



Intro to Nehemiah (Part II) A Man of Godly Zeal

The book of Nehemiah is a report about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the exile of Judah. The principles contained in this book about how Nehemiah led the people in the building up of the walls and also of the people themselves offer incredible insights into *God's Way of Getting Things Done*.

Nehemiah 1:1-4 (NKJV)

¹The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, ²that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

³And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

⁴So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

NEHEMIAH-THE AUTHOR

Nehemiah writes for the praise of God, not of himself; he is testifying to what God has done in and through Him, not to anything he might claim as a personal achievement.

Nehemiah glories in what God has brought about through him and for the spiritual welfare of others—and his aim is to lead his readers to share his glorifying with him.

Nehemiah glories in what God has brought about through him and for the spiritual welfare of others

So we will explore the book of Nehemiah by being equally interested in both how Nehemiah led the people and in how God led Nehemiah.

NEHEMIAH-THE PERSON

Nehemiah is usually not mentioned in people's list of favorite Biblical characters.

He does have a rough edge to him. Many leaders of his kind do. He even seems to have had an intensity about him that expressed itself in somewhat of an un-Christlike manner at times. But we have to remember that he was human.

His imperfections should not make us lose sight of his marvelous strengths, just because he was like us. This should only add to our being able to identify with him in some ways and have hope that we may attain to some of his incredible qualities as a leader and as a human being.

So what were some of his strengths?

1. **Wise**—He had the ability to make and set high but realistic goals with plans on how to get there. And then he got things done. From this standpoint, Nehemiah's memoirs constitute a crash course in managerial skills. The book of Nehemiah has often been looked to as a book on Leadership Skills.

And as a result of his leadership skills, his achievements are outstanding.

1. He restored the wall of Jerusalem in 52 days when nobody thought it could be rebuilt at all.
2. He restored regular worship
3. He restored regular instruction from God's Word
4. He restored regular Sabbath keeping
5. He restored godly family lives among the people.

Yet with all of His accomplishments, as he insists over and over again, none was achieved through mere human effort.

2. **Compassionate**—As a committed leader he was passionate about helping the needy. Just as he expressed his love for God through his zeal, so he expressed his love for his neighbor by his compassionate care. He consciously shouldered the responsibility for others' well-being. See chapter 5

He was the kind of guy that you would say, "I'm sure glad he's on our side. I would hate to have to go up against him." If you were on God's side, and therefore his side, you knew he cared for you and you didn't have to worry. But if you were against God, and therefore against Nehemiah, you had better watch out!

3. **Zealous**—He was extremely zealous for the honor and glory of God. The strength of his passion to magnify the Lord was very great. There didn't seem to be anything that would stand in his way of making sure that God was glorified.

Most of us are more like the lukewarm Laodiceans mentioned in the book of Revelation—drifting along in our churches and making sure we don't make waves. We rationalize that by quietly going to church and not making waves outside of the church we are being "spiritual" and "a good example." Nehemiah didn't differentiate the sacred from the daily. God was going to be magnified no matter what.

Zeal—not fanaticism in the negative sense. It is not irresponsible enthusiasm. It is not a pushy egoism.

J.C Ryle in his book, *Practical Religion* describes a zealous man like this:

"He only sees one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness—whether he is rich, or whether he is poor—whether he pleases men, or whether he gives offence—whether he is thought wise, or he is thought foolish—whether he gets honor, or whether he gets shame—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is, to please God, to advance God's glory."

4. **Prayerful**—Prayers for help with which he punctuates his story show where he believed his strength lay, and where on a day-to-day basis he looked for support.

--In **Ch 1:4** he prays to God as soon as he hears the status of Jerusalem and knows that this was a result of Israel forsaking their God. He asks for forgiveness for him and all of Israel. And he asks God to grant him mercy as he moves forward with a plan to ask the king of Persia if he can go back to help rebuild the walls.

--In **Ch. 2:4** he prays as he is talking with the king.

--In **Ch. 4:4; 9** he prays a couple of times that God will help as their enemies begin to arise against them.

--In **Ch. 6:8-9** he prays for strength to deal with people who were contriving lies against him.

(These point to the fact that Nehemiah knew where his vision and wisdom came from.)

--In **Ch. 6:15-16** it is abundantly clear how Nehemiah viewed the accomplishment of the rebuilding of the wall.

He is saying in effect, "Don't give me credit. What was done through human agents like me is done by God, and He must have the praise for it."

APPLICATION

1. Do you make a real plan on how you are going to be a part of God's plan? Do you set high, realistic goals on how you can be a part of God's plan? Does healthy fear of God guide you as you map out your day-to-day and long term steps to achieve your goals?
2. Do you have a real concern for people so that you notice needs and make sure that people are cared for? Or are you so goal-oriented that tasks become more important than people? Do you let your goals of accomplishment overshadow noticing the real needs of people around you and how you can be a help?

3. Are you consumed with loving God and loving others and long to see people become followers of Jesus Christ and see them built up with such passion, that you won't let hindrances stand in your way—such as fear, disbelief, criticism, and other attacks?

4. Do you bathe (as they say) all of this in prayer as Nehemiah did? Do you seek God before, during and after? This is the key to Nehemiah's success. He sought God on a regular basis. He was in continual communion with God and made sure that everyone knew that God was the power behind any and every good that was accomplished. Do you spend time in constant prayer and then naturally make a point to acknowledge God and give Him the glory regularly?

"He [a man of godly zeal] only sees one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness—whether he is rich, or whether he is poor—whether he pleases men, or whether he gives offence—whether he is thought wise, or he is thought foolish—whether he gets honor, or whether he gets shame—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is, to please God, to advance God's glory."

If we were to read your memoirs as we are doing with Nehemiah's, how would we describe your life in regards to your contribution and love for Christ, His Church and His Kingdom?

Do you possess the wisdom, compassion, zeal, and most importantly the prayer life that focuses on building Christ's Kingdom and bringing glory to God?

SENATE STUDY-Tue, 7:30am: Sen. Hancock's office
HOUSE STUDY-Wed, Lunch Adjournment: Austin Club
CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY-Thu, Noon: Reagan Bldg
JHR 140

