

Nehemiah Sermon #9

Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 3

This chapter is more than a construction record of how the wall of Jerusalem was built.

It is a great temptation, when we come to a chapter like this to skip it, to leave it and go on to the next.

But this chapter shows us the kind of people and the types of things, of which the Lord takes account.

In these chapters we are permitted to glance over the shoulder of the building contractor.

Take your map – back of bulletin and fold it – so you can see this alongside Nehemiah Chapter 3

Nehemiah began his list of the “work stations” with the Sheep Gate in the northeast corner of the city (Neh. 3:1).

In his record, he names ten gates and several towers and other landmarks.

He describes the work on the north wall first (vv. 1-7), then the western wall (vv. 8-13), then the southern point of the city (v. 14), and finally the eastern wall (vv. 15-32).

I have entitled today’s message “Let Us Arise and Build.”

Nehemiah 3:1

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word

Nehemiah 3:1-5, 20, 32

Let us pray

You may be seated

Let Us Arise and Build

It would be easy to pass over this chapter.

It is filled with names that are difficult to pronounce and information that seems redundant

But there is more than meets the eye.

What we see in this chapter are the results of Nehemiah's nighttime survey—which resulted in a very ingenious plan and I want to show you that plan.

As you look at your map, begin at "12:00" (Sheep Gate) and proceed to move counterclockwise, starting and finishing at *the Sheep Gate* (vs. 32).

The places identified between vs. 1 & 32 are actually mentioned in order in this chapter.

The First Step on a Building Project is to Get Organized

Rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem was an enormous task—especially under such adverse conditions—but Nehemiah rose to the occasion.

His organizational efforts are magnificent.

The lead given by Eliashib and *the priests* was decisive (vs. 1)

The fact that they *consecrated* their portion of the work emphasized the nature of the whole enterprise.

It is important to note that Nehemiah started his list with Eliashib the high priest.

The most important person is named first.

Leaders must set the example (*Neh. 3:1*).

If anybody in the city should have been busy in the work, it was the priests.

That the high priest used his holy hands to do manual labor shows that he considered the work on the wall to be a ministry to the Lord.

They did not just direct others, but they themselves “went to work.”

I love that about leadership.

Sad to say, Eliashib did not stay the course – for later he joined up with the enemy, Tobiah, and created serious problems for Nehemiah (Neh. 13:4-9).

Some people who enthusiastically begin their work may drop out or even turn against it for one reason or another.

I’ve seen both – people who have jumped in to help – quit

And some not only quit – they try to destroy

#1 – leaders set the example

II. Every Person Was in Place

Underscore in your Bible every time you see the following phrases in chapter 3:

Vs. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 – “next unto him,” and “next to them”

Vs. 16 – “after him,” and “after them” (vs. 16-24).

You’ll find these various phrases are recorded twenty-eight times in this chapter

Every person was in place

Thirty-eight individual workers are named in this chapter, and forty-two different groups are identified.

There were also many workers whom Nehemiah did not name whose labors were important; and each worker—named and anonymous—was assigned a place and a task.

Nehemiah had an ability to coordinate people—to get everyone involved.

This didn't just happen. It never "just happens"!

What may appear to be a smooth-running operation always reflects a lot of careful, behind-the-scenes planning.

Remember, too, that once people were in their places, they needed careful supervision.

They also needed adequate resources, building supplies.

Nehemiah thought through all of these things ahead of time.

This calls for highly effective communication.

This kind of coordination, on such a huge scale, is impressive

I want you to notice that **Some do their work at home** (*Neh. 3:10, 23, 28-30*).

At least six different workers repaired the portions of the wall that were nearest to their own houses.

So people were assigned work near to their home.

There are at least **four reasons** why Nehemiah developed this kind of coordinated plan:

1. People who were assigned to sections of the wall near their homes would be more personally involved and more highly motivated.
2. People would not have to travel to another part of the city to do the job, wasting valuable time.
3. In case of attack, these people would not be tempted to leave their posts, but would stay and protect their families.
4. The task would be a family effort, using all available talent.

So, by arranging for each man to work close to his own home, Nehemiah made it easy for them to get to work, to be sustained while on the job, and to safeguard those who were nearest and dearest to them.

This would relieve the workers of any unnecessary anxiety.

It also insured that each person would put his best effort into what he was doing.

But not everybody worked near their home.

He also gave assignments for those who commuted to work. Yes, there were people who traveled.

There were a number of families who lived outside of Jerusalem.

They lived in Jericho, Tekoa, Gibeon, and Mizpah.

Nehemiah assigned these men to sections of the wall where there weren't many homes (see vv. 2, 5, 7).

They were asked to complete tasks that could not be as conveniently handled by the permanent residents in Jerusalem.

Again, this was an ingenious plan!

Nehemiah also gave **assignments by vocation**.

Nehemiah assigned specific people to specific areas that related to their vocations.

Nehemiah assigned "Eliashib the high priest" and the Levites to rebuild the "Sheep Gate" (v. 1).

This would be an assignment close to their own hearts, since it was through this gate that animals were brought to the temple for sacrifice.

Nehemiah used people who were already people managers – 3:9, 12, 14-19

These are people who are high level management with administrative abilities and skills.

Nehemiah used people who had certain skills in their current work to help in this work.

So, we can observe Nehemiah's careful and cautious planning.

He had unusual administrative skills.

II. Every Person Was in Place

III. "We've Got to Work Together"

We've seen the positive response the children of Israel had to Nehemiah's plan.

They said, "Let us arise and build."

What we see outlined in chapter 3 demonstrates conclusively that this initial response by the children of Israel was not just words.

Neither were they motivated by the "emotions" of the moment.

They demonstrated their seriousness with their actions.

They were not only hearers but doers—and most importantly, almost everyone was involved in this building project.

Nehemiah succeeded in getting men and women of all ages and from all walks of life to participate in rebuilding the wall.

We've got to work together.

There were "priests" (v. 1), "goldsmiths" (v. 8), "perfumers" (v. 8), "temple servants" (v. 26), and "merchants" (v. 32).

What a cooperative effort!

Shallum worked side by side with “his daughters” (v. 12).

This is a genuine family effort.

How easy it would be to miss this bit of information. But it’s very significant!

It indicates that whole families worked together to rebuild certain sections of the wall.

For the most part, everyone cooperated in this building project.

There were, however, a few exceptions. You always have them.

Some people have good reasons for not participating, though others have poor reasons—or no reasons at all.

Now, Nehemiah faced this problem and he made note of it in his journal: (vs. 5).

Their nobles here means “their supervisors.” – a sorry figure.

Some people will not work (Neh. 3:5).

Tekoa was a town about eleven miles south of Jerusalem, and some of their people traveled to Jerusalem to assist in the work.

What a contrast between these people and their nobles!

The Tekoites (Tu-koe-ights) built in *two* places on the wall (vv. 5 and 27), while their nobles refused to bend their backs and work in even *one* place!

None of us are too big to do manual labor.

Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), and Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

It took a lot of grunting and groaning to build those walls.

This work created a lot of sore backs, sore hands, and sore feet.

The nobles were shirkers.

I don't know about you, but I would not want to be in that group.

I would hate to have it reported in the eternal Word of God that I did not do my part.

In our day I am afraid that there are many people in the church – given opportunities who are shirking their responsibilities.

Nehemiah doesn't tell us why these leaders refused to cooperate.

But, since they represent an elite group of individuals, maybe they felt they were above getting their hands dirty.

Perhaps they didn't feel it was their responsibility since they lived outside of Jerusalem.

It could be that they were afraid to be identified with the children of Israel and face the same harassment from the enemies because "Tekoa was located southeast of Bethlehem, and it was close to the area controlled by Geshem the Arab.

Maybe they were influenced by him or afraid of him, but the regular people weren't afraid.

Or, they may have been just plain selfish—or lazy.

We've got to work together.

Nehemiah was also an *encourager!*

In chapter 3 alone, Nehemiah mentioned people by name and, in many instances, recognized their accomplishments – we all need encouragement.

Nehemiah was definitely a "people person."

He knew these individuals by name.

He not only knew where they worked, but also what they had accomplished.

This took time and effort.

Now, Don't Miss This!

There is one very significant statement that is tucked away in this mass of data.

It's easy to miss

Vs. 20

Nehemiah evidently believed this man deserved special recognition. Why?

The only clue we have is that he is defined as being "zealous."

Maybe he worked overtime. Maybe he worked faster and harder.

Perhaps he bypassed some of his "coffee breaks."

Could it be that he worked around the clock?

Whatever it was, it didn't go unnoticed by Nehemiah.

And don't you suppose Zabbai (Zab-A-I), his father—who was also named—beamed with pride to be identified with his son.

Vs. 20 – tells us that some people work harder than others.

Baruch (Ba-Ruke) is the only worker of whom it is said that the work was done "earnestly" ("zealously").

The Hebrew word means "to burn or glow" and suggests that Baruch (Ba-Ruke) burned a lot of energy!

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecc. 9:10).

"Whatever you do – do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31)

Baruch (Ba-Ruke) did not just work on his assignment – He took other assignments.

Some people do more work than others (Neh. 3:19, 21, 24, 27).

They did another section of the wall

Meremoth and the Tekoites (Tu-Koe-ites) rebuilt more than one section of the wall.

These are people who make real sacrifices for God – God takes note of that.

Most workers are glad to lay down their tools when their job is finished, but these people asked for additional assignments.

It isn't enough for us to say that we have done as much as others; we must do as *much as we can* as long as the Lord enables us.

Let's draw some principles from Chapter 3:

Principle 1 - The Principle of Coordination

Effective planning is absolutely essential, no matter what our vocation in life.

There is no task that can be done well without careful forethought.

The ability to manage our homes is stated as a requirement for those who occupy leadership positions in the church (I Tim. 3:4-5).

God expects the church to be carefully managed.

This means that elders and pastors cannot be good leaders if they are not good leaders at home.

Principle 2 - The Principle of Cooperation

To what extent are we involved in our church—utilizing our talents, our gifts, our abilities, our personal resources?

The task in Jerusalem was completed because nearly everyone participated.
Everyone contributed what they could.

God's work is a shared work.

We call it the "Body" of Christ – where "every joint" must supply and "each individual part" *must* do its work (Eph. 4:16).

When it comes to the work of the Lord, there is always room for workers.
God uses all kinds of people.

The chapter mentions rulers and priests, men and women, professional craftsmen, and even people from outside the city.

There was a place for everyone, and a job for everyone to do.

There was a great degree of unity in the work, but there was also a remarkable diversity in the kind of work and the kind of people.

They stood together, shoulder to shoulder and labored as one man in the work.
It was a unified effort.

Principle 3 - The Principle of Commendation

To what extent do we encourage?

Folks, we are told again and again in Scripture to encourage one another.

Remember Barnabas? -- He was called "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36).

His name was changed by the apostles.

I Thessalonians 5:11 – "edify one another" – to encourage one another

Hebrews 10:25 – "exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Sincere and honest encouragement is so easy, so inexpensive, but so powerful and motivating.

Proverbs 12:25, "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."

Proverbs 16:24, "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

Proverbs 25:11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

No one person could have accomplished the work of repairing the walls and restoring the gates.

It took leadership on Nehemiah's part and cooperation on the part of the people.

Each had a place to fill and a job to do.

So it is with the church today: We must work together if we are to finish the work to the glory of God.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:58 was what kept him going: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

No matter how difficult the task, or how strong the opposition, **let us arise and build!**

Let us stand for closing invitation.

In the areas of your ministry, is it organized? Is it coordinated?

Are we cooperating?

Are we a part, a working part of the church? Supplying what we can?

Are we encouraging one another?

The church is a great work – let us arise and build!

You cannot be a part of the church unless—

You have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life.

Take your green map again

Ten gates tell us the story.

I. The Sheep Gate

The Sheep gate was so called because through that gate the sheep were brought on their way to the temple and to the place of sacrifice.

3:1 Therefore, the sheep gate symbolizes the Cross of Christ. This is where you begin with God.

The Cross is the only place you can begin with God. It all begins at the sheep gate.

II. The Fish Gate

3:3 It was to this gate that fish were brought in from the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. There were many fish eaters in those days.

III. The Old Gate – The Corner Gate

IV. The Valley Gate

VS. 13 -- The *Valley Gate* had been the starting point for Nehemiah's nighttime tour of inspection.

V. The Dung Gate

3:14 This is an important gate for the health of the city. This gate did not have a beautiful name, but it did perform an important service!

The dung gate was where the filth was carried out, where the garbage was taken away.

VI. The Fountain Gate

VII. The Water Gate

3:26 The water gate was the gate used to bring water into the city. An aqueduct brought some water into the city but not all of it. The remainder was carried in through the water gate.

It was here that Ezra put up a pulpit. When Ezra erected a pulpit at the water gate, he read from the Word. (8:1)

“The Ophel” (OH-Fell) (*Neh. 3:26-17*) was a hill south of the temple area.

It was especially fortified and had a tower.

VIII. The Horse Gate

The Horse Gate (*Neh. 3:28*)

It was here that wicked mother, Athaliah, was executed (II Chron. 23:15).

IX. The East Gate

3:29

Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart from the temple at the East Gate (Ezek. 10:16-22; 11:22-25), and the Lord will return to the city the same way (43:1-5).

The East Gate was the gate that fills us with anticipation and excitement.

Faced the sunrise – it was the first one that was opened in the morning.

The east gate in modern Jerusalem is sealed.

X. The Muster Gate

3:31

The Gate Hammiphkad (Neh. 3:31)

The Hebrew word has a military connotation and refers to the mustering of the troops for numbering and inspection. . . . “the Inspection Gate.”

Miphkad means “review” or “registry.”

When a stranger came to Jerusalem, he had to have a visa—not like those we have today, but he had to stop at this gate and register.

It was also a gate of review.

When the army had been out fighting a battle and returned, they passed through this gate.

It was here that David reviewed his soldiers returning from battle.

When they passed through this arch, David was there to thank his battle-scarred men for their unselfish loyalty and daring.

3:32 We have been through ten gates, and now we are back at the sheep gate.

We have been all of the way around the walls of Jerusalem, and we are right back where we started.