

## A HEART TO WORK

### Int.

1. Aim: To discuss the people in the days of Nehemiah and how they worked to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem and the lessons and application to us today.
2. Neh. 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."
  - a. "And we build the wall, and all the wall is joined--unto its half, and the people have a heart to work." Youngs Literal Translation
  - b. "The people were working hard" Bible in Basic English
  - c. Mind = the heart, used figuratively for the feelings, the will and even the intellect
3. Nehemiah was the main character of this book and his main task was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
  - a. He completed this task in 52 days - Neh. 6:15 "So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days."
  - b. There was opposition from the people who lived nearby
  - c. But he focused on rebuilding the wall and completed the work.
4. As we look at the story of Nehemiah and the people who had a heart to work we can learn valuable lessons that apply to us today in building up the church.

### Discussion

#### I. SETTING FOR THE STORY

- A. Both Israel and Judah had been carried away into captivity.
  1. Israel the Northern Kingdom had been taken into Assyrian captivity - absorbed
  2. Judah the Southern Kingdom was taken into Babylonian captivity for 70 years

B. Only Judah was able to return and they came in stages:

1. Zerubbabel led the first group and they intended to restore the city of Jerusalem and the Temple
2. Ezra brought a second group back and his special work was to restore the law to its rightful place
3. Nehemiah brought back the third group and his purpose was to rebuild the wall about the city of Jerusalem.

C. Nehemiah:

1. Was a member of the tribe of Judah
2. Lived In Babylon served as the cupbearer for king Artaxerxes in Shushan.
3. Artaxerxes and Nehemiah were very close friends and knew each other very well.
4. The King noticed that Nehemiah was very sad.

D. THE NEED - Neh. 1:1-4 and 2:1-4

1. Why was Nehemiah sad?
  - a. Hanani had come from Judah and reported about the Jews
  - b. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates had been burned with fire - 1:2-3
  - c. Nehemiah was heart-broken when he learned of the situation back home.
2. When the king noticed his sad countenance he knew something was bad wrong.
3. Neh.2:3 "...why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

4. The King was willing to help. He asked What do you need? Nehemiah said...
  - a. Let me go back and help
  - b. Give me letters of permission
  - c. Give me an allowance of timber for the gates
  - d. Neh. 2:5-8

E. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem - Neh. 2:9-11

## **II. A PLAN WAS MADE**

- A. Neh. 2:12-16 "And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. 13. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. 14. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. 15. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. 16. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work."
- B. Nehemiah toured the city
  1. He traveled around the city by night and surveyed the situation
  2. He saw the walls broken and the gates burned
  3. He then began planning what he was going to do.

### III. **THEY WENT TO WORK** Lessons we learn

#### A. [1] **ENCOURAGED EACH OTHER**

1. Neh. 2:18 "...And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."
2. They encouraged each other
3. When they got ready to tackle the job they helped to encourage one another
4. They had a determination and resolve to do the work.

#### B. [2] **THEY DID NOT ALLOW CRITICISM TO STOP THEM**

1. They received some criticism
  - a. Their enemies criticized - they laughed and scorned
  - b. **NEH 2:19-20** "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? 20. Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem."
  - c. Neh. 4:1-3 they even ridiculed saying that a fox could break down their wall
2. But they didn't stop
  - a. Neh. 2:20 "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build:..."
  - b. Nehemiah was not relying on the help of men but he was looking to Jehovah for help.
  - c. God had assured him that he was doing what was right.

**C. [3] THEY USED EVERY PERSON**

1. Neh. 3:1 "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate"
2. They assigned parts of the wall to each family and each tribe
3. "Next to them" at least 15 times this expression appears
4. They all were involved with a specific portion to repair

**D. [4] THEY DID NOT QUIT WHEN SOME WOULD NOT WORK**

1. Neh. 3:5 NKJV "Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord."
2. The Teko nobles would not work
  - a. This could have brought the work to a standstill
  - b. They were the leaders and they would not work
  - c. Many people would have said - "If you don't work, neither will I!"
  - d. If that had happened then the family working next to them would have probably said: "What good is a wall if there is a hole in it?"
  - e. Then that would have discouraged other families and the domino effect would have been disastrous on the work.
3. But the people didn't quit
  - a. Neh. 3:27 "After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel."
  - b. They did what was assigned to them
  - c. And then volunteered to help in another place.

- E. [5] The work was completed because they had a mind to work
1. Neh. 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."
  2. They were successful in getting the wall built because they had a mind to work.
  3. It was not only Nehemiah who had the mind to work but the people also had this idea - it only took 52 days Neh. 6:15
  4. Interest and enthusiasm are catching and spread.
  5. Cooperation is essential in any good work.

#### **IV. THE LESSONS / APPLICATIONS FOR US TODAY**

- A. We were in bondage to sin - Rom. 6:17
1. We have been made free - Rm. 6:18 "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
  2. As members of the Lord's church we have work to do
  3. Our mission is to seek and save the lost - Lk 19:10
- B. What is happening to the church today....
1. We are dying - declining - losing members - not meeting our budget - not having enough children for our Bible classes. - many are choosing to stay home on Sunday night and Wednesday night. More empty pews than filled ones.
  2. What can we do ? Sit around and complain - find fault with one another - blame everyone for not doing more!
  3. Do we feel the way that Nehemiah did when he saw the condition of Jerusalem?
    - a. He was saddened and heart - broken because of the condition of Jerusalem
    - b. Are we heart - broken because of the condition of the church today?

4. God wants the church to grow, be strong, increase - He will help us to make the church what it ought to be. Just as Artaxerxes the King gave Nehemiah anything he needed in the work, God has Promised "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20b

C. A plan must be made to get the church back on track

1. Nehemiah made a tour of the city and planned how they could do the work
2. The leaders of the church must be busy making plans of how we are going to evangelize this community
3. Then we must get to work. Churches that don't plan to grow plan to fail.

## V. Applications for us in the Church

A. [1] They encouraged each other

1. It is easy to criticize and point out the weaknesses and flaws of one another.
2. But these people in the days of Nehemiah said: "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Neh. 2:18
3. We would be wise to follow this example
4. Heb. 10:24 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,"  
ESV
  - a. Provoke = we usually think of this as meaning to offend, make made.
  - b. But the word means to arouse, to excite, to call into action.
  - c. Let us stimulate one another to do the work before us.

**B. [2] Never allow criticism to stop us**

1. Some people from without and some from within will find fault with our work.
2. They found fault with Nehemiah and his people but they did not stop.
3. But when we know that we are doing God's will we should continue.
4. II Tim. 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

**C. [3] They used every person**

1. We must all get involved in the work of the church
2. In too many cases only a few do the work.
3. We must try to involve every member in some way.
4. "A work for every member and every member working"
5. "Synergism, in general, may be defined as two or more agents working together to produce a result not obtainable by any of the agents independently."
  - a. Comes from two words meaning "to work" and "together"
  - b. So it means working together.
6. When we all help build up the work of the church we will:
  - a. Accomplish more
  - b. Have more feeling of belonging and a sense of pride [in a good way]
  - c. Be very slow to tear it down or allow anyone else to tear it down.
  - d. Be united in our efforts.

**D. [4] We must not quit when others will not work**

1. We must not quit working in the church just because some others have quit.
2. Do your best and then volunteer to do some more.
3. Remember we must give an account individually for the way we serve in the church.
4. I will not answer for you and you will not answer for me.
5. We will be judged according to our works - Rom. 14:12

**E. [5] The work is completed when We have a heart to work**

1. The people in the days of Nehemiah had this attitude: Neh. 4:6
2. All of us must have this attitude - we are willing to work for the church
  - a. Interest and enthusiasm will spread - contagious
  - b. It will urge others to greater activity - it is like a little spark that ignites others to work and do their best.
3. WE NEED COOPERATION.
  - a. All must be enthused about the work
  - b. Two horses cannot pull a pound of feathers, if they are pulling in opposite directions. Pulling together
  - c. A church cannot accomplish anything if the members are pulling in opposite directions.

## **Conclusion**

1. There are great blessings if we have a heart to work.
    - a. When people work together they get acquainted with each other and love one another more.
    - b. It helps to maintain peace and unity in the congregation
    - c. Work contributes to our spiritual growth.
    - d. We will bring lost souls to Christ - preparing them for heaven
  2. The people in the days of Nehemiah had a mind to work and they accomplished their work.
  3. We today must have a mind to work in order to accomplish our work.
    - a. Our work is the work of the church
    - b. It is a great work
    - c. And we must not be afraid to start
    - d. Do not quit because someone finds fault.
  4. I Cor. 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
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