

Nehemiah

*What was the manner of life for those who returned from Babylon
to restore the City of God?*

Isa 62:1-4 — Zion is the place where men worship God on His terms, under His conditions, according to His righteousness, His standard (Mt 16:24).

Rom 15:4-6; Neh 1:3 — Nehemiah knew the Holy City of God was in ruins, and he grieved. The same conditions as prevailed in the day of Nehemiah prevail in the world today.¹ The church, as Jerusalem, is in ruins. The walls of salvation are broken down, the gates of praise burned with fire (Isa 60:18). There is no one standing in the gate holding up a standard showing who loves God and who doesn't (Mal 1:10; 3:18). But those who mourn over Zion are the very ones God can use to restore all things (Isa 61:3-4; Mk 9:11-12; Isa 49:6; Mt 21:43). They are the ones whose hearts can be stirred to return and build (Ezra 1:5).

Neh 1:8-9 — This is talking about apostolic ministry — the gathering of true Israel together to live in places where His name shall dwell (Mal 1:5,11; 1 Cor 1:2,10; 1 Tim 2:8 — “in every place”).

Neh 1:11-2:6 — Nehemiah was the cupbearer of the King of Persia. It was a position of utmost trust and integrity (he tasted the king's wine to see whether it was poisoned). Nehemiah was a man of unimpeachable honesty. Even though he could lose his life for entering the king's presence with a fallen countenance, he was still the same on the outside as he was on the inside. He could have had his head cut off, but YHWH heard his prayer and granted him compassion before the king. He was anointed and appointed to rebuild the walls (he had both gifts and graces).

The hand of God was on Nehemiah to establish order and bring discipline and discipleship to the people. The people were in sad shape. They were God's people, but

¹ See also *The Stirring of the Heart* (2005.04.01-P01), which shows the parallel between the gospel and the call for the Jews to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem to rebuild what had gone to ruin.

they weren't *being* His people. Nehemiah set out and made the 700-mile journey to Jerusalem. At night, while others slept, he rode out and surveyed the damage. He knew the cost. He had a sleep-denying concern for the cause of God on earth.

Neh 2:10 — Satan hates a man with motives like Nehemiah (to build the Kingdom of God, not seek his own glory and recognition, Jn 7:18). Opposition came mainly through those who made some claim to knowing God. Gal 4:29 — The sons of the flesh always persecute the sons of the Spirit.

The Enemies of God:

- Apostates who have departed from God (Acts 2:42; Ps 83:1-8):
 - Arabs, Ishmaelites, Hagarites — descended from Abraham,
 - Ammonites, Moabites — descended from Lot,
 - Edomites, Amalekites — descended from Esau.
- Pretenders who presume to know Him (Ps 81:15):
 - Horites, Samaritans — of mixed blood, worshipping God and their collection of idols as well.

Neh 2:17-20 — It was a big undertaking to rebuild the wall amidst opposition from within and opposition without. It would take total unity among God's people. He got together with the rulers and elders of the day to bring about government among God's people. Without the government of God, there is no care, no authority.

As soon as the people began to rally around Nehemiah and the vision he was bringing, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem opposed them. They tried to weasel in with them and take part in what God was doing. But Nehemiah stood in the gate and said,

“The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, therefore we His servants will arise and build; but you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem.” (Neh 2:20)

“If a guardian is true, he will give My word out according to My mind and My purpose,” says the Sovereign.

Whenever God says, “arise and build,” Satan says, “arise and oppose.” We overcome Satan by the word of our testimony, the blood of the Lamb, and not loving our lives even unto death (Rev 12:11). Satan is defeated, but he still has his fangs. He hasn’t been de-fanged yet. The enemy of God used fear tactics to discourage God’s people, but when they saw what the work was that was before them, they started laboring together with one common purpose.

Neh 3:1-32 — Every person had a part of the wall to guard and build. That’s what we must do (Eph 2:10; 4:16). We pour our life and energies into building up our part of the wall. It’s a Body effort to build the wall. It won’t be built by a few overcomers, but many! Not by a few wise virgins, but many!

Neh 5:14-19 — Aaron’s rod that budded gave life. The rod was a symbol of God’s authority. That is the kind of authority Nehemiah had. Nehemiah was only seeking the welfare of the sons of Israel. He was one who served, not one who lorded over the people. He was leading by example, not merely by word. He was right there with the people building the wall, putting his hand to the work (verse 16).

The story of Nehemiah is a parallel to God’s work in our time, and gives us understanding of the gospel and what we are going to come against. Apostolic ministry is all about building a wall and caring about our brothers. There is a wall now being built to separate the true worshippers of YHWH from those who pretend obedience (Mal 3:18).

The Two Natures

- Sheep — always ready for self-sacrifice, follow readily, let the Shepherd have their heart, and surrender their will to be slain (Jn 10:4-5).
- Ravenous wolves — thieves and robbers (Jn 10:1) — thieves of your time and robbers of your strength, like an incurable wound that never gets better. They don’t do anything but drain those around them. They come over the wall to

kill and destroy. They haven't truly given up their own self-life. They're still hanging on to their lives and haven't come through the cross of our Master. They always think of self first. They are always taking and never giving.

A person who comes in over the wall is one who doesn't come through the gate, the narrow gate. Without the apostolic ministry to restore the age-old foundations and establish a standard, all you can expect is a mixed multitude (sincere and insincere) incapable of doing God's will on earth. This is the state of Christianity today. Ask any Christian.

Opposition: “No Opposition, No Importance.”

There is no triumph without trouble, no victory without vigilance. There is a cross in the way of every crown worth wearing. There is no winning without first warring, no opportunity without opposition, no open door set before us without many adversaries to obstruct our entering (1 Cor 16:9).

When the saints say, “Let us arise and build,” (Neh 2:18) the enemy says, “Let us arise and oppose.” Neh 4:6-8 — The people had a heart and mind to work. The enemy had a mind to fight. Battles must never be allowed to take precedence over building.

Nehemiah stands out as a man of prayer, a man of faith, a man of courage, a man of action. TAKE NOTE OF THE MANNER IN WHICH NEHEMIAH WAS ATTACKED. When ridicule fails, threats, force, and violence follow. If Satan can't get you to compromise, he will try to intimidate you. If he can't intimidate you, he will try to destroy you.

Opposition from Without — Scorn, Force, Craft:

- Scorn = open, unqualified contempt or disrespect, disdain, mockery, or derision (Neh 2:18-20; 4:1-6). What were the real reasons for the scorn of the enemy?

- Hatred and anger against God and His people (Rom 8:7). Sanballat was *wrath*. His scorn was simply a covering for his hatred. The first real reason why the world scorns and opposes us is that Satan is behind it, and because the natural mind hates the gospel, which must expose sin before it can save one's soul.
- Ignorance and unbelief (Eph 4:17-18; 1 Pet 4:4-5). They did not know the true God or His purposes for His people. The second real reason the world scorns is ignorance and unbelief, and very often when the ignorance is removed the unbelief is removed.
- Sanballat's scorn was a trick to hide the fact that he had no genuine ground at all for opposing Nehemiah. It's the same today. The third reason for the world's scorn is its inability to find any genuine argument against the gospel. How did Nehemiah meet the scorn of Sanballat and Tobiah (verses 4-6)? He just kept on building (that's the way to meet scorn, not by counter-scorn). The scorn of Sanballat soon began to look stupid as the walls of Jerusalem rose higher and higher. It's always a big victory for the devil if he can laugh us out of accomplishing some worthy work because we're ashamed to be God's people.
- Force = Strength or power exerted on an object; coercion, violence, intellectual vigor or persuasiveness (as of a simple statement loaded with venom). Neh 4:7-23 — When the enemy comes to cause a disturbance in the Protection of Peace, Jerusalem (verse 8), the only solution is to pray and be on guard day and night. (There is no victory without vigilance.)
- Craft = Skill in evasion or deception, shrewdness, cunning, guile (Neh 6:1-19).

Opposition from Within — Debris, Fear, Greed:

- Debris = the scattered remains of something broken or destroyed. Neh 4:10-11 — Before the building-up can take place, the rubble has to be torn down and cleared away. But beware lest the burden-bearers become overburdened. If we become preoccupied with the weight of all the rubble, we will be unable to build the wall, and we will not know or see until our enemies come among us and kill us and put a stop to the work. Don't let Satan build back the rubbish or debris already destroyed in our life. That's the old — we are the new building. Debris gets in our way and entangles us: previous foundations, besetting sins, familiar spirits, and all the excess baggage of the flesh — pride, unbelief, anger, self-importance, etc. — anything that hinders, impairs, or slows down our being built on the solid foundation of our Master Yahshua as living stones tightly cemented together by entire submissiveness (Heb 12:1-3).
- Fear = the feeling of alarm caused by awareness of danger, a state of dread, apprehension (for example, anxiety about the future or fear of being wrong). Neh 4:11-14 — Nehemiah combatted fear in his people by getting their eyes off of themselves — encouraging them to fight for the sake of others.
- Greed = avarice, excessive desire for more than one needs. Neh 5:1-13 — An enemy from within the wall was greed. The people of YHWH have always had the principle that there would be no poor in the land. Nehemiah exposed the worldly Gentile way they were living. Our industries are potentially the most dangerous things we have ever been given. We could easily fall into making a living and not remember our Master. We have to continually be on guard against greed — every form of it, according to our Master (Lk 12:15). In Christianity people don't even see what the true enemy is. True opposition comes when we see the true enemy.

If Nehemiah had not resolutely resisted compromise, laxity, and intrigue, he would have failed. Each is a lesson of what we are up against today.

Compromise is settling differences by mutual concessions. For what good or advantage do we compromise? What compromise is possible between good and evil, or between food and poison? (1 Cor 10:21; 2 Cor 6:14 - 7:1; Neh 13:4-28)

Laxity is negligence, slackness, looseness, lack of strictness. Neh 2:18; 4:6,9,13,16-23; 7:3 — Nehemiah passed on to the people his own sleep-denying concern for the Kingdom of God.

A picnic is a time for personal relaxation and pleasure. A crusade calls for work, dedication, and sacrifice. Many approach service to God as if it were a picnic: home life, business life, everything is self-centered. They are always looking for what they can get, not what they can give. The cross is not a part of the daily life to such as these. It is more secure to keep your options open, to keep your suitcase packed under your bed, not to put your eggs all in one basket. Get the most out of life and the world system just in case.

But the work that Nehemiah undertook could only be done through the cross. True experience of Messiah in the Body of Messiah changes life from a picnic to a crusade. It takes total commitment to rebuild the wall. No matter how great Nehemiah's burden, if the people had not responded to him in total commitment (because of the anointing he had received from God) and chosen to love one another, then the wall could never have been built. Even though he was governor, the people had to recognize his God-given authority.

Intrigue is underhanded scheming; the use of such schemes to arouse interest or curiosity, as the serpent deceived Eve in Eden (Rev 12:9; 2 Cor 11:3).

Neh 6:10-16 — Because Nehemiah did not give in to compromise, laxity, or intrigue, the wall was built in 52 days, and the enemies of God lost their confidence.

A Man of Faith

The touchstone of spiritual life is how much one's volition is united with God's. Good or bad sensations, happy or sad feelings do not serve as an indicator. Is one willing (however bad he may feel) to be faithful to God even unto death? Spirituality is measured by our volition because it unfolds our undisguised condition. Self stands in opposition to spiritual life. With self broken down, spiritual life grows up. Should self remain strong, spiritual life will suffer. We can judge someone's spirituality by looking into his will.

Don't let those who sincerely strive for spiritual life and growth be deceived into thinking that feelings are their life principle, because this will entice them to always be mindful of tingling sensations. Just be certain that the will be utterly offered to God. Happy or sad feelings are not to be considered. God wants us to live by faith. You don't know what it means to live by faith until you serve God without good feelings!

We're getting to know God. He takes away our sensation of His presence so that our motivation toward Him will be totally pure. He tries our motives and strengthens us and purifies us. Before He comes back to reign on earth, the sons of Levi will have to be purified (Mal 3:1-3).

Nehemiah is an example of one who has entered God's rest. Nothing external can stimulate him. His joy and his delight come from seeing God's will accomplished. Though he appears to be deserted by God and forgotten by man, he still mans his battle station (as a prayer warrior) and overcomes Satan by his faith. (An empty prayer closet is forever a memorial to a dead heart and dead church.)

How much we owe to the difficulties and setbacks, the obstructions and oppositions which have been permitted to try us! The things we thought were breaking us were in reality making us (Rom 8:28). It is always such men as Nehemiah who

become the inspirers and encouragers of others, overcoming Satanic opposition and worldly scoffers.

Apostolic Ministry

The hardest thing God has ever had to do is redeeming mankind from the Fall. Rom 12:1-2 — The principle of the cross is denying your own selves, living by faith every day, believing in our Master, having true communion with Him. God wants to produce people who will endure with Him, having that vital communion which His Holy Spirit put in us. Rom 15:4 — These things happened for our instruction.

The prophets spoke about a people who would bring about God's purpose (Dan 2:44; Joel 2:1-11; etc.). Who is that people going to be? A disciplined people. You can't teach a disobedient, rebellious child. First you'll have to train him through much discipline. One disciple is worth a thousand converts. A *disciple* is one who receives the *discipline* of the Sovereign. Yahshua didn't teach His disciples from the scrolls all day long. He trained them and plowed up their hearts, pouring everything into them about the Kingdom that they were going to set up and establish. He was always exposing them and encouraging them.

In the last days people are going to be more perverted than they've ever been. It's going to take magnanimous grace from God to be His people. The opposition will be so great that there will be a continual need for vision and encouragement about who we are and what we are doing (Pr 29:18). No warrior can resign or go AWOL. We must keep the armor on until God calls off the war.

Without apostolic ministry the "Church" isn't the Church, no matter how loudly it claims to be God's people. It was on the foundation of love — laying down our lives for our brothers — that we have been built, and only on that foundation is our Master able to give us more revelation. In the last days many will come in our Master's name, saying He is the Messiah (Mt 24:5). Many will be deceived. Only those who are in the pillar and

support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15), and who *love* the truth (2 Ths 2:10) will be saved. If you love your brother with all your heart, your doctrine will be correct. We won't have to worry about being in doctrinal error. We may go from glory to glory, but the age-old foundation will always be the same (Mt 16:24).