

couragement when they became afraid of the enemy. They were listening to his threats and had closed their ears to God.

### ***OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT***

Discouragement is a difficult disease to cure. What lessons do Nehemiah have for us in overcoming discouragement.

**First**, go into the *Presence of God*. Verse 9 says, "But we made our prayer unto our God." Get into the presence of the Lord and tell Him everything! "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you" (I Peter 5:7). There is wonderful relief and release even in the process of telling Him of our discouragement.

**Second**, seek the fellowship of the *People of God*. We notice in (v.9) that "we" prayed and we see Nehemiah (v.14) gathering the people together. There is great value in sharing our joys, sorrows and discouragements with others who are like-minded with us. If you are discouraged, try encouraging someone else and it will help make your own discouragement disappear.

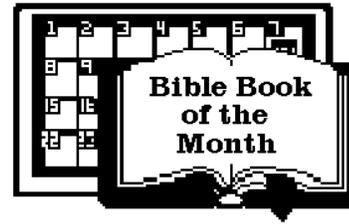
**Third**, lean hard on the *Promises of God*. Nehemiah called upon the people to "Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome!" That sounds great, but how do we do that? Call to mind the things that the Lord has said. Meditate upon some of His wonderful promises like Isaiah 26:3,4 and Philippians 4:6,7, or Hebrews 13:5 where we have God's promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

When the people complained that there was much work yet to be done and they were weak, Nehemiah said to them, "You've got your eyes on the rubbish, the debris. Focus your eyes instead on the Lord and his promises to us." When people only see the problems they get discouraged, but look at our troubles through God's promises.

**Fourth**, remember the *Providence of God*. Although Nehemiah and Judah were passing through a time of upheaval and change, threats and fear, yet God had them in His plans and in His care. He controls what the nations around His people can do.

We must notice the results of applying this formula. In verse 15 we read, "And it came to pass... that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work."

-- Windell Gann



# Nehemiah

Lesson # 3

Text: Nehemiah 3:1 - 4:23

## NEHEMIAH — THE BUILDER

### Introduction

Nehemiah has returned to Jerusalem following the migration of thousands of Jews from Babylonian Captivity and found the walls of the city in shambles. He has been commissioned by the Persian King to rebuild the walls and serve as governor over Judah. Nehemiah calls the people together and inspires them to rebuild the walls of the city.

### 1. A Leader Must Be An Organizer-- 3:1-32

Chapter 3 contains a lot of names because people are important to God. There are some 41 crews that Nehemiah put to work around the wall. A reoccurring phrase is "And next unto him/ them. . ." The work around the entire circuit of the wall is documented. Nehemiah's plan was to put people to work on the part of the wall they would be most concerned with, so we read that "every one [worked] over against his own house" (v. 23, 28,). If enemies attacked they wouldn't want the intrusion made in the vicinity of their neighborhood.

Not only did all the residents of Jerusalem get involved but the people from nearby cities like Jericho, Tekoa, and Gibeon (vs 2, 5, 7).

People from all walks of life cooperated together in the project. The priests worked on the sheep gate where the sacrifices were brought into the city. Goldsmiths, and apothecaries (perfumers) and others like them put their hands to the work also.

We learn a number of important lessons about leadership from Nehemiah as an organizer.

1) A Leader calls on others for help. Nehemiah realized that it would take everyone to get this gigantic job done.

2) Leaders can't spend all their time planning, there must be some action. In ch. 3 we see the action.

3) Leaders must integrate the work of the various people into a "whole" work. Leaders are those who use their influence and ability to secure the cooperation of the workers in the task to be done.

4) Leaders can help others visualize how their part in the work is strategic to the whole

We should be able to see how these valuable principles apply to all leadership roles, whether in the home, at work, in the Lord's church, and even in the nation.

## 2. Leaders Must Know How to Handle Problems

1) Leaders must discriminate between good and evil and courageously stand opposed to evil and evil men (2:19-20). Nehemiah enthusiastically encouraged the people to "rise up and build" and he quickly assessed who the enemies of the work were and vigorously answered them.

2) Leaders are not stopped from doing a good work by mockery and ridicule (2:19; 4:1-4). Sanballat and his cohorts "laughed us to scorn, and despised us." The enemy tried to plant seeds of doubt in the minds of the workers. "Is this a job you think you can do in a day?!" They mocked the idea of turning the rubbish heap around the city into a wall (4:2).

The enemy sometimes tries sarcasm and ridicule to discourage a good work. "If a fox tries to jump over the wall he will break it down!" How many times have good works been defeated by "That can't be done!", "It wont work here," "Nothing lasting or good will come out of it!"

## 3. Leaders Must Have Prayers and Followers -- 4:4-6

Take heart, Leaders! Nehemiah met the opposition as he usually did, with PRAYER (4:4 "Hear, O our God; for we are despised...") The opposition did not succeed, but verse six stands as a KEY VERSE for the entire book "So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

## 4. Leaders May Have to Deal with Conspiracy -- 4:7-23

"And they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion therein" (v. 8). Immediately after reading of this threat of force against the work we read in the next verse "But we made our prayer unto our God. This is not idle prayer, but prayer with action, "...and set a watch against them day and night." How Nehemiah teaches us to pray! And to do something along with our prayers! This is the kind of praying the Lord will bless! As an old timer said, "Pray like it all depends on God, and work like it all depends on us."

### NOTICE THE TACTICS AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION

1. Mockery and Ridicule -- (from without) 4:1-6
2. Threat of Force -- (from without) 4:7-10 15-23
3. Sowed Seeds of Discouragement -- (from within) 4:11
4. Complaints of Cruel Greed -- (from within) 5:1-19
5. Appeals to Negotiate (Compromise) -- 6:1-4
6. Attempts to Discredit Nehemiah -- 6:5-15
7. Spies and Internal Opposition -- 6: 16-19

Nehemiah followed the prayer with the plan of putting "half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears and shields, and bows..." They went on working but were ready to fight! He shows us to not let "fights" stop the work! Keep on working!

Nehemiah kept a man by his side all the time with a trumpet to sound in case of an attack by the enemy. They developed a plan to follow in such an event. They worked from early light to the appearance of the stars. Those from outside Jerusalem began to lodge inside the partially completed walls (v.22). Nehemiah and his men slept in their clothes.

## 5. Leaders Must Know How To Deal With Discouragement-- 4:10-14

After "the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof" the people came to Nehemiah all discouraged. If we look carefully we'll find **Four Causes For Their Discouragement.**

1. **A Loss of Strength.** In v.10 Judah said, "The strength of the burden bearers is failing." They had been working for some time and now the newness of the project had worn off. Enthusiasm tends to drop, and we think we're not as strong as were when we began. "Halfway" is discouraging!

2. **A Loss of Vision.** In spite of all the work that has been expended they said there is "yet" much rubbish. The builders had lost vision of the completed wall. They looked at the problem and lost vision of the goal and its benefits! We must never lose sight of our goals. Know what we want to accomplish and keep that vision ever before us.

3. **A Loss of Confidence.** Perhaps the most devastating cause of discouragement is an obvious loss of confidence. They said, "We ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall" (verse 10). They had built the wall to half its height because "... the people had a heart to work." But now they lost their heart! When you lose confidence you lose heart, you lose your motivation.

4. **A Loss of Security.** The builders suddenly slumped into dis-