



Time to Reflect

- As we seek to serve God, how can we ensure that we are consistently faithful in bringing glory to Him and Him alone?
- Pause to reflect on the Wiersbe quote in the middle of page two. What are some of “...the old truths that made the church great in ages past?”

Last week our attention was drawn to the first stages of Nehemiah’s rebuilding project. We saw how early opposition emerged and we reflected on how Nehemiah dealt with that opposition. This week our passage records details relating to the rebuilding process. Nehemiah faced a great challenge but he was faithful to the call of God and he also partnered with various people and groups, all of whom demonstrated incredible dedication.

“When it comes to the work of the Lord, there is no place for spectators or self-appointed advisors and critics, but there is always room for workers. As you study this chapter, you will discover principles that apply to all human labour, especially the work of building the church.”

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p45)

Specifics

- There is considerable detail recorded in Nehemiah 3 and it can be neatly divided into four sections.
- 1. The Purpose Of The Work**
 - In this study series we have already reflected on Nehemiah’s faithfulness. It is fair to say that he was, primarily, concerned about only one thing: the glory of God.
 - Jerusalem was in ruins and this deeply troubled Nehemiah. In chapters one and two we can sense his pain and his anguish. In chapter three we see how he moved to repair the city and bring glory to God.
 - As we read this chapter we are reminded that the purpose of all ministry is to bring glory to God. The words of Jesus in his highly priest prayer challenge us to think about the purpose of our work. *“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do”* (John 17:4).
 - Even at this early stage, we are challenged to think about our motives as we seek to engage in mission and ministry.
 - Warren Wiersbe outlines a helpful point of application. He writes, *“God has a special task for each of His children (Eph. 2:10), and in the humble, faithful doing of that task, we glorify His name.”*¹
 - 2. The Pattern Of The Work**
 - In earlier studies we have noted how Nehemiah was a structured and organised person. In chapter three we see how he planned his work and then worked his plan.
 - Thirty-eight individuals are named in this chapter and forty-two different groups are identified. It is also same to assume that there are others who worked on the rebuilding of the walls who are not specifically named in this passage.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p46.

- It is striking just how many people worked together in the rebuilding of the city walls. There is plenty of activity recorded in Nehemiah 3.
- D.L. Moody once observed, “A great many people have got a false idea about the church. They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in...to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work for them – actual work in the church – never enters their minds.”²
- What we actually encounter in Nehemiah is every member ministry, and everyone fulfilled their specific role. The sense of unity is clear. Everyone followed one leader and they were united in one task. Everyone also worked together for the glory of God and what appeared impossible was achieved.
- It is worth noting that the word ‘built’ is used six times in this passage and it actually could be interpreted ‘rebuilt.’
- Some biblical scholars and commentators suggest that all the material that was needed for the rebuilding of the walls existed in the debris of the ruined masonry that lay all around – few new materials were needed.
- Wiersbe reflects on this and brilliantly draws a lesson that is very significant for the twenty-first century church. He contends, “It is not by inventing clever new things that we take away the church’s reproach, but by going back to the old truths that made the church great in ages past.”³
- The word ‘repair’ is used thirty-five times in Nehemiah 3 and it means ‘to make strong and firm.’ This reminds us that Nehemiah wasn’t interested in overseeing remedial work or a quick fix. He wanted to offer his very best because he was working for the glory of God.

3. The People In The Work

- There are various people and groups mentioned in Nehemiah 3 – rulers and priests (v1, 12-19), men and women (v12), professional craftsmen (v8, 32), and even people from outside Jerusalem (v2, 5, 7).
- There was a considerable amount of work to be done and everyone played their part. It is interesting that the leaders set the example. Even the high priest, Eliashib (v1), worked on the rebuilding of the Sheep Gate – and the other priests were also enlisted.
- It is clear that some people did more work than others (v11, 19, 21, 24). Individuals like Malkijah and Hasshub worked on more than one section of the wall. This challenges us not to be content with doing just enough in God’s service or in matching what others have done. We are encouraged to do as much as we can, for as long as we can, and all in God’s service and for His glory.
- Notably, in Nehemiah 3, there is one specific mention of people who wouldn’t work (v5). The men of Tekia (a town about eleven miles from Jerusalem) assisted in the rebuilding of the walls (v5, 27) but their leaders refused.
- In contrast, Baruch (v20) is named as one who worked zealously. He gave of his best and so must we.

4. The Places Of The Work.

- In Nehemiah 3 we encounter ten gates, several towers and other landmarks. Starting with the Sheep Gate in northeast Jerusalem (v1), the record progresses anticlockwise around the walls.
- Nehemiah’s primary purpose was “...to document for posterity and the official records the names and accomplishments of the people who worked on the wall.”⁴
- The list of places, people and accomplishments should encourage and challenge us. They should also remind us that with God all things are possible.

² D.L. Moody quoted in Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p47.

³ Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p47.

⁴ Ibid, p50.