

# **Nehemiah Bible Study**

**By**

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## **Nehemiah – A Man of Principle ch.2-3**

**No.3**

It is important that any man God calls to lead his people at any level should be a man whose life is governed and sustained by godly principles.

It was these principles that kept Nehemiah going in the right direction and helped him to encourage others to join him in God's work. They also protected him against all the opposition that was raised against him and the work that God had given him to do.

So we will see into the life of this 'Man of Principle' and learn from his methods by which he got the work of God not only started, but also finished.

But the Message isn't about a man or his methods – but it is about the loyalty of the people of God to rally around the man who applied the methods in building something that would bring glory to God at a time when things couldn't have been worse.

When we think about any work of God - for our own work here – we must be open and honest about it and ask ourselves –

i. Is it effective? ii. Is it productive? iii. Is it Spiritual as well as scriptural?

I am sure that much of what is being done for God in the power of the flesh, God would much rather see being left undone. Many kinds of service, which begin as being both spiritual and scriptural, lose their aim and motivation and become ineffective and unproductive.

It is a sad, but true, reflection that the work begins because of what we are, and becomes what we are – a reflection of us and not of the Lord.

If we are spiritual the work will be spiritual – and then the work and the worker will be effective and fruitful for God.

In the last Study ch.2vv1-10 we dealt with Nehemiah's response to the call of duty, and his prayerful preparation for it. We touched on how he assessed the task that was to be done and how he encouraged others to see the possibilities rather than the problems.

a) Nehemiah's Duty was quite plain to see. God had laid his hand upon him and put into his heart what was to be done.

b) Nehemiah's Determination – there was rubble and rubbish everywhere. The task was enormous, but not too big for him to do with God helping him. Not too big for a man who prayed and planned, and persevered as he did.

c) Nehemiah's Difficulties – they were not only related to the sheer difficulty of rebuilding from the ruins. Of doing a task that others had never thought possible, but which for God was never impossible.

The difficulties in a work for God are always there to be overcome. Every mountain can be climbed and every obstacle overcome.

The real difficulties came from people who hindered the work by direct opposition; open hostility; criticism and downright envy and jealousy.

Nehemiah would have to face all these difficulties and be determined to overcome them with prayer and perseverance in order that his duty to God would bring glory to God.

His Principles would have to stand the test of Duty and difficulty.

1<sup>st</sup> Principle – Get to know the Will of God

If you know what God wants you to do, nothing will deter you – and nothing will deflect you. You will allow no discouragement to delay you, or any disappointment to deflate you.

This is God's work and He will see it done in His way and in His time – using men like Nehemiah – like you and me?

2v12 – Nehemiah knew what God wanted him to do. He had learnt this in the only place that a man can learn it – in the place of prayer where God discloses his secrets.

Nehemiah wasn't a born leader; he wasn't a natural 1<sup>st</sup> choice. He was quiet and reserved and not given to rushing into anything. He spent weeks in prayer and agony until he knew that his only release was to do the Will of God. He hadn't to wait for someone else to do what God had clearly laid on his heart.

Doing the Will of God is a costly experience – and God does not call inadequate men to do the impossible without them first of all counting the cost, and being willing to pay the price of seeing their own weakness exposed so that the power of God could work through them.

If we are prepared to do God's will we will get to know what it is AND BE PREPARED TO DO IT. It will not be the case that I will do it if I feel like it and it fits in with my plans and programme – but we will do it even before we know what His will leads us into.

We can ask all the questions, but God will often withhold the answers.

Where will it lead me? – How much will it cost me?

He wants us to make our duty a delight to do as Jesus did.

Knowing what you have to do will help you realise how inadequate you are, and how much you need God to help you.

So whilst others slept – totally oblivious of the ruined walls around them – Nehemiah was out investigating the possibilities as well as the problems.

I am sure that it is true of many churches today that much of the work they have done is in ruins and they are asleep among the ruins that they revere.

The problem seems too big to have answers that we can find within resources or ourselves. The people accept the inevitable ruin and are no longer ashamed of it. No wonder the world thinks so much of what the church does is irrelevant.

Getting to know the Will of God and the size of the task will often bring grief and tears as you stumble among the ruins of what was once a great work for God.

But it is vital in every work for God to know the worst and to face the facts. Then we can let the Holy Spirit begin to work in us and through us to see God's Will for our day not only to be known – but also to be done.

Nehemiah was prepared to lose sleep in order to know what he had to do. Like him, the burden of the work should not only keep us awake, but also alert. The only way to lighten the burden is to do something about it.

Do you lose sleep over the spiritual health of the church?

You see, God will never be able to revive the church until individuals like Nehemiah wake up to the need in their own hearts. God will never renew us until we know that we need to be renewed. The need is immense but the resources are available.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> Principle is – Get to know the Will of God – and be prepared to do it.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Principle** – You don't have to do it alone. Co-operation with others.

2v17 – Trouble and disgrace were the result of a ruined work for God, but Nehemiah didn't have to carry the burden alone. He wasn't interested in apportioning blame, but in the community accepting joint responsibility.

“Come, let US build” ‘Let us remove the cause of the disgrace’.

This city had been the centre of all spiritual worship, but now it lay in ruins. People don't care anymore so worship has become a drab routine instead of an uplifting joy. It is not drab worship that makes drab worshippers, but vice-versa.

What the outsider sees in our worship is important in them arriving at their own attitude

towards God. If we worship mechanically in an unreal way they have every right to deduce that the God we worship isn't real either.

v18 – The people responded immediately – “Let us start” – so let's began.

All who worship the same God should share in the same work for God. There must have been the deepest longing for something better, which Nehemiah's enthusiasm revived. The sight of the ruins daily depressed them and all they saw was a problem.

Then Nehemiah opened their eyes to the possibilities.

They had thought that the task was too big and their resources too small – Yet the very walls that had crumbled were the source of their building material. The stones were already there but needed to be recovered and re-used in the new building.

They needed vision that would bring unity and purpose to them.

“Where there is no vision the people perish”. Prov.29v18

To get the vision to them God had to send a man of vision. Someone who could see the possibilities and what could be done- rather than the problem and what couldn't be done. E.g. Sailors adrift in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean during WW11 were lost at sea – but what if they had known that years later one man could row across the whole Atlantic Ocean and not just half way.

Nehemiah was a man with a vision - but he was also a man of action to make that vision into a reality. Vision without action produces visionaries. But men like Nehemiah turn the visions into facts by their faith and obedience.

He needed others to share his vision. He did not believe in a one-man ministry – but he did believe in one-man Leadership of a church wide ministry.

He was not chosen as leader for his sake – but because God had saddled him with a vision and the responsibility for passing it on and sharing it with others for their blessing too.

Matthew Henry said – “The Pilot has enough to do to steer the vessel – others man the sails”

Leadership is an essential part of the work of God in which every one of the Lord's people has a part to play.

The one thing that God wanted from Nehemiah was CONSECRATION.

The one thing that God wanted from the people was CO-OPERATION.

So Nehemiah exhorted and encouraged the people by his own example and vision.

The work was shared by 42 different house groups (Ch 3)

All those groups were next to each other, and all had the same purpose to rebuild the broken wall nearest to them. There is a lesson here too – Before you start rebuilding someone else's ruins make a start with rebuilding you own.

They worked together as a team. They were not independent, but inter-dependant of each other.

We will see in the next study where Nehemiah's leadership and organising skills came in so that the work of God would proceed unhindered by lack of commitment of the people.

Looking through the Minutes of a Church Meeting I came across the following report – 'There was too little Agonisation - and not enough Organisation.'  
I believe that related to prayer is planning. Organising should not replace agonising. Working for God and waiting on God go together. Nehemiah saw to it that there was a balance of both.

S.D.Gordon said, "The united church is an unconquerable church."

Co-operation is as essential as commitment in any work for God. The greatest deterrent to revival and re-building is the Christian who cannot, or will not, work with others. God can do nothing with us if we are not willing. It isn't a question of ability - but of availability. Am I ready and willing to work with others for the Lord?

God can do nothing through us if we are satisfied with things as they are. That is why we need Leaders with vision, who see things as they can be.

This is why Nehemiah had to share the vision with others to see the walls of Jerusalem being rebuilt.

It was to be a concentrated and concerted effort, which required a co-operative effort from a consecrated people.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Principle** - - Be prepared to face every Difficulty with determination.

Visible opposition in the persons of Sanballat, Tobiah and Gershom was soon apparent. They were not Jews – they were enemies inside the camp.

2v10 – they were disturbed -and v19 they were disrespectful.

Ridicule would soon go beyond words and become active opposition, and we have to be determined to face both. There is only one answer to such critics – v20

God has called us to wonderful work and he will give us success if like Nehemiah we are prepared to obey him first, last and always.

There will be Success despite the difficulties. Can God do his work through us? – Yes, he can.

It will take Courage as well as conviction; Determination as well as daring; Endurance as well as enthusiasm; Willingness to do, as well as availability to do.

Nehemiah was ready for all this and more. He was prepared to 'burnout' rather than burn bright. He was prepared to face the enemy, because he had faced God first.

His duty was to do the Will of God and to rebuild the wall.

His determination was to overcome every difficulty that came his way.

The inroads into the full and free worship of God had resulted in a disregard for God's Word and a disobedience to God's Will. Putting these things right was the ultimate reason for re-building the wall.

The rebuilding of the wall would be a 6 weeks wonder- a spectacular short campaign – but it would be followed by 12 years of patient rebuilding of worship and faith by teaching and loving care.

The wall was there to give them protection and peace in which to develop and grow into a people God wanted them to be.

We will only grow when the walls we have seen broken down in our lifetime are repaired and where necessary rebuilt. For this we need to have Nehemiah's Dedication; Determination; Commitment and Consecration.

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Chapter 3 – is a report of the list of workers and the work.  
2 questions arise - "Where do we start?" And "Who is going to start first?"

From ch 3 you can see that everyone had an appointed place to work - a section of the wall for which they were responsible. Many started –opposite their own houses v11. Most of the people were local to Jerusalem, but some helpers came from distant towns to share in the work of rebuilding.

The thing is that they were all workers – there were no shirkers.  
There was no grumbling or complaining – they were united in purpose as well as in prayer.

They did the work they were given and did it well. They were not all given the same amount to do – but according to their skill and ability. They expected no reward – for in the Cause of the Kingdom it was not work for pay -but work and pray.

But where did they start?

3 v1 – The Sheep Gate – This was place of sacrifice and was the gate through which the Sacrificial lambs were brought to the Temple. It was the only Gate to be consecrated by the High Priest. This for us is where we start as well – Calvary is the Gate of Sacrifice for us.

v3 – The Fish Gate – the Place of Service.  
Didn't Jesus say that his disciples would be 'fishers of men'?

v6 - The Old Gate – the Place of Sanctification.

v13 – The Valley Gate – the Place of Humility.

v14 -The Dung Gate - the Place of Defilement

v15 – The Fountain Gate – comes after the Dung Gate as a Place of Cleansing.

v26 - The Water Gate – a Place of Refreshment by the Spirit of those cleansed by the blood.

v27 – The Horse Gate - a Place of War.

v29 – The East Gate -A Place of Worship

v32 – The Muster Gate – a place of Inspection and Judgement

Ten gates in all. As there were 12 gates it is taken that the other 2 were not broken down.

(Ch 4 and 5 took place whilst the rebuilding was in progress - more in later Study)

These Gates speak of the full Gospel – the whole counsel of God. These must be reinstated completely if we are to know the blessing of God in the future, as we may have experienced it in the past. A restating of old things like –

- a. Salvation through repentance and faith
- b. Sanctification by the fullness and Baptism of the Spirit
- c. Justification by faith in the blood of Jesus.
- d. Satisfaction through obedience to the Word.

If any aspect of the Gospel is left in ruins the wall remains incomplete and leaves us as vulnerable to error and deviation.

The Report of who built the wall is very instructive, and just about every class of people were involved. Hardly any of them were bricklayers or stonemasons.

For Example - look at who was involved –

v1 The High Priest and his fellow priests. v28 Other priests of lower rank.

v8 - Uzziel was a goldsmith. Hannaiah was a chemist – a perfume maker.

v9 – Some were rulers who acted as working foremen of the districts in which they ruled.

Even one ruler was prepared to get his hands dirty for he repaired the Dung Gate.

v12 – There were some women too - A ruler called Shallum and his daughters.

v17- There were Levites who were Temple servants.

v32 –There were Merchants who worked alongside the goldsmiths and others.

Many who were given special mention were rulers, but also the ordinary people were not missed out.

Others came from out of town - v27. Men from Tekoa (Amos was a shepherd in Tekoa)

v22 - Priests from the surrounding region

v2 Men from Jericho - they knew a bit about rebuilding ruined walls.

Everyone played their part with one exception – v5- The nobles of Tekoa were too proud to work under his supervision of others and were not willing to submit to Nehemiah's authority or to get their hand dirty with the work.

Thank God that they were in the minority - these were the only shirkers.

v27 – the men of Tekoa mentioned in v5 took up the work that their rulers refused to do. And they did an extra section of the wall.

But what about the workers? Those who not only said. “Let us build”. But set about it with all their hearts -

There are 4 special mentions in this long list which have a Message for us today.

vv10, v23; v29 and v30 ‘Each built the ruins in front of his own house’.

This is where rebuilding has to start – at home. If it doesn't start at home it will never reach the church. The Church Family is only as strong as the families of the church.

Let us look at these 4 references: -

v10 Jediah - means – “An Invoker of God” i.e. He was a Man of Prayer.

This says much about the man and we can relate his prayer life to his family and his community. He was one who rebuilt next to his house a wall of Prayer.

Active workers are activated by Prayer. Pray-ers are also to be doers.

v23 – Benjamin – means – ‘the son of my right hand’ or “My Protector”

He rebuilt a Wall of Protection in the front of his house.

All our homes need this Wall of Protection too. We cannot be protected from circumstances which happen to others as well as to us, but we have a protector when the Lord has us in his hand. Where would our homes be without the Lord protecting them?

Members of the family are shielded by faith and protected from every evil intent of Satan to destroy their relationship with God.

v29 – Zadok – means Justice and Integrity which build a Wall of Purity.

Above all else our Wall of Purity has to be repaired, and we have to be able to approach God on the basis that our sins, which are many, have all been dealt with in forgiveness and cleansing -and that our integrity before God is maintained through faith in Christ.

This man Zadok was the son of Immer - which means – ‘the talkative one’.

There is no harm in being talkative as long as you don't bore your listeners into silence or your talk is no more than gossip. Even when we have something to say we have to be discerning as to when and how we say it.

‘Careless talk costs lives’ used to be a wartime warning. In the ordinary life – and especially in church life – it is loose talk that is often destructive.

Sometimes it is better to say nothing if you have nothing to say.

Ruins are often the result of unkind words and unnecessary criticism. The Wall of Integrity is rebuilt when we speak less about others and speak to them more often,

v30 – Meshullam – means Devoted. He repaired the Wall opposite his living quarters. I wonder if when it does not say ‘opposite his house’ that maybe he was a single man living in rented rooms. I think this might be the case and is an encouragement to unmarried folk to know that they too have a part to play in rebuilding the work of God. He maybe didn’t have any more than a bed-sitting room somewhere – but it was home to him and he wanted a wall rebuilt to protect it.

Whether we live in 1 room, or in 3 or 4, we all need the Wall of Devotion to protect us.

Nothing and no-one is too small for God to bless – So I hope that you find someone in this list of workers to represent you.

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So the work began by each one rebuilding what was nearest to them, and thereby ensuring that by rebuilding a Wall of Prayer – and a Wall of Protection - they would be able to live a life that was pure and pleasing to God.

Our homes are to be places where renewal begins and revival in the church will follow. We will never build a new wall for God around our Church and family unless the foundation is well and truly laid in Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives and families. All this rebuilding will mean a great deal of heart searching and maybe re-adjustment to our priorities in life - and like Baruch in v20 we have to set about it with zeal and enthusiasm.

He zealously repaired his bit of the wall as a matter of pride and urgency. He put his whole heart into the effort involved and so should we.

And in doing so apply the 3 Principles of Nehemiah –

1. Consecration – 2.Co-operation and 3. Determination

Because when you get serious about rebuilding for God the enemy gets upset, as we shall see in the next Study.

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