

Operation Wall

Nehemiah 3:1-16

Nehemiah 3:1-16 – *“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.² Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.*

³ Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. ⁴ And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs. ⁵ Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

⁶ Moreover Jehoiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars. ⁷ And next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, repaired the residence of the governor of the region beyond the River. ⁸ Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹ And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. ¹⁰ Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah made repairs.

¹¹ Malchijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

¹³ Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate. ¹⁴ Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

¹⁵ Shallun the son of Col-Hozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David. ¹⁶ After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs as far as the place in front of the tombs of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as the House of the Mighty.”

Background Notes

The wall of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Babylonian armies when they conquered Jerusalem in 586BC was now being repaired. A number of the Jews had returned from their seventy-year captivity in Babylon, and Nehemiah was spearheading the wall-building operation.

Nehemiah was a personal servant of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I. A godly Jew, he had become concerned that Jerusalem, the city of God's Temple, was defenseless because it had no wall. So, with the king's permission, Nehemiah himself had come back to Jerusalem, and he had personally motivated and organized the people to rebuild the city wall. The people accepted his challenge, and they began to build.

Chapter 3 is the record of all those who worked on the wall, and what section of the wall or gate they built.

The chapter begins at the Sheep Gate. Located at the northeast corner of the city wall, the sheep for sacrifices were brought into the city through the Sheep Gate. As we go through the chapter we'll follow the wall in a counter-clockwise direction, and at the end of the chapter we'll be back at the Sheep Gate. At each stop we'll see an individual or a group repairing the wall. When we get to verse 16, we'll have traced the wall repairs a little more than half way around the city. (By the way, the Nehemiah mentioned in verse 16 is not the same Nehemiah of the book of Nehemiah!)

We've already mentioned that part of Nehemiah's wall is still standing today. The Broad Wall, built during the reign of King Hezekiah, is mentioned in verse 8. The foundation of that wall has been excavated, and can be seen in the Old City of Jerusalem today.

Doctrinal Points

1. Unity and blessing go together.

The Bible certainly teaches that unity and blessing go together. The unity of the people who worked on the wall is quite obvious. **Everyone** was involved! It was a coordinated effort. The recurring phrases, "*next to him*" and "*after them*" emphasize this unity. These phrases are used **28 times** in the chapter!

Notice how everyone was involved. The high priest and the priests are mentioned in verses 1, 22 & 28. Goldsmiths and perfumers are mentioned here in verse 8, and the goldsmiths are mentioned again in verses 31-32. The district leaders were involved (v9). The leader of half of the district of Jerusalem made repairs, and in verse 16 there's that "other" Nehemiah, the leader of half of the district of Beth Zur.

People from districts in Jerusalem and outside of Jerusalem were involved in rebuilding the wall. People from outside the city in the province of Judah came in to help build: men from Jericho (v2), the Tekoites (v5), the men of Gibeon and Mizpah (v7), and the men of Zanoah (v13). All these men were from areas outside of Jerusalem.

The Levites are mentioned in verse 17, and the Nethinim, or Temple servants in verse 26. The merchants were involved as well (v32). Entire families were involved in the project. Look at verse 12: "*And next to him was Shallum...; he and his daughters made repairs.*"

You kind of get the idea here – it's like the old nursery rhyme about “the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker”!
Everyone got involved in rebuilding this wall!

What a picture of unity! Could this be said about your church? Could you get all these kinds of people involved in a project? That would certainly be unity. No wonder the people were able to finish building the wall in less than two months! God blessed this work because they were united.

Psalm 133:1 says, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* Unity and blessing go together. We should do whatever we can to preserve unity in the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:3 says, *“...endeavoring to keep the unity of the body in the bond of peace.”* Notice that Ephesians 4:3 does not say that we're to **form** the unity. The unity of the body is already formed. **We already are “one in Christ.”** If you're a believer, you're united with other believers in Christ. That bond has already been formed. But Ephesians 4:3 says that we are to do our best to **preserve** that unity - and that does take work!

It's important to realize that “unity” is not the same as “uniformity.” No two people are exactly alike. People were different in Nehemiah's day, and people are different today. We have different interests. We have different ways of looking at things. We have different tastes in music. The Bible does not call us to be *uniform* - it calls us to *unity*. We are to be **united in our purpose** to see Christ magnified, and the work of the Lord prosper. Unity and blessing go together.

2. Spiritual wall building is continuous.

Remember, although we're talking about physical walls in Nehemiah, this book provides a great picture for building spiritual walls. God wants us to have strong spiritual walls. God wants us to be able defend our faith. He wants us to be strong Christians.

The idea here is not that we continue to build throughout our lives, although that's true enough. But the idea in this doctrinal point is that the whole wall should go up at the same time. Notice what we read here. They didn't complete the wall in the east, and then move to the north, then to the west, and then to the south. No. Throughout this chapter we see that the wall building was going on all around the city, all at the same time.

In the same way, our spiritual walls must be continuous. You don't work on your prayer life and neglect your Bible study. And you don't work on your Christian service and neglect the other parts of your spiritual wall! No, every area of our Christian lives should be built up together.

Spiritual wall building is continuous. We're to be involved in all of these things, all at the same time. The idea is that we should have a strong and balanced Christian life.

Practical Application

1. We should aim to have a balanced Christian life.

There should be some Bible study, some prayer, and some kind of service for the Lord every day in our lives. There should be worship. There should be fellowship with others. This is biblical. Acts 2:42 says that the early Christians “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine [teaching], and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*”

We need to work on building a continuous spiritual wall. We should aim at having a balanced Christian life.

2. Don’t be surprised if some of your brothers and sisters don’t join you in the work of the Lord.

Look at verse 5: “*Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.*” The “nobles” didn’t want to get their hands dirty. They thought they were too good.

Unity in the body of Christ is important, and unity is pleasing to God, but there will always be some believers who don’t join in the unity of the body. They don’t catch the vision. They criticize. They don’t want to do the hard work.

What should we do in a case like that? We should do what Nehemiah did. Don’t get hung up with the problem! Don’t stop the work because of a few! Don’t waste time trying to motivate the shirkers or the spectators!

There’ll always be some people who don’t catch the vision of what God is doing. So don’t be surprised if some of your fellow believers don’t join you in the work of the Lord.