

Nehemiah 4:6

Nehemiah was a Jewish leader of the 5th century BC who supervised the rebuilding of Jerusalem. His name means “The Comfort of Jehovah.” He was the cupbearer to the Persian ruler Artaxerxes I soon after the end of the Babylonian Exile, when the Temple of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. The Jewish community was still weak and fragmented. Around 444 BC he was put in charge of Jerusalem's reconstruction, and he organized the rebuilding of the city walls. He also revived adherence to Mosaic law and forbade intermarriage with non-Jews. His work as a reformer was later continued by Ezra.

Nehemiah had the daunting task to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. After the devastating attack by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C. the city was in ruins. How would Nehemiah succeed in rebuilding the wall? What would he do to motivate and inspire the people to work? Did he have enough help and supplies for the job? These were just some of the questions that must have weighed heavily on the mind of Nehemiah as he stared at the charred rubble remains of a once glorious city.

There was much work to be done in Jerusalem, and Nehemiah was the man for the job. But Nehemiah could not do it alone. He needed people around him who were committed and unified in the work. We read in Nehemiah 4:6, “So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.” The message for us today is **we must work together for a godly purpose**. This was the message for Nehemiah and the people of God. This is the message for us today. Working Together For A Godly Purpose.

There are several observations I would like to make from the text.

I. The Nature Of The Work

What kind of work was Nehemiah called to do?

It was a spiritual work. Listen to the prayer of Nehemiah in chapter 1:4-11,

“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and

mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

Nehemiah in his prayer quotes from Deut. 30:4, “If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:”

Nehemiah prayed God’s Word back to the Lord. Nehemiah saw the crumbling ruins of Jerusalem as an opportunity for the Lord to restore Israel and to receive all the glory.

First and foremost Nehemiah was a man of prayer. He poured his heart out before the Lord. He prayed like the righteous man in James 5:16, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The Lord had called Nehemiah to a spiritual work and the way forward was on his knees.

Nehemiah was also a man of the Book (God’s Word). We read in Nehemiah 8:8-12 “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people

wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.”

Nehemiah made sure the people of God were taught and instructed from the Word of God. Notice the message in verse 10, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” How this message must have encouraged and unified the people of God to do the work!

The Lord has called Heritage Free Presbyterian Church to a spiritual work. We must go forward on our knees. We know people who need the Lord. Family members, friends, co-workers. Their lives are in complete shambles and ruins because of sin. They need a work of grace done in their hearts. Christ must save them or they perish!

The work Nehemiah did and the work we do is spiritual in nature.

2. It was a separated work

We read in Nehemiah 9:2

“And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.”

Nehemiah encountered distractions in the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The Jews had intermarried with non-Jews. In his reforms, so effectively carried out, Nehemiah discovered that one of the grandsons of the current high priest Eliashib had married a daughter of this Sanballat, and was thus son-in-law of the chief enemy of the Jews. The high priest was driven out of Jerusalem on the ground that he had defiled the priesthood.

Nehemiah 13:28 “And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.”

This was just one example of the serious problems

and delays in the work. The Scripture admonishes us to separate from them who practice wickedness.

2 Corinthians 6:14

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

Ephesians 5:10-12

“Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

2 Corinthians 6:17

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

C. H. Spurgeon writes in his Morning Devotion on June 27, “If we would follow the Lord wholly, we must go right away into the wilderness of separation, and leave the Egypt of the carnal world behind us. We must leave its maxims, its pleasures, and its religion too, and go far away to the place where the

Lord calls his sanctified ones. When the town is on fire, our house cannot be too far from the flames. When the plague is abroad, a man cannot be too far from its haunts. The further from a viper the better, and the further from worldly conformity the better. To all true believers let the trumpet-call be sounded, "Come ye out from among them, be ye separate."

Are you separated unto the Gospel? Is your speech seasoned with grace? Are you heeding the exhortation in 1 Peter 1:16 "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Nehemiah was involved in a spiritual and separated work and so are we.

II. Nemesis To The Work

During the work of rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem, Nehemiah encountered a clear and present danger. We read in Nehemiah 4:7, "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the

walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth and conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”

The first arrival at Jerusalem of Nehemiah and his escort aroused the enmity of Sanballat and his allies. They were aggrieved that the welfare of the Jews should be fostered. When Nehemiah actually disclosed his intention of building the walls of Jerusalem they laughed him to scorn, and said "Will ye rebel against the king?" Nehemiah resented their insinuation, and gave them to understand that they had no right in Jerusalem, nor any interest in its affairs.

As soon as Sanballat and his associates heard that Nehemiah and the Jews were actually building the walls, they were angry; and Sanballat addressed the army of Samaria with a contemptuous reference to "these feeble Jews." Tobiah appeased him by saying that a jackal climbing on the wall they were building would break it down. Nehemiah and his builders, the Jews, vigorously hurried the work, while Sanballat and his associates organized their forces to fight against Jerusalem. Nehemiah prepared to meet the opposition and continued the work on the walls. Five

different times Sanballat and his confederates challenged Nehemiah and the Jews to meet them in battle in the plain of Ono. Nehemiah was equal to the emergency and attended strictly to his work.

Then Sanballat, with Jews in Jerusalem who were his confederates, attempted to entrap Nehemiah in the Temple; but the scheme failed. Sanballat's Jewish allies, however, kept Sanballat and Tobiah informed as to the progress of the work in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah faced a persistent foe in Sanballat. He wouldn't go away and leave them alone. When work is being done in the name of Jesus Christ there will be fierce and steady opposition.

We read in I Thessalonians 2:18 of how Satan hindered Paul in the work of the gospel, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once again: but Satan hindered us."

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

Mark 3:26-28

“And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.”

Christ bound Satan at the cross. The nemesis of God's people is defeated.

Nevertheless the nemesis to the work of God is real and dangerous and we must be on our guard at all times.

III. The Purpose Of The Work

1. Was to unify God's people. “The people had a mind to work.” They were united together for a godly purpose, and this brought them closer together as a body.

Psalm 133:1

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Unity is a good and pleasant thing because work can get done in the name of the Lord. Progress can be made. Growth can take place.

Philippians 2:3

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

James 3:16

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

Last year wasn't easy for the church in Prince George. You stuck it out. The Holy Spirit knit your hearts together and the unity you enjoyed in Christ was what kept you going.

A purpose in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was to unify the people.

2. Was to glorify Christ alone

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem led to something bigger. It led to the rebuilding of the city. That led to the rebuilding of the Temple. Then the Temple was where, 400 years later, the Lord Jesus

Christ came to teach and preach during His earthly ministry.

The work Nehemiah and the people of God did in Jerusalem pointed to a greater Temple. We read in Revelation 21:22

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

The glory in the work of the church is Christ
Psalm 21:5 “His glory is great in thy salvation:
honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.”

Working Together For A Godly Purpose. This is the message of Nehemiah 4:6. May we continue to have a mind to work for the glory of Christ!

Let us pray!