes to direct the attention of the congregation to the following:

- 1). Dr. Luther's action severely damaged First Church's beautiful solid oak portal. This door was part of the original Church and was preserved when our new million dollar sanctuary was built last year. The cost of replacing the door will be \$413.53 (including labour). The Board strongly reprimands Dr. Luther for his action and demands that he pay the cost.
- 2). Dr. Luther's action is clearly in violation of Church policy. He circumvented the Board, and did not even consult the subcommittee on Publicity and Promotion. This violation is, therefore, referred to the District Supt. and the Credentials Committee for investigation and prosecution.
- 3). Dr. Luther's action brings his character and personality in question. In the light of such abnormal behaviour, the Board suggests that he submit to a psychiatric examination.
- 4). The Board has sent a letter of apology to the Municipality for posting a notice in public without written consent. Furthermore, the matter has been cleared with Carpenters Local No. 407 for failing to hire a union carpenter to do the hammering.

We trust that Dr. Luther will make a public apology and comply with the above requests. In the interest of congregational tranquillity, we trust it will never happen again. ***

Adapted from "The Christian Century"

It doesn't take long when the wrong leadership gets into authority that problems arise that require immediate, drastic action. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to serve King Artaxerxes. It was during his absence that the people slipped back into their old ways. A time of reform had to come - again!

I. REFORM OF SECULAR SEPARATION (13:1-3)

13:1-3 It appears the Law was not read on a consistent basis or this portion in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 would have been read long before now. As the Word was read the reform began. Both the Ammonites (from Lot's younger daughter) and Moabites (from Lot's oldest daughter) were not allowed within the Israelite community.

“It's a great responsibility to own a Bible.”

The Word of God demands a responsibility if we expect a reward.

“Those who shrink at responsibility keep on shrinking in other ways to.”

“You can tell you're on the road of righteousness - it's uphill.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty”

II Corinthians 6:17,18

II Samuel 7:14

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

God has not changed in his requirement of separation from the world.

“A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.”

“Even a hypocrite admires righteousness. That's why he imitates it.”

Our country needs a reform of separation. The gray areas need to disappear. The battle lines need to be drawn - become more distinct.

II. REFORM OF COMPROMISING COMPANIONSHIP (13:4-9)

13:4-7 Who would ever think that Eliashib the priest would make an alliance with Tobiah.

It was Eliashib that removed the . . .

- 1). *grain offerings* - sacrifice
- 2). *incense* - prayer
- 3). *temple articles* - acts of service
- 4). *tithes* - appreciation of many blessings

The *grain, new wine and oil* were all the priest's contributions.

In its place the high priest made way for Tobiah ("*slave*"). The people became a slave to the ungodly. Nehemiah called it an "*evil thing.*"

I wonder how many Tobiahs are trying to find their way into God's storehouses today? What compromises are being done by some of our spiritual leadership. Our companions will eventually help in determining our character. Many problems have begun with the wrong friendship. Don't become swayed by popularity contests.

"God never alters the role of righteousness to fit the man, but the man to fit the role."

13:8 Notice the **action** that Nehemiah took to rectify the problem. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the storage room. We must both pray and then act. Prayer can be often used as a cop-out for action. Obedience to the Word of God is constantly needed.

13:9 He gave orders to purify the room and return its equipment to its original location

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14)

13:10 The allotted portion of the Levites was to be re-instated so they could return to their spiritual work. Without a proper wage they began to take on secular work to support themselves. The work of God was neglected because the people forgot about their priorities. The sacrifices, worship and daily temple duties were neglected.

13:11 The officials were rebuked and again assigned to their stations.

III. REFORM OF FINANCIAL FIASCO (13:10-14) (Contd.)

13:12 Notice the results among the people. They responded by bringing in their tithes.

13:13 New leadership was recognized for their trustworthiness and responsibility.

“Freedom is a package deal - it comes with responsibilities and consequences.”

13:14 God remembered the past faithfulness of Nehemiah.

IV. REFORM OF SECULARIZED SABBATH (13:15-22)

What traffic today is destroying our Sabbath - our rest and peace?

13:15 All of this Sabbath activity was needless. It came about because of materialism and greed. The violation of the Sabbath (rest) began with the merchants. But the people in Judah became the customers. If there were no customers there would be no need to open for business.

13:17 Notice once again the action by Nehemiah. He rebuked the nobles of Judah first for wickedly desecrating God’s Sabbath.

13:19 Nehemiah ordered the gates to be shut at sundown and remain closed until the Sabbath was over. He shut all avenues of disobedience. No burden could be carried.

13:20,21 He further warned the merchants not to tempt the people. If they did he would physically remove them.

13:22 Look at the results of his swift action. Purification took place. Guards were put in place. The Sabbath was restored as Holy.

13:23 God would remember Nehemiah and his people.

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28)

What daughter of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab has captured the attention of the Church?
What Delilah has taken away our spiritual strength? What language are we speaking today?

The people began to pick up the customs of the ungodly neighbours. They began to talk like them - they wouldn’t be able to read the Hebrew Scriptures (13:24); they began to sin like them (13:26); they became unfaithful to God (13:27).

V. REFORM IN MINGLED MARRIAGES (13:23-28) (Contd.)

13:25 - **Look once again at the action** of Nehemiah. He rebuked them. He placed a pronouncement of a religious curse upon them. If the covenant was broken - the curse would come into effect. He pulled out their hair (literally - *“to make bald, slick or polished.”* probably their beard). He made them take an oath.

We must be very careful about the problem of compromise and toleration.

“What we tolerate today - we embrace tomorrow!”

13:28 He removed the grandson of Eliashib from any further priesthood responsibilities.

13:29 God remembered their wickedness in contrast to Nehemiah faithfulness.

13:30 The priests/Levites were again purified and re-assigned their duties.

Josephus records that the grandson of Eliashib (Mannaseh) the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Sanballat was an archenemy of Nehemiah and therefore this was an act of defiance. It was the highest form of religious apostasy. Sanballat not only promised Mannaseh the priesthood but also promised to build a temple for him at Gerizim. Due to the rise of Alexander the Great, Sanballat shifted his allegiance from Darius who was losing his empire onto Alexander who was conquering much of the land. Sanballat had the temple built and placed Manasseh as the priest. Sanballat died before it was completed.

“Nehemiah faced the problems head-on. He dealt with the problems severely. He worked toward a permanent correction. He defined the problem and then solved it. A leader must declare his convictions. Honest observation with courageous conviction must be tempered with deep devotion.”

Charles Swindoll

